

EXTENSION

Magazine of the American Home Missions



Blessed Kateri—inspiration to Native Americans



'Respect God and Mother Earth.'

NAME: Burton Pretty On Top, Sr.

BORN: September 17, 1946, on the Crow Reservation in Montana.

OCCUPATION: Truck driver.

PASTIMES: Sharing the Faith and Native American spirituality, protecting sacred Indian lands, cheering on the Dallas Cowboys football team.

HEROES: Jesus, Saint Francis, Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II.

ULTIMATE AIM: To help bring the human family closer together in love.

Burton is just one of many individuals in the Tekakwitha Conference who are making great strides in evangelization among Native Americans. For more on this ministry, turn to the stories which start on page 8.

When Burton Pretty On Top, Sr., gives a talk to youths, he usually wears his Indian headdress and buckskin outfit. He smokes his sacred pipe and prays with the young people amidst incense of burning cedar.

If his audience is mostly non-Indian, he teaches about Native history and culture. With Native American youth, he encourages them to walk proudly and to not lose touch with their roots. But the main themes of his presentations are the same: embrace the Catholic Faith, love yourselves and respect Mother Earth.

As a father of six (plus a grandchild), Burton makes a good teacher along with his wife Eleanor. "We have to allow our children to grow, to use their judgment. If they make mistakes, we can't come down too hard on them. We have to still say, 'I love you.'"

Burton learned about love and Native traditions from his grandfather who raised him in a one-room cabin with no electricity or

running water in the mountains of the Crow Reservation in Montana. His grandfather taught him to develop a relationship with God and with Mother Earth.

But although he had been baptized when he was 3, Burton was not active in the Faith. It wasn't until he ran into difficulties raising his family off the reservation in Billings, Montana, that he returned to the Church.

Burton now serves as president of his parish council on the Crow Reservation, is a secular Franciscan, a Knight of Columbus and is active in the Cursillo movement. He works to protect sacred Indian lands and artifacts. And through his public speaking ministry, he teaches about the integration of the Catholic Faith with Native American spirituality.

The Church truly cares for Native Americans, Burton firmly believes after representing the Indian peoples of the Western Hemisphere along with his uncle at the 1986 World Day of Prayer for

Peace in Assisi, Italy.

"The Pope has done so much for the Indian people. He gave me a message in Assisi: 'Tell your people that God loves them very much. Tell them that their traditions, languages and sacred ways are very good.'"

The Tekakwitha Conference is an important means of uniting the diverse tribes in the Faith, he says. "We are able to come together as Catholics, to share what we have in common for the good of all." In addition to serving on the Conference board of directors, Burton volunteers his time each summer to truck materials to the site of the annual Conference meeting where more than 100 tribes convene.

"We need to begin to break the ancient tragedy of religious hatred. We need to gather together in humility, fasting and prayer as one family. God wants to unite people all over the world into a family of love — just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share a community of love in Heaven."

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Ever since Europeans first encountered America's native population, relations between these peoples have been marked both by conflict and respect.

On the one hand, America's expansion westward brought on a crescendo of violence, which resulted in the destruction of some tribes, the loss of cultural identity, and from one ocean to the next, America's native population saw their world stolen.

Yet, there was also a kind of romance the settlers felt towards America's Indians. Farmers who plowed the prairies spoke respectfully of the Indian's courage and honesty. Tradesmen and factory workers in the East thronged to Wild West shows.

This ambivalence also characterizes the religious feelings of many Native American Catholics. As Catholics, they believe that Christ is the fullest revelation of God's love for us. But as Native Americans they suffer from the recollection that the message of Christ was often brought in the company of violent men, so that the natural religious values of the Native Americans were often simply dismissed or destroyed.

Now Native American Catholics ask themselves, "To what extent can these ancient spiritual values be brought into harmony with the Church's liturgy and doctrine?"

The Tekakwitha Conference addresses this essential question with a confidence born of faith. We dedicate this issue to the growing influence of Native Americans in the Church.

Father Patrick

EXTENSION

Volume 84 No. 8 February, 1990

COVER STORY

Now you are the Body of Christ...
— 1 Corinthians 12:27



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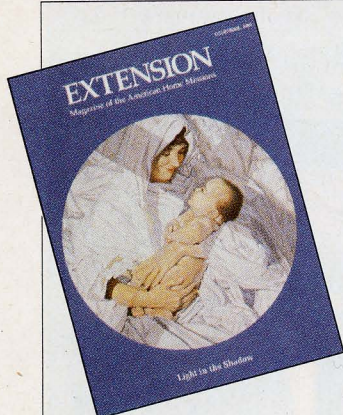
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Our cover illustration of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was painted by Joe Swearingen of Chicago, Illinois, a Native American who grew up in the home mission territory of southern Oklahoma.



Artistic differences

As an artist myself, I don't know when I have been so moved by a painting as I was with the cover of your December issue. The shadow of the cross falling across that beautiful baby and His mother tells it all. That is truly great art!

*Mrs. Thomas Crawley
Carlsbad, California*

Would you please explain why one sees so many pictures of the Madonna and Child, and the Child has no clothes on — while the mother has plenty on! I don't like it at all!

*Mrs. John Hoare
Chicago, Illinois*

Editor's note: The Madonna and Child have been illustrated through the centuries in poses very similar to that portrayed on our cover. Mary is often shown clutching the Infant Jesus to show the loving, nourishing bond that exists between mother and child. The naked Infant is meant to emphasize how Christ was truly born of the flesh — both as man and God.

Spiritual nugget

I look forward to EXTENSION each month and have particularly enjoyed the last two issues featuring the Jesuits. The *American Catholic* column always offers a substantial spiritual nugget. Thanks.

*Sister Mary Celine,
OSF
Syracuse, New York*

Extension calendars

Many thanks for the 1990 Extension calendars. As always they look great and are very practical. Continued success to you and the entire Extension staff. Your generosity is one of the best things about the Catholic Church in the United States.

*Brian Olszewski
Merrillville, Indiana*

Wish List recipient

It was not a surprise to find "Santa Claus" wearing an Extension logo this year! I received with a joy that was re-echoed at St. John's Parish in Magnolia Springs your letter and the enclosed check for that parish, as a share of the response to your Christmas Wish

List Appeal. God bless all of Extension's kind benefactors who responded so generously. Considering the cold weather that has extended this far south this year, Father Lemming and his parishioners will at last be able to remain warm and dry under the new roof in the parish hall which will be built with Extension's help. My deep thanks and every good wish in the new decade ahead.

