

July Signpost

for the

GOOD RED ROAD



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.

Direction

Summer

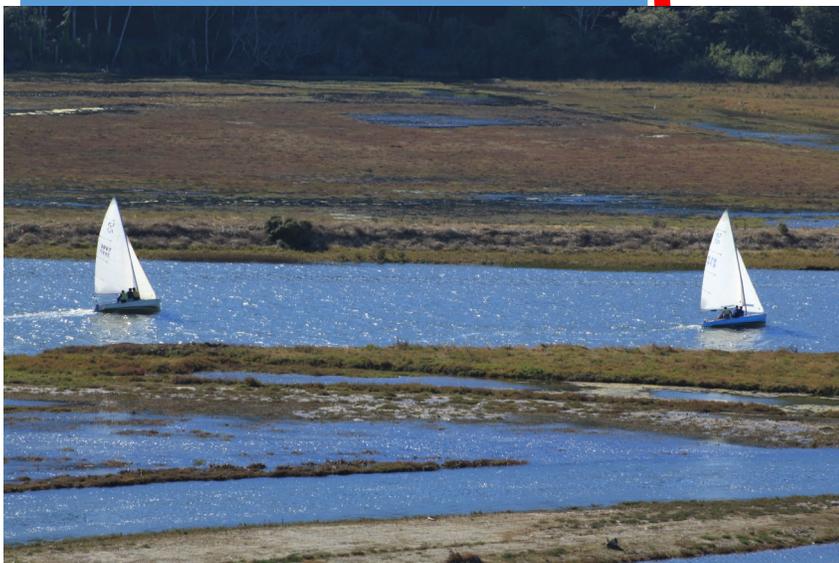
South

White

Sin/ rage/ anger/ lust

**Fruits of the Holy Spirit/ Patience/
Peace/self control/**

**Gifts of the Holy Spirit/ Wisdom
Knowledge**



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
onto this circle.

St. Juan Diego

Saint Juan Diego, is the first canonized indigenous American saint. The canonization connects to some very important concepts in Catholic Native Ministry.

The Bridge

Saint Juan Diego's vision of Our Lady of Guadalupe focuses on the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Catholics in North America. The Blessed Virgin Mary's appearance as an Indigenous woman is the bridge of Christ from Jerusalem to the Americas. By her appearance, she unites Christ with the challenges of the Indigenous communities, the historical trauma, and the Indigenous narrative. It is through this encounter that healing and reconciliation are possible. When the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego as an Indigenous woman, the very essence of Christ becomes manifest throughout all cultures of Indigenous lands and peoples. Also, Saint Juan Diego being the first Indigenous in the Americas to be called a Saint reminds us that Christian holiness and sanctity is just as much an Indigenous virtue as all other peoples of the world.

Faith that Transforms

Saint Juan Diego's encounter with the Blessed Virgin Mary also gives relevance to the profound spiritual and faith life for all Indigenous. One aspect of most Indigenous cultures in the Americas is the enhanced spiritual aspects of values, experiences, and relationships with the land, family, and tribe.

One of the most important aspects of the contact between St. Juan Diego and the Blessed Virgin Mary is the importance of knowing that the belief in Christ did not transplant or diminish Native spirituality. Faith in Christ fully develops the grace of God that has been present in Native cultures for thousands of years.

I have often stated that faith and grace did not come with Columbus. God's grace, power, and guidance are part of all aspects of Native life. That has been true today as it has been true through the centuries.



