

ST. ANTHONY

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Tekakwitha Conference

Native Catholics Rising to New Life



Future of Catholic Schools ■ Sister Wendeline's Home ■ Be a Triumphant Survivor

ST. ANTHONY

APRIL 1989 MESSENGER VOL. 96/NO. 11

From the Editor

For many Native American Catholics the Tekakwitha Conference is a source of spiritual renewal. Assistant Editor Catherine Walsh explains the conference. And through her, members share with us their traditions and spirituality.

Eighty-one-year-old Sister Wendeline Burkhard, O.S.B., is now in her third career. M. Elaine Dillhunt, O.S.B., writes how the group home Wendeline runs for developmentally disabled adults enables them to hold down jobs and find a measure of independence.

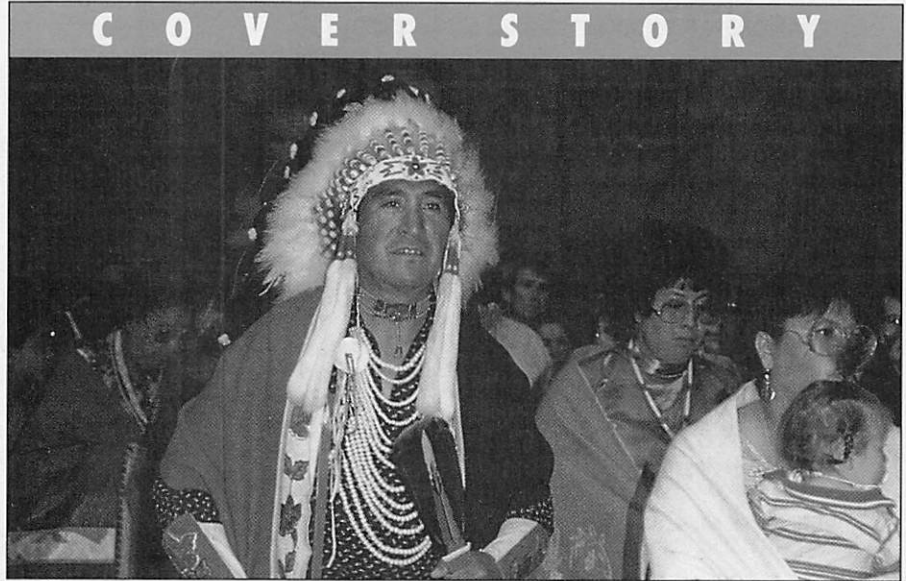
Bishop Francis D. Schulte, head of the U.S. Catholic Conference Committee on Education, has said a future without Catholic schools is unimaginable. Jan Dunlap reports what Catholic educators are doing to put their schools on a sound financial basis and plan for their future.

Through Mary Fay Bourgoon, clinical psychologist Ann Kaiser Stearns shares what a prisoner of war, a man who lost his arm and a mother whose daughter was murdered can teach us about triumphantly surviving a personal crisis.

When Stearns talks about how to survive personal crises, she could be giving advice to the grieving hero in Anthony DiFranco's short story.

Peace and good!

Norman Perry



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NATIVE CATHOLICS: 'RISING TO NEW LIFE' THROUGH THE TEKAKWITHA CONFERENCE

Native American Catholics worship, celebrate and build up the Church at the annual Tekakwitha Conference. Their special spirit is revealed in profiles of three Tekakwitha participants: Father John Hascall, O.F.M.Cap., medicine priest; Genevieve Curry, an active laywoman; and Burton Pretty On Top, who attended Pope John Paul II's World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi. Text and photos by Catherine Walsh

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COVER PHOTO BY CATHERINE WALSH Burton Pretty On Top joins in an intertribal dance at Tekakwitha powwow.



Burton Pretty On Top and his wife Eleanor (holding grandson Charlie) join in a Tekakwilha powwow dance.

NATIVE CATHOLICS

'Rising to New Life' Through the Tekakwitha Conference

Native American Catholics worship, celebrate and build up the Church at the annual Tekakwitha Conference. Their special spirit is revealed in profiles of three Tekakwitha participants: Father John Hascall, O.F.M.Cap., medicine priest; Genevieve Curry, an active laywoman; and Burton Pretty On Top, who attended Pope John Paul II's World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi. Text and photos

by Catherine Walsh





(Left) Clifford "Tanty" Diaz, a Cupeno Indian from the Pala Reservation in California, shares a laugh before the Grand Entry Procession. (Below left) Patrick Camacho, William Callaway, Sr., William, Jr., Maria Dolores and Helen Ruth Callaway came to the Tekakwitha Conference from the Cabazon Reservation in California. (Below) Tekakwitha Conference president Father John Hascall, O.F.M.Cap., dances during the youth Mass.



