

Signpost

Kateri Circles Vol. 8 Issue 4

April

St. Tekakwitha Opening prayer:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled Your Creation with Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our heard words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son through her short life marred by sickness, suffering and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples.

Amen

Who do we need to bring in the circle?

Who do we need to pray for:

Family members who are sick. Family members who have died. Struggles that we are facing.

Let us bring our joys and sufferings into this circle.

Direction:

Spring

East

Yellow

Sin- Apathy, Sloth

Fruits of the Holy Spirit-Faith/ Goodness/Modesty

Gifts of the Holy Spirit- Understanding/Piety

Topic:
Pastoral Framework
Conclusion

We conclude by repeating the words that St. John Paul II addressed to the Native Peoples of the Americas in 1987:

I encourage you, as Native People belonging to the different tribes and nations in the East, South, West and North, to preserve and keep alive your cultures, your languages, the values and customs which have served you well in the past and which provide a solid foundation for the future. Your customs that mark the various stages of life, your love for the extended family, your respect for the dignity and worth of every human being, from the unborn to the aged, and your stewardship and care of the earth: these things benefit not only yourselves but the entire human family.

*Your gifts can also be expressed even more fully in the Christian way of life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is at home in every people. It enriches, uplifts, and purifies every culture. All of us together make up the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Church. We should all be grateful for the growing unity, presence, voice, and leadership of Catholic Native Americans in the Church today.**

* Pope John Paul II, Address to the Native Peoples of the Americas, no. 4; Phoenix, 1987, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870914_amerindi-phoenix.html, no. 4

An unfortunate tension exists today for many Indigenous Catholics, who feel they are presented with a false choice: be Native or be Catholic. Some Conclusion 59

believe an irreconcilable chasm exists between traditional Indigenous culture and Catholicism. For Native Catholics who feel this tension, we assure you, as the Catholic bishops of the United States, that you do not have to be one or the other. You are both. Your cultural embodiment of the faith is a gift to the Church.

This Pastoral Framework is one of several steps toward the revitalizing of Native Catholic ministry. This framework reflects ideas, values, and areas of importance that the bishops have noted in dialogue with Catholic Native leaders. This text is intended to be used by dioceses, parishes, regions, Native Catholic leaders, Catholic schools, and other Catholic institutions serving Indigenous populations to develop specific priorities, initiatives, and programs tailored to the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the local Native populations. We acknowledge the great diversity of Tribes, languages, and cultural traditions that exist among the Indigenous populations in the United States of America and its territories. We know that one size does not fit all and affirm that any pastoral plans of action need to start with Catholic Natives themselves and be developed at the local level.†

† See "Summary of Key Areas and Suggested Action Steps to Further Develop Native/Indigenous Ministry" at the end of this section.

For our part at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we will continue to meet with Native leadership to develop practical actions and suggestions to implement this Pastoral Framework. For this purpose, and in conjunction with the Black and Indian Mission Office, we commit to conduct a follow-up listening session with Catholic Native leaders within a year or so after the approval of this framework. Further, because their experiences differ from those of the other states, separate attention needs to be given to Alaskan Natives, Hawaiian Natives, and the California Mission Indians (given their unique historical experience) to formulate specific action plans that can be accomplished in the next few years to enhance and support their ministries, as well as to the Mayan communities (mostly from Guatemala) and other Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (such as the Purepechas from Mexico) who reside in the United States.

Also, there needs to be continued dialogue with experts and organi

zations to combat Native poverty, lack of access to health care and educational opportunities, and other factors that hinder Native Peoples' social progress and development.

Because the issue of the "doctrine of discovery" has had such a profound impact on the lives of Indigenous populations in many different countries, we suggest that there should be an international conference to study its history and consequences, so that the effects felt even today by many Indigenous communities can be understood.

Finally, the Catholic bishops must continue to work to promote healing and reconciliation with any Native communities that may have experienced mistreatment and trauma at institutions run by Catholic religious communities or organizations and expand this important healing work and ministry.

In the introduction to this Pastoral Framework, we expressed our sincere apology for the Church's failure to respond adequately to those entrusted to our pastoral care. But we must go beyond an apology to take concrete actions, if we are to restore trust within these communities and demonstrate our true willingness to be transparent, present, and accountable to them. As we listen to the voice of Indigenous Catholics and provide opportunities for them to share their experiences, we as a trauma-informed community must be careful not to dictate the process.

The Church in the United States needs its Native members to offer their gifts to the rest of the Church so that all may be mutually edified. Indigenous Peoples' courage, humility, and respect inspire the Church to hold firm in faith, hope, and charity through difficulties. The vast majority of Indigenous Peoples believe in the Spirit of the Creator. In a world that is increasingly secular, the Indigenous worldview — which recognizes that we are all created and loved by God — stands as a beacon of hope and truth. Indigenous Catholics witness to the rest of the Church about the need to see God in day-to-day life. In a culture consumed by materialism, Indigenous Peoples' focus on the supernatural is inspirational. The Church must use all available resources to evangelize and form this part of the Body of Christ. Native People themselves are best positioned to pass on the faith to their families, in imitation of the Indigenous holy men and women who have come before us.

*We turn our prayers to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization in the Americas, for her assistance as we journey together toward heaven. May she guide our hearts ever closer to her son, Jesus. May we be inspired by her words to St. Juan Diego: "Hear me and understand well, my little son, that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who am your mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything." **

May we never lose hope, assured of her love and care for us and especially for Indigenous Catholics, who are always in our hearts. May Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, guide our encounter with one another on our certain path to the heavenly homeland.

Commentary:

In the conclusion, it steers the conversation to some of the themes that have been brought up in the document.

- 1) You can be both Native and Catholic
- 2) All of the Bishops in the United States are making Native ministry a priority
- 3) The Apology for the Boarding School Period is backed up by the four action steps.
- 4) All social justice issues have a solution as long as we work together
- 5) Catholic Natives are the ones that are in leadership and guiding this ministry.
- 6) The Pastoral Framework is written with two audiences in mind. Catholic Native communities to act as a catalysis for ministry and the Catholic Church as a whole for awareness and work for Native ministry.

Discussion Questions for the Pastoral Framework:

Discussion Questions for the Church and Indian Country Podcast:

Closing prayer:

From the Black and Indian Mission Office:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled your creation with Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our hearts words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant, the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ, to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son throughout her short life marked by sickness, suffering, and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples. May she who sought our Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lead up to similar reverences for

the Eucharist so that, like Saint Kateri, our last words may be, “Jesus, I love You.”
Amen.

Notice:

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Rev. Mike Carson