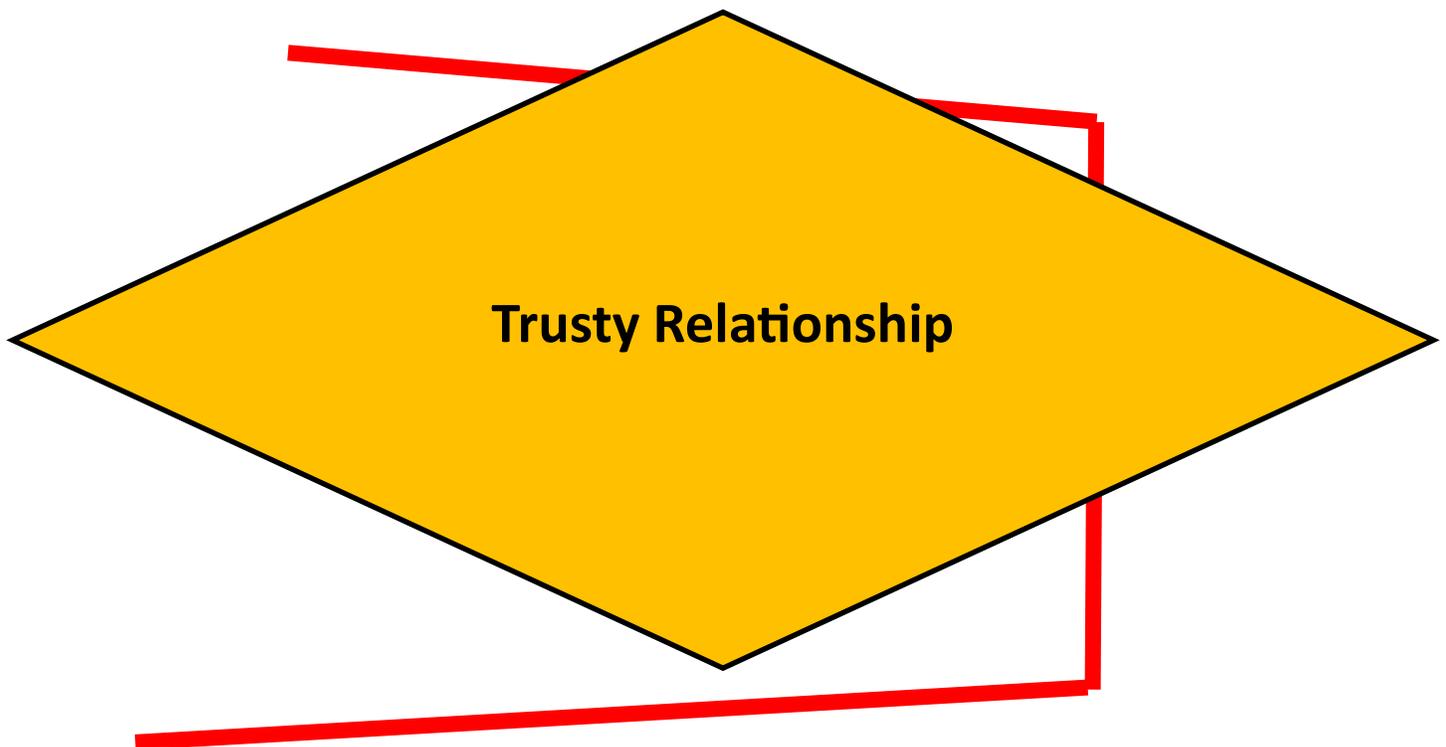
The Tight Connection to the Blessed Virgin Mary

From the very beginning of Catholic ministry in the Western Hemisphere, Saint Juan Diego brought in the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary into a central role in the faith life of Native Communities. The healing and compassionate love of Our Lady of Guadalupe is part of the words that she shared with St. Juan Diego. These words echo through the centuries and have been a comfort especially to those who have faced hardship and tragedies.

The Future of Catholic Native Ministry

What Saint Juan Diego gives us is his prayers for our Native communities, our faith, and our Apostolic zeal for spreading the message of the Gospel. This reliance on the Community of Saints is an important part of our faith. It also reinforces the common thread of grace that works in all of us, not only for the future Native Saints to be declared by the Church but also for our faith lives. The virtue, passionate faith, and embracement of the perfect love of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Saint Juan Diego resonate with our Church's Natives both now and for future generations.





Trusty Relationship

One of the greatest problems with the Trusty relationship that Natives have with the Federal Government is the adjudication and control of Native Land. By Federal statute, the assets that are made by Native lands are to be controlled and adjudicated by the Federal Government.

Historically, the assets developed by Native land have not been passed on to the tribes that they belong to. Many times the funds are just added to the budget of the Interior Department.

After numerous lawsuits in the last few years, they have remitted a small portion of the funds that Natives should be entitled to. Along with Federal funds being provided to buy back checkerboard land. Intuitional controls were also put into place to make sure that funds go directly to Native tribes.

Although the Federal government has been held more accountable to the funds from Native lands, the centuries of fiscal abuse have not been fully addressed.