*Most Reverend Oscar
Lipscomb
Archbishop of Mobile,
Alabama*

Mission find

I enjoy your magazine and often pass it on. I was especially appreciative to find your mission churches while traveling in Montana last summer. There is a fine one in Cooke City.

*Mrs. Sarah Temple
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

Through the years

I wish to tell you how much I honestly enjoy EXTENSION Magazine. My mother always belonged to the Extension Society, and the magazine — quite different

then — was always in our home. I first started reading it when I was 18-years-old and am still reading it at age 78.

*Mrs. Robert Eaton
Clinton, New York*

Educating the faithful

St. Elizabeth's Parish is delighted with the Extension grant to help cover the salary of a Religious Education Director. I am the new director, and with this support more programs can be developed to further educate our parishioners in the Faith. I have been focusing on new programs for high school students. Recently, many of them attended a retreat and youth rally, which has never happened before in this parish. Our future plans include a new youth group, youth choir and classes on parenting. Thanks again for your support!

*Mona Rae Schaan, DRE
Dilworth, Minnesota*

Disaster report

Your December issue (featuring the devastation of Hurricane Hugo and the California earthquake) was great. Please rush me 50 copies to share with my friends back home. Enclosed, too, find my donation to help cover the cost. Your stories told it all so well! God bless.

*Lucy Bough
Kingshill, St. Croix
Virgin Islands*

We'd love to hear from you

If you find something you like or disagree with in this issue, please let us know. Or if you need more copies to share with friends or a parish group, please write. We would be happy to hear from you.

Write to: EXTENSION Magazine, 35 East Wacker Drive-400M, Chicago, Illinois 60601.

EXTENSION

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EXTENSION Magazine is published by The Catholic Church Extension Society of the United States of America. EXTENSION is published monthly except March/April and August/September. It is mailed free to all donors to show prevailing conditions in the American home missions and to record Extension's assistance to missionaries and the people they serve.

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Father Patrick Brankin, *Publisher*
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Marianna Bartholomew,
Managing Editor

The Extension Society is a national Papal organization founded in 1905 to help individuals contribute to the support and extension of the Catholic Faith across America. Its work is possible only through the continued support of donors. You, too, can help in many ways, such as outright gifts, charitable annuities and will bequests. All donations to Extension are tax-deductible as contributions to the Church.

With your support, Extension can build or repair churches and CCD centers, and support priests and religious through Mass stipends or salary subsidies. Extension also aids religious education, campus ministry, support of seminarians, and emergency relief.

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Can you match their sacrifices?



Day after day, America's home missionaries make enormous sacrifices. Throughout the year, they celebrate Mass in gas stations, drive cars with 150,000 miles on the odometer, and sleep in cramped rooms without heating or plumbing — not even a bed!

You can help these missionaries who serve our country's poorest and most isolated Catholics by joining Extension's Inner Circle. As a member, your gift will help them to serve poverty-stricken communities which are unable to provide the barest necessities for a priest or religious.

As a new Inner Circle member you'll receive these benefits:

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- Quarterly newsletter which tells the inspiring stories of the struggling missionaries you support.
- Wallet-size membership card — includes space for emergency information.
- You and your special

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Special bonus for Gold Plus Members!

If you become a Gold Plus Member you will receive a leather-bound edition of *The Word Of God For All Occasions*.



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Won't you match the sacrifice of these selfless home missionaries by joining Inner Circle today!



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Dear Father Slattery:

Please enroll me in the Inner Circle as I have indicated below.

- ☐ \$250 or more — Gold Plus Member*
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☐ \$ 50 — Silver Member
☐ \$ 25 — Bronze Member

I will pay my pledge:

_____ Annually _____ Semi-annually _____ Quarterly

Enclosed is \$ _____

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Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*Your beautiful prayer book will be sent when full payment is received.

What are the sins that cry out to heaven for vengeance?

K.D., South Wales, New York

There are four sins that are said to "cry aloud for vengeance." They are (1) voluntary homicide, (2) carnal sins against nature, (3) the oppression of the poor, and (4) defrauding the worker of his wage.

Eighteen years ago my daughter, who is a Catholic, married a man who was never baptized in any religion. They were married by a Catholic priest in a Catholic ceremony. Is my daughter married in the eyes of the Church? Is she legally married?

M.B., Oak Lawn, Illinois

Yes, a marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized individual is valid and binding when the proper dispensations have been obtained and the ceremony is performed by a priest according to the ritual of the Church. A dispensation is necessary because Church law requires Catholics to marry other Catholics. Since you state that your daughter was married in the Church, you can assume that the celebrant applied for and obtained the necessary dispensation, called "dispensation from the impediment of disparity of cult." Any marriage per-

Who is the 'Little Cajun Saint'?

What can you tell me about Charlene Marie Richard, whom my family venerates as "the little Cajun Saint"?

B.C. Lafayette, Louisiana

Devotion to the saints is a hallmark of our Catholic Faith; and while the final proclamation of a person's sanctity is reserved to the Holy Father in a process called canonization, it is also true that devotion to the saints springs up spontaneously among the faithful as their response to the extraordinary virtues which they see exemplified in those whom they venerate.

An example of this is the devotion paid to a young Louisiana girl, Charlene Marie Richard, who died at the age of 12. Although the Church has not yet spoken publicly about her reputation for holiness, Charlene is known throughout Louisiana as "the Little Cajun Saint."

Suffering from acute lymphatic leukemia and hospitalized in Lafayette, Charlene began to offer up her pain in union with Christ for the benefit of other patients. Following her death on August 11, 1959, reports of her sanctity began to spread among the faithful and her tomb in rural Richard, Louisiana, became a popular pilgrimage site.

Recently the bishop of Lafayette opened a file on this remarkable young woman and began to assemble personal stories and recollections regarding her life. This investigation could lead eventually to the Church declaring her Blessed Charlene!

formed in the Catholic Church is a legal marriage and is recognized as such by civil authority.

