

# The Sentinel

Volume 6, No. 2

News of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions • [www.blackandindianmission.org](http://www.blackandindianmission.org)

Spring 2016



De La Salle Blackfeet School 7th and 8th graders are pictured in Montana's state Capitol with their teachers and the lieutenant governor. In the background are flags for all of Montana's Indian Nations. (January 2015)

# The Sentinel

## Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions

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*Established in 1874 by the  
Bishops of the United States*

### Mission

To further the interests  
of the Catholic Indian Missions  
in the United States.

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Alaska	Nebraska
Arizona	New Mexico
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Colorado	North Dakota
Idaho	Oklahoma
Louisiana	Oregon
Kansas	South Dakota
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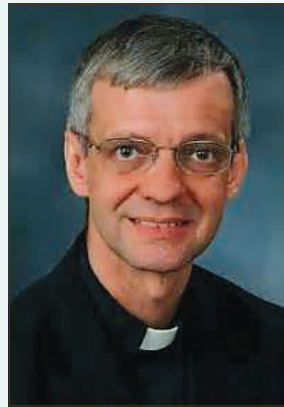
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## *Rev. Carson appointed to Native American post*



Rev. Michael Carson, priest of the Diocese of San Jose, California has accepted the position of **Assistant Director for Native American Affairs** with the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**. Rev. Michael Carson has been a Catholic Priest for the last seventeen years. His background included experience with Native American culture, social justice and education.

Originally from the Louisiana Choctaw Tribe, Rev. Michael Carson is second generation Choctaw. Along with his Masters in Divinity at the Franciscan School of Theology (Graduate Theological Union) he has also earned a Masters in Education Administration from Santa Clara University. He has been involved with long term strategic planning for the Department of Catholic Education in the Diocese of San Jose, and has just begun volunteering with the Diocese of Gallup in their Office of Catholic Education.

Rev. Michael is the co-founder of California People of Faith Working against the Death Penalty (CPF), an interfaith ecumenical organization that aims to abolish the death penalty in California. Personally, he has been ministering to inmates on Death Row San Quentin, California for the last twenty years. Along with his anti-death penalty work, he is the chaplain of the Pro-Life Council of the Diocese of San Jose. He has been volunteering at Juvenile Hall San Jose California, for the last eighteen years. Rev. Michael is also involved with the South Bay Mentoring Coalition to mentor youth in the South Bay area.

For the last eight years, along with being Pastor in San Jose, Rev. Michael Carson has been volunteering his time over the summer at Christ the King Parish in Shiprock, Navajo Nation, New Mexico. In this capacity, he has been doing workshops, programs and ministry with the parishioners and staff in the Navajo Nation. Responding to the real and pressing needs of local communities, he has helped organize services and relief efforts for the poor in the Navajo Nation. Rev. Michael has also given symposiums in California on the people, places and history of Native American Culture in the Southwest.

In this year of Divine Mercy, Rev. Michael Carson looks forward to working with all missions, churches and schools to bring together culture and faith. It is that union that the Divine Mercy of Christ can be found. The quest for the union of culture and faith are what has drawn the Saints before us and our own work in this vital path to divine love. Rev. Michael asks for your prayers as he begins his new position and continues to work toward greater social justice, mercy and faith.

The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions is excited to welcome Rev. Michael Carson in his new position!



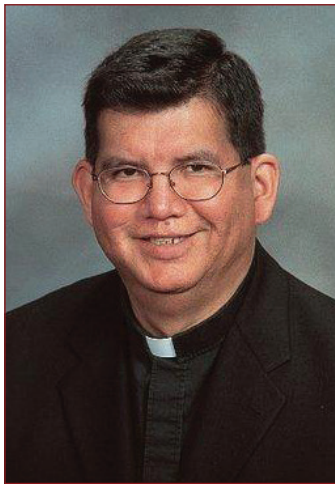


## *From the Executive Director*

# ***Becoming stronger, more vital persons of faith***

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
I am very happy to be writing my second article for the Sentinel Newsletter. I have now been in my role as the Executive Director of the Black and Indian Mission Office for six months. It has been a very blessed and exciting time of learning about the diverse ministries and workings of the Mission Office. I wish to thank everyone for the prayers and good wishes that you have so generously offered to me in these first months. I definitely experience the sustaining power and help of your prayers and I am greatly encouraged by the many kind words and acts of kindness that you have bestowed upon me.