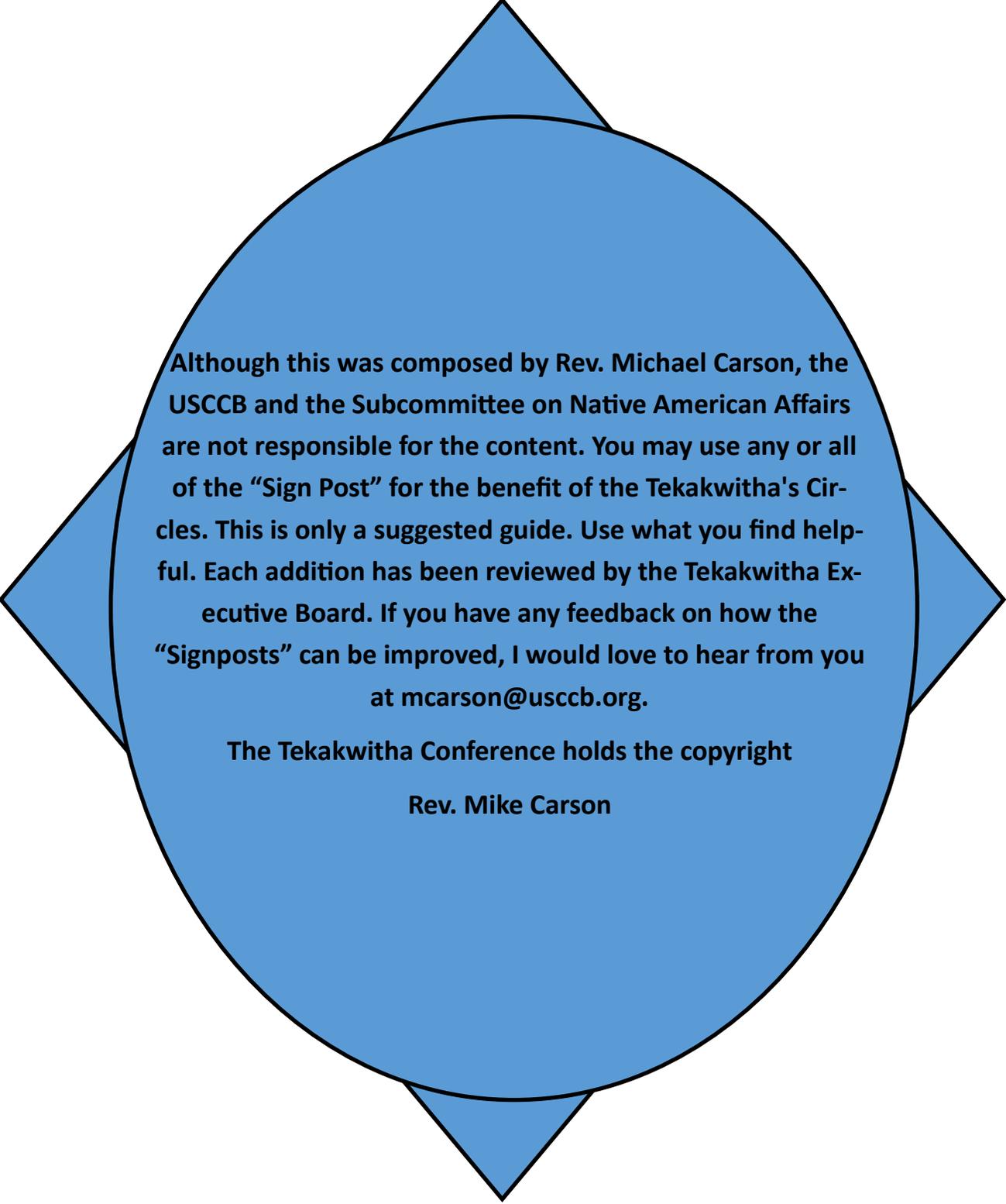


Closing prayer from the Black and Indian Mission Office:

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.



Although this was composed by Rev. Michael Carson, the USCCB and the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs are not responsible for the content. You may use any or all of the “Sign Post” for the benefit of the Tekakwitha's Circles. This is only a suggested guide. Use what you find helpful. Each addition has been reviewed by the Tekakwitha Executive Board. If you have any feedback on how the “Signposts” can be improved, I would love to hear from you at mcarson@usccb.org.

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Rev. Mike Carson