In looking over Extension's Family Appointment Calendar, I find that Saint Dominic was listed on August 8th. But I remember that our family always cele-

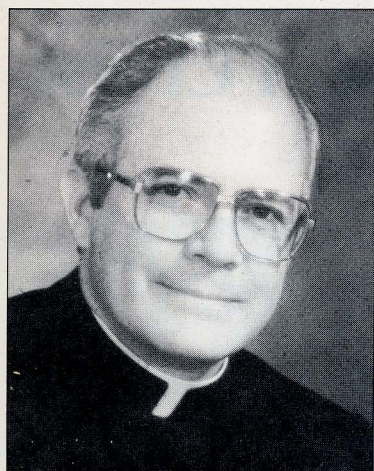
brated his feastday on August 4th. Was the date changed?

T.F.K., Chicago, Illinois
Yes, the date was indeed changed when the Church calendar was revised following the Second Vatican Council. As a general rule, a feastday commemorates the saint's birth into eternal

life. Saint Dominic, who died on August 6, would have had that day as his feast except that August 6th is the Feast of Our Lord's Transfiguration. And since the day before his death was also an ancient feast (Our Lady of the Snows), Saint Dominic's feastday was fixed on August 4th. Meanwhile Saint John Vianney, the saintly Cure of Ars, whose feastday should have been on August 4th, the date of his death, was commemorated on August 9th, the first free day in the old calendar. Much of this confusion was reduced in the new calendar because a number of minor saints' days were eliminated and other liturgical celebrations were rearranged.

Who approved of having grade school children distribute Holy Communion at Mass?

J.K., Buffalo, New York
No one has. Unfortunately, the situation you describe, while common, is a sad distortion of the role of Extraordinary Ministers of Communion. As their title implies, these liturgical ministers exercise their role in certain "extraordinary" situations. They ought not be used in order to broaden the ministry of the laity; and to designate children for this function seems to me to be both manipulative and deceitful.



by Father Edward J. Slattery
Extension President

Changing the world

down to touch us and love each of us singly and intimately.

Just as we are humbled in the face of God's beautiful creation, so we are also overwhelmed and feel helpless when we consider the magnitude and effects of sin.

We ask ourselves, "What can one person do to effect even a small change for the better?" Then it occurs to us that only Almighty God can restore a broken world of so much poverty, sickness, hunger and all the complicated issues of half-hearted loves, envy and even hatred.

Only God? Yes, but with a beautiful twist! God has so arranged it that our prayers and our good deeds become the means, His instruments, whereby He redeems the world. That is why I continue to send you so many letters asking for help. Our sacrifices, big or

is threatened by poverty or family sickness, etc. And so, my endless stream of begging letters!

The dilemma occurs when you realize that you have personal responsibilities, too, right inside your own doorsteps — an invalid spouse or child, an addictive son or grandchild, unexpected or almost sure-to-come bills and emergencies.

We are reminded that we are limited. The words of Isaiah capture this age-old dilemma that tugs at the heart of every good person who wants to go out to others while, at the same time, must care for family members. Isaiah says it well: "Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, but do not turn your back on your own." (Isaiah 58)

At Extension we have dedicated

Our prayers and good deeds become the means whereby God redeems the world.

small, are made significant because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. From now on every prayer and every good deed takes on an infinite value because in the hands of God they are multiplied a hundredfold.

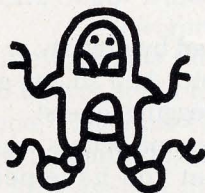
In recent years many of you have been writing to me of your regret that you cannot do more for the home missions. You recognize that the needs in the missions are as overwhelming as a waterfall. There seems to be no end to the poverty, the deteriorating and destroyed churches, the places where there are no churches, the idealistic seminarians whose dream to serve

ourselves to understanding this dilemma which is unique to the selfless and generous person — to the Catholic who wants to do all he or she can to help the home missions. There is a way to make a gift that, if needed, can be taken back. Please write to me for information on our Revocable Agreements. Many have chosen this type of gift to solve the dilemma of going out to others while making sure that those at home will be cared for.

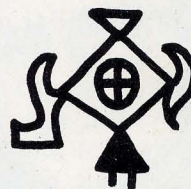
God bless you for your goodness to the home missions. Whatever good you do is multiplied a hundredfold by our all-loving God.

There are times when all of us feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of God's creation. Standing at the foot of a waterfall with its endless rush of water can make us feel small and even helpless in the face of it all. Suddenly it is further overwhelming when it occurs to us that God the Creator of all this power and beauty bends

Walking the Sacred Circle with Christ



Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Tekakwitha Conference brings together Native Americans in an unprecedented spirit of sharing their Faith.



To Native Americans, the circle is the traditional symbol of completeness; and for all Native American Catholics it is our life's journey, which begins and ends in God.

Appropriately, "Walking the Sacred Circle With Jesus Christ" was the theme of the 50th anniversary of the Tekakwitha Conference held last August at North Dakota State University in Fargo. The presence of more than 2,000 Conference members from 100 tribes, including Native American bishops, priests and religious as well as lay Catholics, made it clear that the Tekakwitha Conference has now become a nationwide force in helping Native Americans teach the Faith to their own people.

Originally, the conference had a much different focus. Founded in Fargo, North Dakota, by Aloysius Cardinal Muench, the Conference offered the home missionary priests support and encouragement in their lonely apostolate. Now after 50 years of service to the Church, the Conference offers support to various levels of Catholic leadership among the Native American Indians, especially an emerging class of lay leaders.

Naming the Conference after

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha seems in retrospect to have been a prophetic choice. Blessed Kateri, who lived in upstate New York in the mid-17th century, was a young Mohawk convert. Her struggles to live the Gospel have inspired generations of devout Native Americans. Now she is also seen as a model of lay Catholic

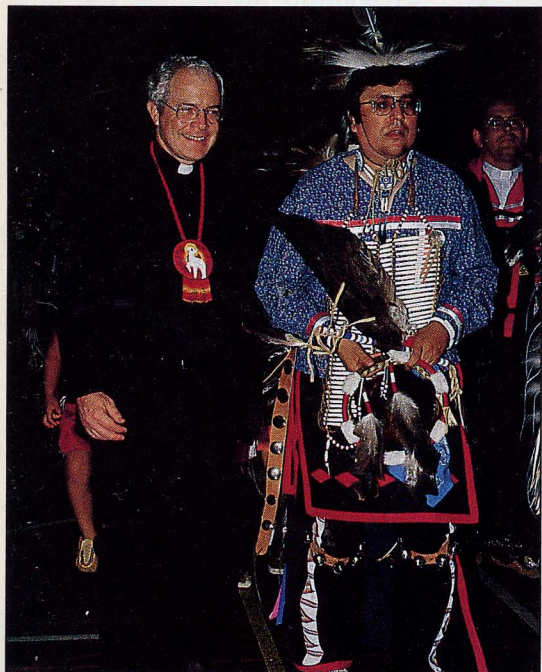


evangelization, a model which the newly elected Conference Director Frederick A. Buckles, Jr. takes quite seriously.