In this issue of the Sentinel we would like to focus our attention on celebrating the many Catholic schools that serve Native American elementary and high school students across the United States. Each year, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission awards more than \$3.5 million to Native American Ministry programs in dioceses throughout the country, and a significant percentage of these grants are awarded to the Catholic schools that serve our Native American young people. Many of the schools we support have been in operation for more than one hundred years and many, if not most, of the schools we support would not be able to operate without our assistance. The funds that are awarded to the Native American ministries and schools are disbursed from the proceeds of the annual National Black and Indian Mission Collection. I would like to offer my profound words of thanks to all of the lay faithful and dioceses who have so generously contributed to this



Father Henry Sands with Ojibwe dancers at the ordination and installation of Bishop James Powers for the Diocese of Superior.

national collection year in and year out. May the Lord richly bless you for your charitable and essential financial contributions to the work that the Lord is doing through the Black and Indian Mission Office.

I also appreciate that I have this opportunity to greet you during the holy season of Lent. Lent is a special time that is given to us each year in which we are invited to deepen our relationship with the Lord through the Lenten practices of increased prayer, abstinence, fasting, penitence and confession of our sins, acts of almsgiving and mercy, and various devotional disciplines. My hope and prayer is that through your Lenten observances each of you will conclude the season of Lent a stronger and more vital person of faith than when you started.

Finally, I wish to convey to all of you my wishes for abundant blessings and great joy as you celebrate Easter, the greatest feast in the Christian calendar. Christ, by means of his passion, death and resurrection has delivered us from our bondage to sin; has destroyed the hold that death has on all of us; and offers to us the promise of new life, both in this world and the next. May we who will celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord with great joy be delivered from our sins and raised from the dead by the life giving Spirit of Christ, who is our Lord and Savior.

Yours in the Resurrected Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Henry Sands". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr. Henry Sands



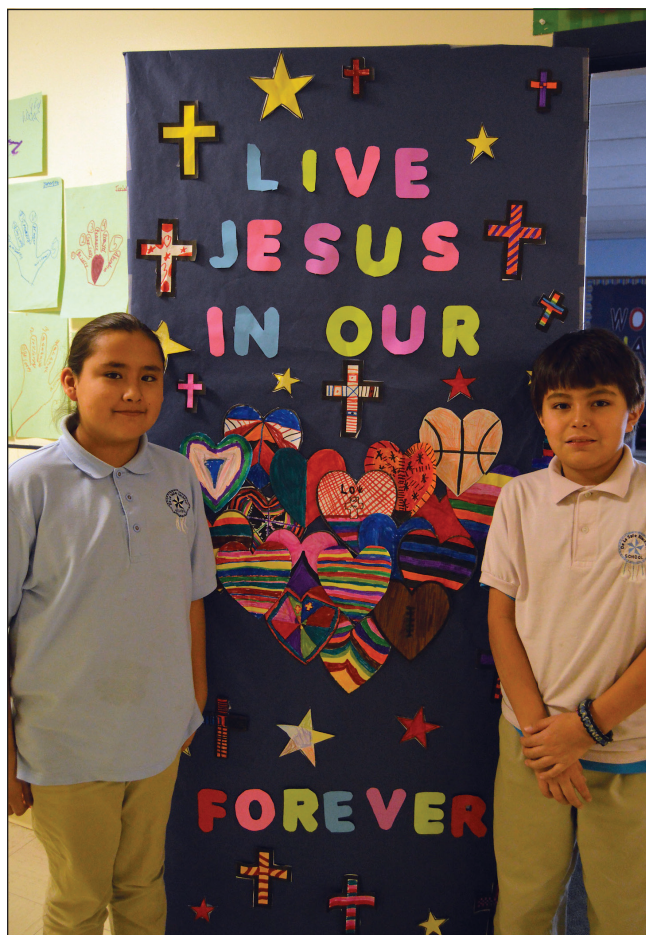


# Catholic Schools Week

This February, Catholic schools across the United States participated in Catholic Schools Week. From January 31<sup>st</sup> to February 6<sup>th</sup>, the National Catholic Education Association hosted a celebration of Catholic education with the theme “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.” Many schools that serve Native American students celebrated this week with masses, open houses and special activities.

## De La Salle Blackfeet School

DLSBS hosted a variety of events including school-wide Masses and Prayer led by students, a Random Acts of Kindness Campaign and a Family Lunch. Students also had the chance to compete in a door-decorating competition, a Scavenger Hunts, an essay contest, Bingo Night and an art contest. The school ended the week with a “Students versus Faculty” Basketball game and Talent Show, where students could share their talents with the whole community.





# Catholic Schools of Fairbanks

It was a fun week of activities for the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks! Events included an all school Mass, all school prayer chain, canned food and sock drives and lunch with students' families. During the week, the CSF staff also performed a dance with the cheerleading team as a community building activity.





