



STATEMENT BY THE ASSOCIATION OF NATIVE RELIGIOUS AND CLERGY
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ANRC Records, Series 1

The Association of Native Religious and Clergy met this week. Saint Kateri has given us a new vision. We want to share it and our future direction with you. Since 1971, our Association has met annually with a twofold purpose: to discern the spiritual direction of our lives and to follow God's Spirit moving among our peoples. We have had the privilege of visiting many Reservations. We have seen the spiritual power of our people and have experienced their hospitality.

In 1976, we were the only national Native organization that the Catholic hierarchy could turn to for help during the Eurcharistic Congress. Our contribution: Native prayers, liturgy, and spiritual leadership was a blessing for us and all who participated. Papal Legate Cardinal Knox, serving the Congregation of Rites, was Rome's representative to that Congress. It was at this time that he and the Universal Catholic Church were introduced to the power of native spirituality.

In 1978, we became involved with the Tekakwitha Conference in Yankton, SD. There we were able to sense the Spirit at work. We could see native leadership developing. We watched the people participating. We could feel our people being healed through the ministry of our Church. Two years later in Denver, the ANRC decided to become more centrally involved in our support of the Tekakwitha Conference. Over the past 10 years, we have shared many individual and collective gifts with this Conference. Our Association has lived this Conference's low and high points, moments of frustration and faith, of struggle and success.

This past week we met at nearby Indian Island. This time our twofold purpose was to discern the direction of our Association and to clarify our relationship with this Conference.

As members of our Church, we feel the present realities in this Conference make it difficult for our membership to share the truth of our traditions. In some areas the hierarchical, ecclesiastical structures no longer hear the people's concerns nor meet their needs. Our people find this a hardship. Our Elders are not being respected or listened to as they speak. Our younger people want to hope again. We need to move in a new direction- a direction that will allow for our own spiritual growth and that of our people. We have fasted and prayed. Saint Kateri has given us a new vision. In this vision, we give our support to existing and developing Regional Conferences. We encourage more areas to developing Regional Conferences. We encourage more areas to create their own

Regional Conferences. And, as God leads us, we will help create a new National Native Catholic Conference.

The ANRC members will no longer be reactors to the Tekakwitha Conference and its Board. Rather, we will be creative initiators and implementors of the Vatican II documents, developing inculturation of the Gospels of Jesus Christ in our many local Native traditions and tribal spiritualities. This is how we will serve you at the regional level. Thus, the Spirit of Jesus will become ever more fully enfleshed among our peoples. As the Association of Native Religious and Clergy, we will continue to be available to the Tekakwitha Conference whenever such is requested of us.

Finally, we are saying, "Saint Kateri." Historically, our Church has officially canonized those whom the people have proclaimed Saints. Kateri is a Saint. Our people believe this. We believe this. We will begin calling her Saint in our prayers, in our letters, our publications and our personal conversation. We invite you to join us as we move forward, strengthening our spiritual relationship with Jesus through the intercession of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.