An Assiniboine Sioux, Buckles has done administrative work with Native Americans for over 20 years. Today he is the first lay person and Native American to serve as executive director of the Conference. One of his goals as executive director, he told Conference participants in Fargo, will be to help the Church "understand our needs and our ways as Native American people."

Helping to clarify the traditions of America's Catholic Indians comes naturally to Buckles and his wife, the former Olivia Red Thunder. Both actively practice their faith and are committed to their own Indian traditions.

For example, when trying to decide whether he should take the job with the Tekakwitha Conference, Buckles hiked up the mountains near his home. The day was misting with a fine rain, perfect for spending time alone in prayer. "I raised my hands to the sky," he said, "and prayed from the depths of my soul. Then it stopped raining, and for a moment the sun came through. I gave thanks to God and slept well that night."



Bottom photo, Pope John Paul II is blessed with an eagle feather during the 1987 Conference in Phoenix. Left and below, the 1989 Conference included Father Slattery's reception of the award for Extension and a deeply felt fellowship among participants.



Photo by Brad Collins



Understanding Native culture

In order to help the Church understand the culture of Native Americans, a five-point national agenda was agreed upon. This agenda, similar in concept to agendas adopted by Hispanic and African-American Catholics, focuses on what the Church needs to do for an even deeper evangelization of all Indian Catholics. Points included among the agenda items were better religious education and programs to counter substance abuse, plus efforts at gaining more vocations from among Native American families.

For its evangelization work in the U.S. home missions, the Tekakwitha Conference has been supported by grants from the Extension Society; and at last

summer's 50th Anniversary Conference, Father Edward J. Slattery, President of the Society, accepted an award from the Conference. Father Slattery explained that he could receive this expression of gratitude "only on behalf of the Extension donors, whose generosity towards the missions helped spread the Faith, educate our people and train leaders in mission areas."

One of those religious leaders who has benefitted from an Extension assistance is Sister Genevieve Cuny, OSF, an Oglala Lakota Franciscan. Now serving as Director of Catechetics at the Conference's national center in Great Falls, Montana, Sister Cuny has received an Extension scholarship and was able to earn a degree in religious education. Sister put her education to

excellent use as Director of Native Catechetics for the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota.

"I would go to communities all over the diocese and give workshops to adults on how Indians can use their gifts to enrich the Church," she said. During her workshops, Sister Genevieve would then ask participants to list their personal attributes. Although some were timid or hesitant at first, they often mentioned their dedication to family life, their closeness to nature and their respect for the holiness of God.

Sister Genevieve encourages Native American Catholics to put their dedication and respect into practice. "A lot of our people have been baptized, but few have been evangelized," said Sister Genevieve. "We need to get these

Bishop Donald Pelotte of Gallup Diocese celebrates Mass for conference participants. At far right, a girl demonstrates a tribal dance.

Photo by Donna Davis



baptized Catholics excited about their faith so they will practice it every day."

One of 12 children, Sister Genevieve learned how to practice her faith as a young girl. She recalls waking in the morning to see her father praying out in the fields. "My mother would say that Papa was asking God to bless our family and all of our relations."

From her mother, Sister learned "that we are dependent on God for everything we are and have." Even in hard times, "when all we had to eat was peanut butter and crackers," the family always shared with those less fortunate than themselves. Recalled Sister Genevieve, "My mother would say, 'My girl, don't worry. God will take care of us.'"

Sister received her first formal religious education at Holy



Help build a mission chapel — and honor a loved one.

Do you have a loved one whom you wish to keep in your prayers—a mother, husband, child or friend?

Now you can create a living memorial to that special person, and help a needy home mission build the chapel they have been waiting and praying for.

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With a Memorial Gift of \$500 or more, Extension will place a plaque petitioning prayers for you and your loved ones in the chapel or parish center you help build.

Please answer the prayers of the home missions and honor the memory of someone you love.



Given in Loving Memory of



(Name of person(s) you are remembering)

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The Catholic Church
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Right, Bishop Charles Chaput (middle), a Prairie Band Potawatomi and Bishop of Rapid City Diocese, mingles with conference participants. Below, a native dancer reminds participants of their rich heritage.



Rosary Mission on the Pine Ridge Reservation. About the time she spent there, she says laughing: "I was wild about the boys then." As a teenager however, she was approached by a priest and a sister who told her they thought that God wanted her for Himself. Because she agreed, she entered the Franciscans and taught in their elementary and secondary schools for 20 years.

The primary goal of her catechetical work with adults today, she says, "is to help lay men and women to grow in the Faith and to live it as Catholic Indians."

Expressions of faith

Living the faith as Catholic Indians often takes concrete expressions. On Good Friday, for example, a small group of men on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation carry a cross five miles from their village to the parish church. Others put on an Indian Nativity play at Christmas. For others, the Cursillo Movement and the Charismatic Renewal have deepened Native expression of faith.

Burton Pretty on Top, Sr., a Crow Indian, explained that both the Cursillo and Charismatic movements give Catholic Indians an outlet for their emotions. "We need to be able to cry, to jump for joy, to clap our hands!" said Burton heartily. "We dance at powwows and at Cursillo. We love to hug one another, to enjoy life, and to feel God's love."

Harold and Geraldine Condon are two lay leaders who studied under Sister Genevieve. Like their teacher, the Condons are committed to the strengthening of Catholic life among Native American families. Members of Sacred Heart Parish in rural Red Scaffold, South Dakota, on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, the Condons have three children.

They are also a "deacon couple" who studied together for several years until Harold was ordained to the permanent diaconate in 1985. "Deacons are in enormous demand on the reservations," said Geraldine. Since the first Native American sought ordination during the 1970's, more than three dozen more have been ordained to the diaconate.

Together with the Condons, there were eight families from Sacred Heart Parish who also attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the Tekakwitha Conference. At workshops, participants were encouraged to become more active in their parishes so that their faith could provide solutions for the

enormous problems faced by the Native American community, including alcoholism, drug abuse and low self-esteem.