# Catholic Schools Week



## St. Mary's School

SMS ended their week celebrating families and greater community with their traditional Brown Bag lunch. Families, personal friends, and community friends of St. Mary's School filled the gymnasium to enjoy a simple lunch while visiting and celebrating.





# Science Fair!

St. Francis of Assisi School in Lumberton, NM held their annual Science Fair on Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>! Students in grades three through eight submitted a total of **45 projects** for the fair. The winners of the Science Fair will compete at the Regional Science Fair. This Science Fair, and many other academic opportunities offered by the St. Francis of Assisi School, helps to provide a faith-based education with high academic standards to their students, over 85% of whom are from the Jicarilla Apache Reservation.



# 15th Anniversary

This year, De La Salle Blackfeet School will be celebrating their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary! To commemorate 15 years of providing **Catholic education on the Blackfeet Reservation** in Browning, MT, the school will be holding service projects and class trips. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade will learn about wildlife, geology and the National Parks Service



after high school of the eleven graduates from the class of 2015 are successfully pursuing a college education!



when they travel to Yellowstone National Parks. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade plans to visit Chicago and the University of Notre Dame campus. These college visits help students to succeed — nine

# School Updates

## Hands-on Learning at St. Mary's

St. Mary's School in the Archdiocese of Kodiak, AK, is looking forward to a **Sea Week and Ocean Science** spring curriculum. Students will learn from local scientists, even visiting the Fisheries Technology Center in early April. Students at St. Mary's have studied local flora and fauna, visiting a local refuge to dissect owl pellets. This focus on hands-on and community learning is an integral part of St. Mary's School,



which seeks to educate the whole child, and to nurture the divine in every child.

## Did you know?

**Cooperative learning** takes place when students work in small groups to learn through positive participation and community building. Staff members at the **Catholic Schools of Fairbanks** recently attended Kagan training to learn more about cooperative learning. The Catholic School

of Fairbanks believes that cooperative learning fits in with their mission, that every child matters and has something to contribute.





# Turtle Mountain Family Week



What better way to break up long winters than with two weeks of fun and exciting activities? **St. Ann's Mission among the Chippewa and Metis** held a two-week long celebration of family and community during the **33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Turtle Mountain Family Week**. This series of community events is aimed at coordinating local activities with the Church.

Lasting from February 14<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>, these two weeks have been received with great enthusiasm by the community. The first part of this celebration is School Week, where the community comes together to celebrate and support St. Ann's School, a tuition-free school open to any child in the area. After this week

is Community Week, in which bonding activities and gatherings take place.

Activities included a daily prayer or blessing, Open Houses, a Community Award Banquet and a "Sliding Day." On February 20<sup>th</sup>, families from the St. Ann's Mission grabbed cardboard boxes to sled down a local hill by the St. Ann's Gym. Talk about an exciting way to take advantage of the Montana winters!

The current principal of St. Ann's School, **Alan Mehrer**, was one of four individuals who received the **Community Professional of the Year Award** at the 2015 Community Awards Banquet for his volunteer work at St. Ann's Mission.



# Welcome Bishop James Powers!

Since 1885, the School Sisters of St. Francis have provided a constant presence among the Ojibwe tribe on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation in northern Wisconsin. By operating St. Francis Solanus School—the only Catholic school in the entire county—the sisters live out their mission to “teach as Jesus did.”

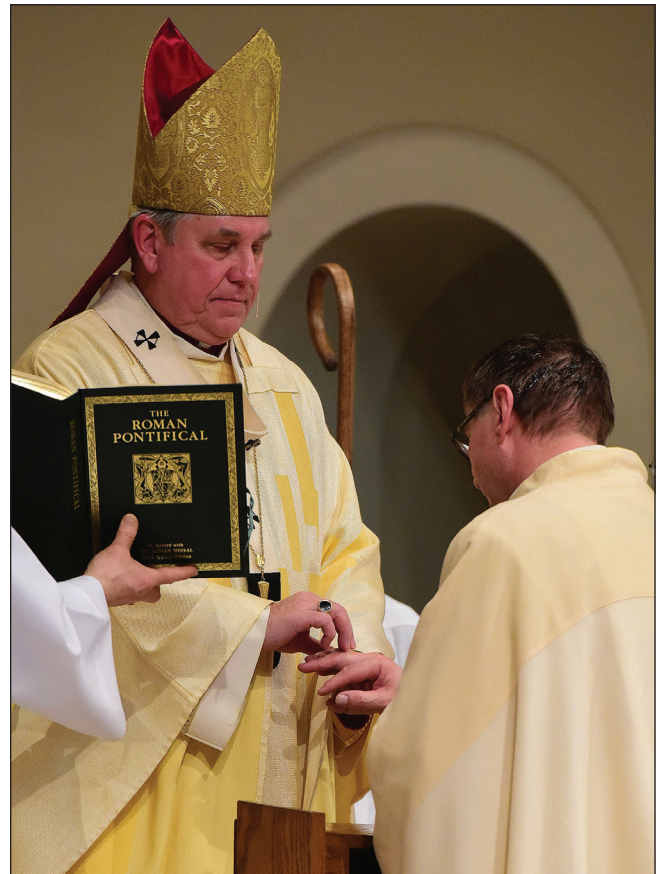
As such, prayer and the sacraments are central to the sisters’ mission. Recently, St. Francis Solanus students prepared for the celebration of the ordination and installation of Bishop James Powers for the Diocese of Superior. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the students signed an Ojibwe prayer petitioning for special blessing for their new bishop, Bishop James Powers for the Diocese of Superior, a ceremony attended by our Executive Director, Fr. Henry Sands.