"I have such a beautiful feeling in my heart tonight," declares Vernon Lane, a Lummi Indian from Washington State, during the opening ceremonies of the 49th annual Tekakwitha Conference. "It is so wonderful to be here together as Native Catholics! The Tekakwitha Conference is one of the greatest organizations in Indian country right now."

On August 10, 1988, over 2,000 Native Americans arrived at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, for the Tekakwitha Conference. They came from all over the United States and Canada: Pueblo and Navajo Indians from the Southwest, Sioux Indians from South Dakota and other plains states, Mohawks from New York, Eskimos from Alaska, Carrier Nation Indians from British Columbia. Over 100 different tribes living on the "Great Tur-

tle" of North America were represented.

After registering for the conference and checking into dormitories, nearby hotels and campgrounds, people donned traditional dress for the Grand Entry Procession. As tribe after tribe walked behind colorful banners from the university football stadium into Breeden Fieldhouse, it was clear what the Tekakwitha Conference has become: a national grassroots movement of Native American Catholic laypeople together with the sisters, priests, brothers, deacons and two Native bishops who minister with them.

It was not always that way. The Tekakwitha Conference was founded in 1939 in Fargo, North Dakota, as a local support group for missionary priests ministering to the Indians. Despite its being named for Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk woman who converted to Catholicism and died in 1680 at age 24, the conference did not include Native Americans or women as members for many years. It was a low-key organization whose annual



meetings were often not well attended.

Inspired by the U.S. bishops' *Statement on American Indians* in 1977, the Tekakwitha Conference was revitalized under the direction of the present executive director, Father Gilbert F. Hemauer, O.F.M.Cap. Besides acknowledging the need for respect of Native American culture and traditions, the bishops' statement called for dialogue with the Indians themselves.

Only a few Native Catholics were present at the crucial 1977 meeting of the Tekakwitha Conference. A decade later, however, over 10,000 Indians were to greet Pope John Paul II when he spoke at the Tekakwitha Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, on September 14, 1987. During the years in between, the Tekakwitha Conference was incorporated as a nonprofit organization, a national center was established in Great Falls, Montana, and a steady rise was seen in Native leadership and ownership of the conference—and the Church.

"Rising to New Life" was the theme of the 1988 Tekakwitha Conference. In keeping with that theme, Native Catholic lay leaders like Vernon Lane publicly shared their personal faith journeys—and how the Tekakwitha Conference has empowered them. Among the keynote talks given was that of newly ordained Native Bishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M.Cap., on inculturation, "the process by which we become fully Indian and fully Catholic in this Church of ours."

Native Catholics also met together as one body for daily liturgies and prayer services, for an Indian powwow and fashion show. Other events that were heavily attended included the healing service, a ceremony honoring the elders and a candlelight procession for world peace conducted by the Native deacons and led by the children. The annual one-mile "fun run" drew people of all ages.

At the center of Breeden Fieldhouse—where most of the general sessions were held—stood a statue of Kateri Tekakwitha, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980. Native Catholics throughout the United States and Canada hope Blessed Kateri will be canonized one day soon. Many fervently believe that the miracle needed for her cause is currently taking place: the growing unity of Native Catholics as a result of the Tekakwitha Conference.

One day during the conference, people broke into small groups and caucuses according to region. Each group discussed questions posed by the Tekakwitha Conference leadership about the strengths and weaknesses, hopes and dreams, of Native Catholics and the Church. In a comfortable setting, participants could air such concerns as the need for more Masses in Native languages, less paternalism in the Church and greater pride and self-esteem among themselves.

Another day, conference participants were hard-pressed to choose two workshops from a wonderful variety of choices. Popular workshops included "Gospels and Native Teachings Through Storytelling," "Satanism and the Occult—Is It for Real?" and "Native Diaconate Ministry."