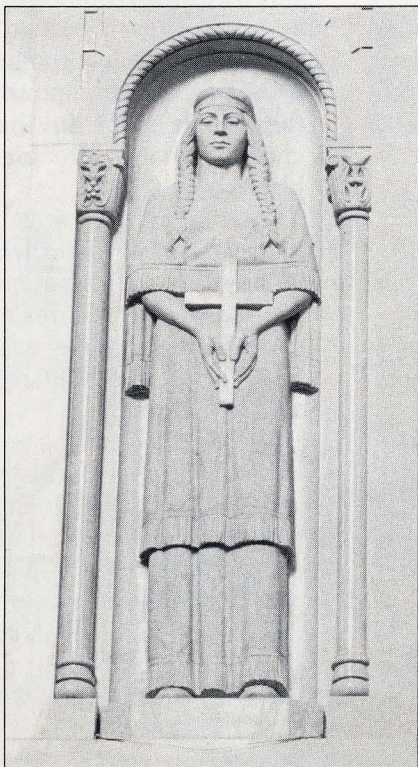
These problems are now being more actively tackled by Native parishioners. For instance, counselors are brought in to discuss these problems such as these at a mini-Tekakwitha Conference held in South Dakota each June. Harold and Deacon Victor Bull Bear of the Pine Ridge Reservation are co-founders of this supportive mini-Tekakwitha Conference.

Working to counteract the influence of alcohol and drugs is one of the seven points adopted last June as part of the Conference's national agenda. When reporting on how his parish

was countering the effects of alcohol and drug abuse, Deacon Condon told of a new program in his parish called "People Against Substance Abuse."

The program now consists of about 20 people, many of whom are recovering addicts. Overtly Christian in nature, this group meets once or twice a week and asks families with problems "if we can come into their home," said Harold. The purpose is "to give families a chance to share their hurts" and "to tell our stories of how we came to sobriety," he explained. The group always prays with the family and will advise family members about various treatment

(Continued on page 22)



The Lily of the Mohawks

Known as the "Lily of the Mohawks" for her saintly life, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was born in Auriesville, New York, in 1656. Her mother, a Christian Algonquin, was wife to the pagan chief of the Mohawk Indian tribe.

When Kateri was three years old she lost her father, mother and only brother to a smallpox epidemic, which left her disfigured and partially blind.

Raised by an uncle, Kateri was baptized into the Catholic Faith when she was 19 years old, against the wishes of her relatives. Vowing to lead a virgin life, she spent her days in prayer, and in caring for the sick and elderly.

Kateri's refusal to marry drew the ridicule of her tribe, forcing her to flee to the Jesuit mission of St. Xavier near Montreal, Canada.

Upon Kateri's death just three years later, her face became radiantly beautiful and free from all the scars of her childhood illness. Buried at Caughnawaga, Ontario, Kateri was beatified June 22, 1980. Many favors and miracles have been obtained through her intercession.

A legacy of Faith

**A Native American sister works to heal
the spirit of her broken people.**



BY MARIANNA BARTHOLOMEW

Sister Dolores Ellwart, SP, is doing more than teaching the Gospel to her Couer d'Alene tribe in the northern Idaho wilderness. According to an 18th century legend she is helping to imbue the people with great spiritual powers.

The legend dates back to a prophecy by powerful Chief Circling Raven that medicine men would come from the East wearing black robes and carrying a cross. These "blackrobes," as they came to be known, would bring new spiritual powers to give the people hope in the face of changes that white men would bring to their land.

This prophecy was fulfilled nearly a century later when Jesuit Father Pierre De Smet met a band of Coeur d'Alenes on his missionary travels and sent a Jesuit priest to establish a mission among their tribe.

Within 10 years the entire tribe had converted. But this wondrous growth in faith was soon tested by turbulent times. Hordes of gold prospectors in the 1860s forced the Coeur d'Alenes to abandon much of their land and their beautiful, newly-built church in Cataldo. Settling 30 miles southwest in the village of De Smet, they built Sacred Heart Church and a school. But again in 1909 they lost much of their land when the U.S. Government gave



away two-thirds of their farmland to homesteaders.

"Our people have been stepped on all through the years," said Providence Sister Dolores. Born and raised on the reservation, an Extension stipend allows her to serve missions in the Coeur d'Alene villages of De Smet, Worley and Plummer with the pastor, Father Thomas Connolly, SJ.

Although Sister Dolores describes her people as "very open, sincere and supportive of each other," she admits that decades of trouble have left them

a broken people. She and Father Connolly cannot undo past injustices, but they can bring to the people what Circling Raven prophesied so long ago — the healing power of Christ.