At St. Francis Solanus Mission, appropriate Ojibwe prayers, dances, and customs are frequently paired with liturgical celebrations. For example, the Feast of Corpus Christi incorporates an outdoor Eucharistic procession to three wigwam altars decorated by various local families. At each wigwam, students dance the Cedar Bough Dance, play a flute song, and sign a prayer to the beat of a drum. Afterwards there is the Benediction and then a traditional feast.

A non-tuition school, St. Francis Solanus School



relies on continued donations, particularly grants provided by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. All funds go directly to school expenses and ensure that the School Sisters of St. Francis will remain a constant presence among the Ojibwe for many more years to come. The School Sisters of St. Francis thank you for your continued prayers and support!





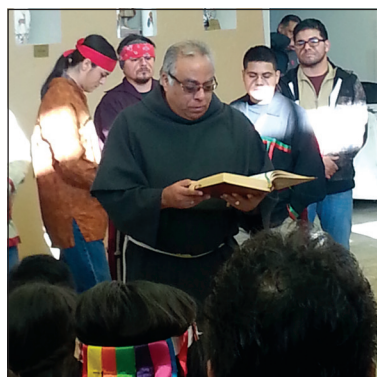
# ‘Present Among the People’

The Catholic faith in El Paso, TX, dates back to 1680, with the arrival of the Pueblo community. Today, in the diocese of El Paso, Texas, the **Tigua Native American Ministry**, led by director Mike Lara, ministers to the blend of the culture of the Yselta del Sur and their sense of Catholic faith. Serving thousands in the El Paso area, the Tigua Ministry seeks to be truly “present among the people,” fostering continued spiritual growth while respecting the diversity of the Yselta people.

This harmony of Native and Catholic spirituality was seen clearly during the **Feast of the Holy Innocents**, held on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The Yselta community honored their children on this feast day and celebrated the passing down of tradition. Beginning with a procession of the children to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, the Yselta then held a Catholic service, during which the children were blessed by Fr. Miguel Briseños. The children later performed a Yselta dance, which was taught to them by their parents and the rest of the Yselta community. During this feast, the Tigua Native American Ministry was present, and gave the children a gift of a prayer book.

Another exciting event for the Diocese of El Paso was the **Feast and Procession of Our Lady of Guadalupe**, held on December 12<sup>th</sup>. In conjunction with the larger Catholic community, many members of the Yselta community joined the Diocese of El Paso in a procession through El Paso in honor of Our Lady. Over 500 people participated in the procession, including the Kateri Circle. Following this procession, the Diocese held a Mass, celebrating this important feast day with the Eucharist. This Mass incorporated elements of the Yselta spirituality, including the preparation and smudging of the altar, as well as the Eagle Dance following the Mass.

The harmony of Native and Catholic spirituality shines through in the Diocese of El Paso’s Tigua Native American Ministry among the Yselta people. By being present among the Yselta people, the Tigua Ministry continues to foster the coming together of two cultures into one celebration.







# ‘Sustaining Our Native Culture’

## *Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair*

During the first week of February, St. Paul’s Mission Grade School, located on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Hays, Montana, participated in the Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair. This celebration had a variety of activities and contests. Each school in the area sets up booths in accordance with a particular theme. The overall theme of this year’s Mid-Winter Festival was “Sustaining Our Native Culture.” The Fort Belknap Reservation is

St. Paul’s Mission Grade School earned the First Place Plaque for their booth, which was designed and created by students. St. Paul’s has been serving the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine communities on the Fort Belknap Reservation for 129 years, seeking to provide their students with an excellent education, as well as the gift of Catholic spirituality. The school actively teaches respect for oneself and for others, with service events aimed at helping students recognize the needs of other people in the world. This award from the festival is an exciting accomplishment for St. Paul’s Mission Grade School!





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