During a "free" period each evening, participants could attend meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, Alanon, Alateen and Adult Children of Alcoholics, as well as an Ultreya meeting (part of the Cursillo movement tradition). Or they could just relax and socialize with fellow conference participants before the evening's events began. For many people, friendships made and renewed—as well as the chance to learn more about one another's tribal traditions—are among the most enjoyable aspects of attending the annual Tekakwitha Conference.

Native American Bishop Donald E. Pelotte, S.S.S., celebrated Mass on the last day of the conference. Afterward, he and Bishop Chaput read aloud a vision state-

ment of present and future goals within the Tekakwitha Conference developed by participants in attendance.

"As Native Catholics, we are encouraged by the recognition of our Native cultures, traditions and languages in the Roman Catholic Church," began the statement. Among other things, it called for more Native bishops and leaders, appreciation for the gifts of Native women, better religious education programs and more effective means for dealing with alcoholism and substance abuse in Native communities.

Even before they departed from the 1988 Tekakwitha Conference, people were already discussing the 50th anniversary of the conference that will take place in Fargo, North Dakota, in August 1989. That celebration will truly be one that is of, by and for Native Catholic people, for it is they who now *are* the Tekakwitha Conference. Non-Indian missionaries who have played a major role in developing the Tekakwitha Conference, such as Father Hemauer, will also be honored.

Perhaps the best way to understand the spirit of the Tekakwitha Conference is to meet three Native Catholics who have been deeply involved with it during the past decade: Father John Hascall, O.F.M.Cap., Genevieve Curry and Burton Pretty On Top. Their stories are told on the following pages.

Father John Hascall: 'Priest and Medicine Man So My People May Be Strong'

Father John Hascall, O.F.M.Cap., is used to the question: How can you be both a priest and a medicine man? For the Ojibway Indian, the answer is simple. "This is what makes me a whole person," he says on several different occasions during the 1988 Tekakwitha Conference. "This is what makes me such a loving person." His roles as priest and medicine man "complement each other," says Father John. "I am priest and medicine man so my people may be strong."

President of the Tekakwitha Conference since 1986, Father John maintains a hectic pace during the annual conference. He conducts the Grand Entry Procession, the healing service, the sunrise and youth Masses and a workshop on fundamentalism. He sandwiches in a meeting with the Tekakwitha Conference board of directors. With his

guitar, rich baritone voice and lively manner, Father John has no problem getting everyone to sing the Lord's praises during daily morning prayer in the fieldhouse.

During the healing service and the liturgies, Father John uses medicines of different Native tribes: sweetgrass, cedar, sage, tobacco, corn pollen, eagle feathers. He tells those attending the Sunrise Mass that "the Eucharist, the body and blood of Jesus, is the strongest medicine I could ever give you." He reminds conference participants in his homilies and talks that "we must be true to ourselves as



Father John Hascall

Native Catholics. We must be true to everything God has given to us."

Father John Hascall, 47, has spent most of his adult life learning to be true to himself as a Native Catholic—and teaching other Native Catholics to do the same. One of 10 children born to an Ojibway mother and Cherokee-Irish father in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, John was baptized into the Catholic faith when he was eight days old. His family was poor but found meaning in practicing their Catholic faith and Native spiritual traditions.

When John was 14, he moved 400 miles away to a high school seminary in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. "For four years I managed to hide my fears," Father John wrote in a recent Tekakwitha Conference Newsletter. "As I look back, I can see how I hid who I was."

During most of his years of formation as a Capuchin, "I left all that I had learned in the forests of the North on the back burner," recalled Father John. He often lived "in silence and fear" as cultural sensitivity in the Church—a gift of Vatican II—had yet to make real inroads in his community. One day, however, a fellow Capuchin told John that it was O.K. for him to be who he was. Encouraged, John went to the director of clerics and received permission to pray in the way of his people.

After his ordination as a Capuchin priest on October 19, 1967, Father John returned to his reservation on the Michigan/Canadian border. He carried with him a dream of helping his own people. The initial response he received was the first of many tests of his vocation during the next decade.

"I faced a people who had given up our Indian ways and who, in fact, feared me and the medicines of our people. It was as if I were a 'pagan' priest," said Father John.

Although he was soon accepted by his people, Father John had many misunderstandings with non-Indian priests and laypeople in the diocese. Meanwhile, he began to doubt whether he had the right to practice his Native traditions as a Catholic priest. From 1974 to 1977, "the most difficult years of my life," Father John often contemplated "leaving the priesthood, religious life and Christianity to go the Indian way." It was a time when he suffered from heart trouble and the debilitating disease of alcoholism. He felt "worthless."