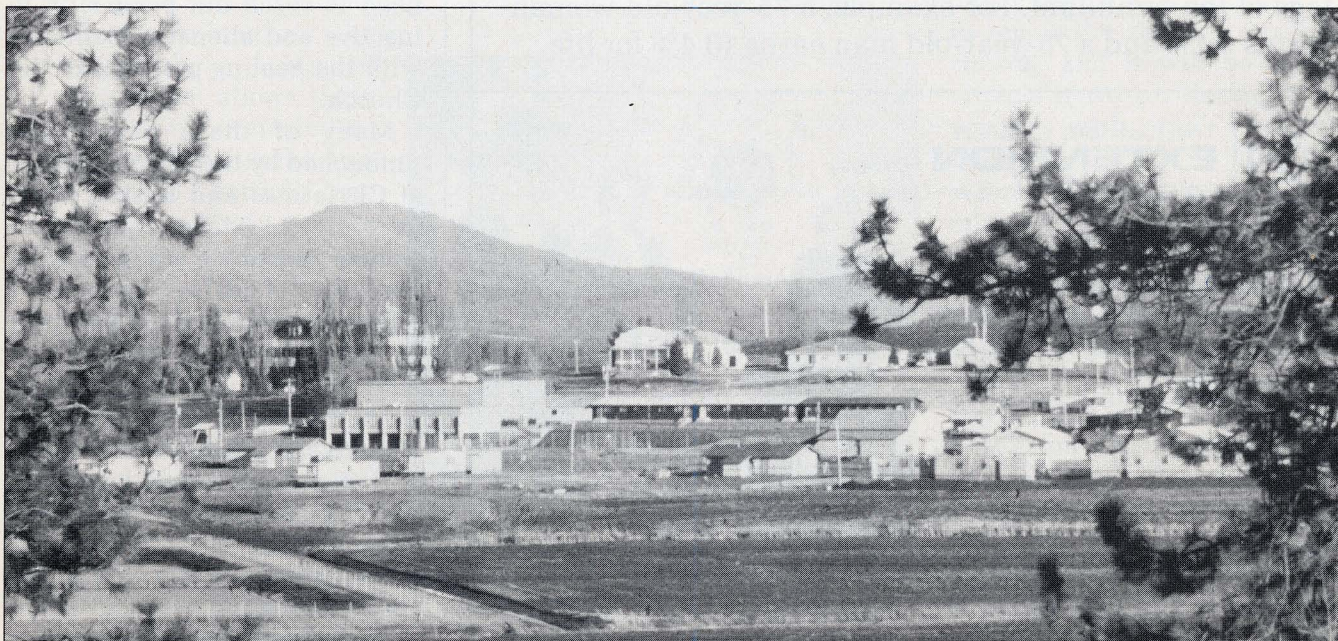
Their greatest inheritance

Today the Coeur d'Alene Indians live in government-subsidized homes heated by wood-burning stoves. A total of 43% live below the poverty level. One reason for such pervasive poverty is because the land allotted to them is so miniscule. One Coeur d'Alene family told of

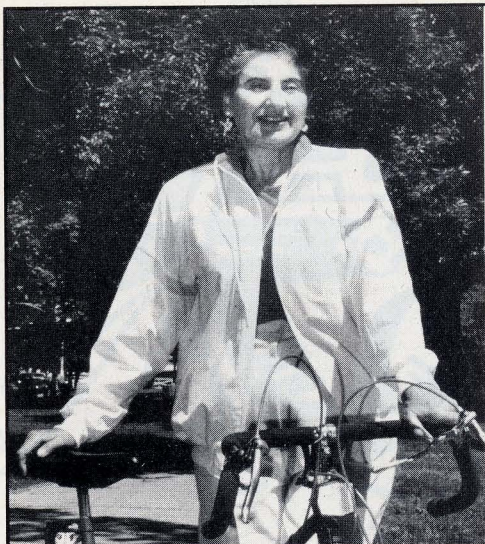
earning little more than \$5 a year from their farm.

Yet it is not the poverty, the tensions between the Native Americans and non-Indians, nor even recent inroads made by fundamentalist sects among this nearly 98% Catholic tribe that worries Sister Dolores the most. It is that young Coeur d'Alenes may be losing their greatest inheritance — their Catholic faith.

"I see a big difference between the faith of the elders, which is very staunch, and the faith of our youth," said Sister Dolores. "Our



The Coeur d'Alene village of De Smet lies in the scenic, mountainous region of Northern Idaho.



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Sara Kubik

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children are growing up with drugs and alcohol, and the loose morals they see on television." Although Coeur d'Alenes have traditionally revered family values, children are becoming alienated from both their families and the Church, said Sister Dolores.

This situation has only worsened since Sacred Heart School closed in 1974 due to a lack of funding and teaching sisters. "The people felt abandoned," said Sister Dolores, who, after 13 years of teaching throughout the Northwest, served as principal of the school from 1965-1974.

"Generations of our children received a solid Catholic education at the school. Now there is just Father Connolly and me."

Keeping the legacy alive

Now that the school has closed Sister Dolores sees great importance in her role of calling the people to fuller participation in the Church. She has begun a door-to-door outreach driving many miles across the rugged countryside to visit with the people. It is difficult work for this aging though energetic nun. Yet now more than ever, she sees the need to reach out personally to inactive and alienated Catholics with the healing presence of the Church.

Many of these people are untouched by the Church except at Christmas and Easter when they attend Mass, said Sister Dolores. Some are going through marital troubles or other difficulties and feel too ashamed to come to Mass. Others are confused and bitter about the changes they have seen in the Church since Vatican II.

"I want to let people know that the Church is there for them, and to teach them that God still loves them despite whatever troubles they may have." Only when Catholics return to the practice of the sacraments will they be able

to take responsibility for passing their faith onto their children.

"Sometimes I'll spot someone who is strong in faith and good with children and ask if they will have sessions in their home to teach neighbor kids about their faith," said Sister Dolores. "Often the reaction is 'Me? I can't do that sort of thing!' But things are beginning to happen! People are rising up and taking responsibility." One woman in Worley, for example, opens a room in the church one night a week for a study hall for the children. Others are learning to conduct religious education classes.


And with Father Connolly incorporating traditional Indian symbols into the liturgy, such as



The Coeur d'Alenes make a pilgrimage each year to their original church in Cataldo.

sweet grass for incense, the people are "starting to feel that this is really *their* Church now," said Sister Dolores.

For example, when no priest was available to celebrate Mass recently, parishioners at all three missions held prayer services. "Five years ago they would have all just gone home!" laughed Sister Dolores.

"People are learning to grasp at their faith themselves," said Sister Dolores, who believes that this is why God put her to work on the reservation in the first place — to teach her people that "blackrobes" alone can not give them faith. The balance lies with the Coeur d'Alenes themselves. Only by living the Gospel and helping to nurture their children in the Church, will they keep this legacy alive for future generations. 

A ministry of sacrifice

Can you match their sacrifice?

Through their lives of great simplicity and sacrifice, Sister Dolores and Father Connolly are true disciples — effectively spreading the Faith through their ministry, says their bishop, Most Reverend Sylvester Treinen.

It is their spirit of sacrifice that allows these devoted missionaries to continue bringing the love of Christ to Coeur d'Alene Indians on their remote reservation. But even the greatest sacrifice is not enough to keep this religious team serving this rural mission.

The Coeur d'Alenes cannot afford to support the presence of the Church. That is why Sacred Heart School closed in 1974, and the teaching priests and sisters were forced to leave. And that is

why Extension has sent aid to this mission parish through the years.

Since the 1920s, friends of Extension have helped build three chapels and a religious education center on the reservation. Today Sister

Dolores depends on an Extension stipend each month to help provide for her food, shelter, and other expenses.

Without this aid, she says, it would be "nip and tuck" to keep the missions open. "The insurance company is after us to repair the steps of our church, and it will be a miracle if we get through winter with the roof intact."

Sister Dolores needs a miracle.

Won't you show your support by using your magazine envelope to send a gift to Sister Dolores today? And by sending your dues and joining Extension's Inner Circle, you can help other home missionaries to continue serving our nation's most impoverished home missions. God bless you for your generous concern.



Sister Dolores serves people of many needs on the reservation.

Continuing the work of the martyrs

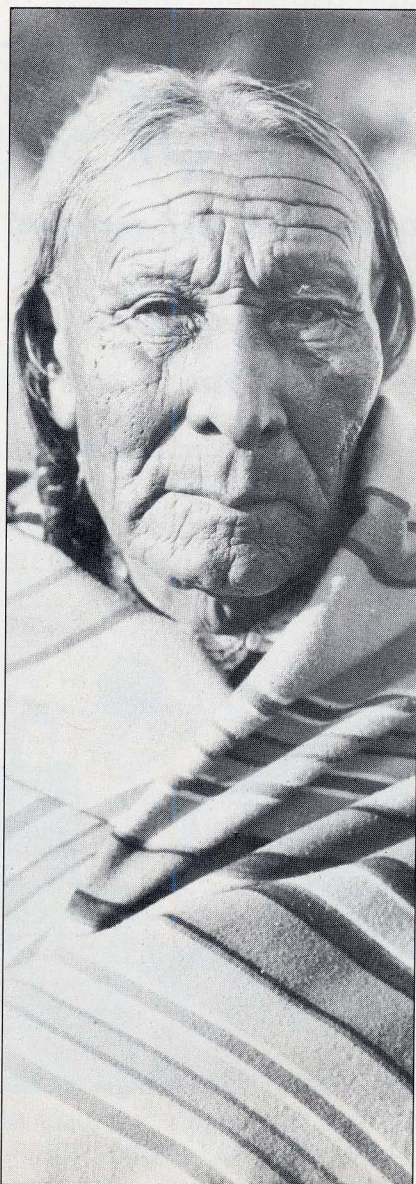
For 85 years Extension has helped bring the light of
Christ to Native American missions across the nation.

“Would that all the Catholics in the East took more interest in the (home) missionary. Like the Poor Souls in Purgatory, he can pray for others, but cannot help himself,” lamented Jesuit Father Henry Westropp in 1907.

Westropp, stationed on the desolate Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, knew first-hand the hardships which faced home mission priests and their poor Native American parishes. His mission covered 2,500 square miles and in his enormous territory, he was the only priest! Traveling by horseback to 20 mission stations, Father Westropp had to gather his people to celebrate Mass and receive the sacraments in open fields and in dilapidated log chapels.

He grimly told of “Protestant missionaries who would ask their congregations for a mite of \$20,000,” when he could not even raise the same number of pennies.

In far off Chicago, Father Francis Clement Kelley heard Father Westropp’s cry. Father Kelley’s newly founded mission aid society, the Catholic Church Extension Society, was dedicated to maintaining the Faith in our



nation’s poorest rural areas and Father Kelley was especially concerned about the faith of Native American Indians. He feared that this faith was “languishing and dying” on reservations because of a lack of resources to support missionaries to serve there.

“We have almost forgotten that it was the Catholic missionary who converted the great majority of the American Indian tribes; that all our glory of martyrdom comes to us from our Indian missions,” wrote Father Kelley. “All of this history is an appeal not to let the work of the martyrs fail!”

An urgent appeal

In an urgent appeal in EXTENSION Magazine, Father Kelley urged readers to “send whatever you can,” on behalf of Father Westropp and many other struggling home mission priests.

Catholics from around the country responded. Their gifts to Extension helped build St. Anthony’s Church on Pine Ridge, and later, a new parish hall and a home for neglected children. Donations helped subsidize religious education programs and provided small monthly stipends for other missionaries to come and serve on the reservation.



The generosity of Extension donors has continued through the years, reaching far beyond Pine Ridge to other Indian missions across the nation. On the Flathead Reservation in western Montana, for example, Extension donors helped build St. Joseph Church (Camas) in 1913, Immaculate Conception (Polson) the following year, and also helped construct mission chapels in the villages of Dixon, Hot Springs, and Arlee.

Today, with the help of Extension subsidies, two religious sisters help Jesuit priests teach the Flathead people their Faith.

At St. Bonaventure Mission in Thoreau, New Mexico, Extension grants helped build a chapel in 1949. More aid was sent in 1968 and a church hall constructed in 1980. This multi-purpose hall has


proven its worth many times over, accommodating more than 100 children for CCD classes, serving 50 hungry people on Saturdays when it becomes a soup kitchen, and then being used as a Catholic grammar school on weekdays.

Two priests and six religious sisters here receive stipend subsidies from Extension each month. "There is hope for a growing number of our Catholic Navajos because Extension's support allows us to be here," said Father Doug McNeill.

Prayers and love

Extension's assistance crisscrosses the country, helping Native Americans from Alaska to Florida and from New Mexico across to Minnesota. Because of Extension's long history of

support, the exact number of souls helped by the Society's donors will never be known. Nor will the grateful tale of America's missionaries ever be fully told.

Yet it is safe to say that without Extension's aid the Faith would have long since withered and died in hundreds of remote parishes and missions. "Thoughts of your prayers and love encourages me on days like today when there is heaviness and loneliness in the field," wrote one priest serving in a remote mission in Arizona. His gratitude echoes that expressed by thousands of missionaries throughout the century: "It is a privilege and a blessing to be living and serving among the Indians. Thank you, Extension, for your continued support and kindness." 

Making Native Americans at home



The new executive director of the Tekakwitha Conference sees unique beauty and promise in the spirituality of his people.

Frederick A. Buckles, Jr., is the first lay person to serve as executive director of the Tekakwitha Conference and its national center in Great Falls, Montana. He is also the first Native American to assume that responsibility and his appointment comes at an exciting time for the conference, which last August celebrated its 50th year of apostolate to Native American Catholics.

By using his broad experience, Buckles hopes to develop new directions for the work of the conference. In a special interview with *EXTENSION*, Buckles talked about maintaining basic Catholic values and traditional Native American expressions . . .

What strengths do you bring to your new position as Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference?

First of all, I have 20 years of experience in social, health and educational programs, working with Native Americans on and off the reservation. As a Native American, I grew up with our traditional cultural ways and spirituality; but I was also born and raised a Catholic. I attended Catholic schools and had training in catechism on the reservation. So this job is, for me, a way of living who I am.



What would you like to see the Tekakwitha Conference do in this coming decade?

The Tekakwitha Conference stands for evangelization among our Native American peoples. I'm quite proud that we've just received the Pope Paul VI Evangelization Award. We need to continue that work. I would

also like to see us working closely with the Church to bring about a clearer understanding of the deep spirituality of our Native American peoples. This will help heal any hurts that might have happened along the way.

Finally, I want to see more involvement of our youth and elders. We certainly cannot have the depth of spirituality, growth and learning that we need if our elders are not honored and given a place of respect.

And the conference is praying for the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

We're all hoping that this decade will bring about the canonization of Blessed Kateri. It will definitely be the highlight of our lives when she becomes our patron saint.



Tekakwitha Conference honored the Extension Society for its longstanding support of Native

BY CATHERINE WALSH

in the Church



Photo by Catherine Walsh

missions in rural America. What do these missions need most?

These missions need to develop our Catholic and our Native American spirituality. Then they need to stress the values of family unity, pride, honor, respect and dignity. We need these basic values even more than we need material goods, as important as these are.

We want our Indian people to have more self-esteem, to feel better about themselves and their lives. This is one reason why we are forming new Kateri Circles on our reservations. These Kateri Circles are prayer groups with a special focus on using spirituality to help overcome the many social problems our young people and adults face.



The Tekakwitha Conference was one of the few groups to have a special audience with Pope John Paul II during his U.S. visit in 1987. What impact did that have

for Native American Catholics?

It was a great honor to meet with the Holy Father. We have great love and respect for him and feel that he has great love and concern for our Native American people. His visit and that of (Nigerian) Francis Cardinal Arinze, last year's keynote speaker in Fargo, show us that the Vatican is attuned to our needs and cares about us. This means a lot to the Native American people.



Do Native Americans feel accepted by the Church?

Anyone who attends one of our annual Tekakwitha Conferences knows that the answer is "Yes!"

Participants never really want the conference to end because they experience such a strong sense of fellowship, so much growing and sharing in the Spirit! Through the Conference we're working to make our people feel more at home in their local

parishes, whether they be on reservations or in urban areas. I am never prouder than when I see people from over 100 different tribes sharing their faith in a bond of fellowship, love and concern. We are brothers and sisters in the Spirit despite our tribal differences.



It seems that many people know very little about Native Americans except for negative stereotyped images. Do you see the Tekakwitha Conference as helping to educate society and the Church about the many positive aspects of Native American culture?

That's an interesting question. In all the jobs I've ever held, I've always tried to project the positiveness of all the Native American people. I find that the Tekakwitha Conference is in an ideal position to present to this country the beauty of our people and of our spirituality.

(Continued from page 13)

programs offered around the reservation. According to Harold, "People Against Substance Abuse" is certainly having a positive impact.

Myron and Cheryl Littlebird, who live on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana, are recovering from the effects of Myron's alcoholism. Both have lost relatives and friends to the disease. Their marriage and family life were torn apart by it. "If we don't do something about alcoholism," emphasized Myron, "we are just not going to survive as a people. I really believe that."

The Littlebirds are very hopeful about the growing sobriety movement among American Indians and the Church's role in furthering it. "The Church is in our recovery," said Myron.

Both Myron and Cheryl lead Alcoholics Anonymous meetings on their reservation and at the annual Tekakwitha Conference. Myron now does individual counseling of alcoholics. Cheryl was thrilled to be one of 10 people from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation last year to receive a Native American Woman In Recovery Award.

The Condons credit their former pastor, Father Larry Rucker, SCJ, with the strength of their marriage and the success of their counseling work. "We had struggles at the beginning of our marriage," recalled Geraldine. "Father Larry counseled us and never gave up on us."

Reflecting on his years of friendship and teamwork with the Condons, Father Larry said: "It has been thrilling to see how the small seed of faith has developed within them. I am very

proud of Harold and Geraldine!"

In search of vocations

According to the Condons, their nine-year-old son Chris has wanted to be a priest since he was five. Whether or not he will remain to be seen, of course.

But vocations among Native Americans are sorely needed and efforts directed at an increase in vocations is another one of the Tekakwitha Conference's priorities. Presently there are a dozen Native priests, 50 sisters and eight religious brothers.

The Condons are not the only Catholics who have recognized the enormous potential for vocations that exist within Indian families. Francis Cardinal Arinze, The Holy Father's Secretary for Interreligious Dialogue attended last year's Tekakwitha Conference and gave an encouraging keynote address.

"You need more Native American priests!" he exclaimed. "In every age and in every culture, the Church needs those who will sacrifice themselves



Participants from more than 100 tribes across the nation gathered at the conference to reaffirm their dignity and their unity with all Native American Catholics.

Photo by Donna Davis



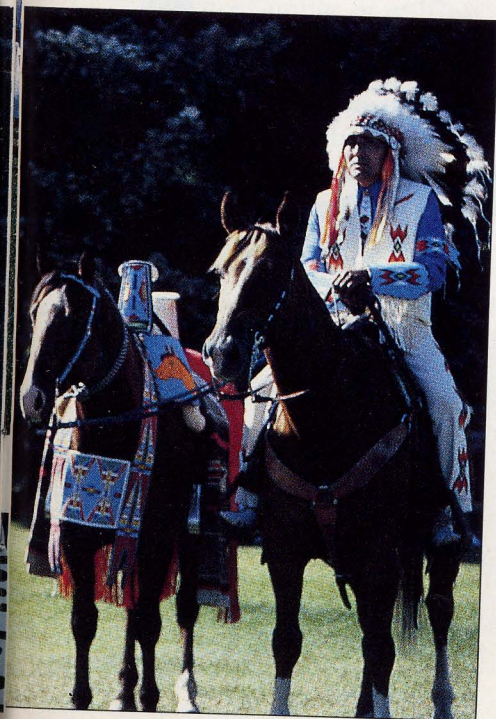
totally as priests and religious."

The Cardinal noted with pleasure that there are now two Native American bishops, Bishop Donald Pelotte of Gallup, New Mexico, and Bishop Charles Chaput of Rapid City, South Dakota.

The Native Association of Religious and Clergy, which was formed by Indian priests, sisters and brothers in the Tekakwitha Conference, is studying various ways to attract more Native American Catholics to the priesthood and religious life.

"Talk to your children and grandchildren about vocations to the priesthood and religious life," urged Father Emmett Hoffman, who emphasized the importance of the family in encouraging greater numbers of vocations. "Only when we have many Native American priests and religious, will the Sacred Circle be complete."

Catherine Walsh is Assistant Editor of St. Anthony's Messenger Magazine.



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If your parish is unable to meet your immediate needs for a Mass, please consider sending your intentions to Extension.

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