When Father John finally got "so tired of fighting and looking for my own answers," he experienced the liberating breakthrough of God into his suffering. Through a series of insights, Father John realized anew that the God of Moses had *always* been with Native Americans—and with all people. He realized that Jesus, too, had been with Native Americans and all people from the beginning. After all, Jesus *was* God and *had always been* with God as the Second Person of the Trinity! Therefore, Jesus is "a part of every culture" and is incarnate in every culture—including that of Native Americans.

"I resolved never to leave my priesthood, my religious life, Christianity," said Father John. "I would strive from within the Church to teach the Church [what it means to be Native Catholic]. Through the years that followed, God has given me the privilege to be able to



put things together, to see myself as one person totally Native, totally Christian, as medicine priest. Jesus is my center in all things."

Father John served as a pastor to Ojibway and other Native Catholics in northern Michigan for nearly 20 years, through Holy Name Parish in Baraga and several mission churches. He has been pastor of St. Charles Mission on the Crow Reservation in Pryor, Montana, since last July. For two years before coming to St. Charles, Father John did not have a parish. In his capacity as president of the Tekakwitha Conference, he traveled instead throughout the North American continent and ministered to Native Catholics wherever he went. During his travels, Father John discovered that many people still have difficulty allowing Jesus Christ to speak through their Indian cultures and traditions—despite the supportive teachings of Pope John Paul II and the Church.

"A lot of us are afraid to do that yet because we're afraid of our traditional ways," Father John says during his workshop on fundamentalism. "The greatest healing we need as Native Catholics is to overcome our fears, especially fear of being who we are."

Much of that fear has its roots in history. "For a long time, the Church told us that our traditional ways were pagan," comments Father John at the beginning of his talk. "When the missionaries came over to our land and came in contact with our ancestors, they saw people doing 'strange' things—dancing, piercing themselves, undertaking severe fasts, offering tobacco. They often thought we were worshiping alien gods like a tree or the sun. Many times they had us burn our medicine bags."

The Catholic Church has come a long way since its early years among the Indians. At the annual Tekakwitha Conference in 1983, Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Pope's personal representative to the United States, publicly apologized for the Church's past mistakes and insensitivities in its evangelization of Native Americans—and smoked the peace pipe with Father John and other Tekakwitha Conference priests and members. Smoking the peace pipe is a special honor for all involved.

Unfortunately, many Protestant fundamental churches on reservations throughout the United States and Canada today are repeating mistakes of the past.

"Don't condemn the Pentecostals who come on our land and say you've got to burn your medicine bags or

throw them away," Father John urges his audience. "We've got to respect them because that's our Indian way. But we've also got to *teach* them what our sacred medicines and traditions mean to us."

Father John believes that Native Catholics must continue to educate non-Indian Catholics, particularly those who minister with them. "Our Indian way of looking at God is totally different than the European way which has been heavily influenced by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas," he says. "We call God 'Mystery' in many of our Native languages. God is greater than anything we could ever understand, or define."

Native Americans' understanding of God is influenced by their concept of their place in creation. "As Native people, we're not *over* creation," emphasizes Father John. "We are *part* of creation. The four-legged, the two-legged, those that swim, those that fly, those that grow from the earth as medicine, as food, are not under us. They are equal to us." Thus, in Native theology—as in some Eastern religions—God "speaks through all of creation" and cannot be limited.

At the Tekakwitha Conference's summer institutes, Father John occasionally expounds upon the above themes. He has taught catechist training workshops and been involved with the annual three-week program for those beginning ministry within Native communities entitled *Basic Directions in Native Ministry*. Father John is also a member of the Native Association of Religious and Clergy.

In September 1989, Father John Hascall's term as president of the Tekakwitha Conference will be completed. But he will continue to go among the Native Catholics of North America ministering, healing and celebrating the Eucharist. Meanwhile, he is training several young adults to be medicine people—spiritual leaders who will minister and heal in the name of Jesus Christ.

Genevieve Curry: 'We Have a Lot to Offer As Indian People'

"If we would use our Indian spirituality, we could really change our communities and the world!" says Genevieve Curry.

"But often we are timid and we hold back. We have a lot to offer the Church."

Genevieve Curry, 55, is anything but timid. A vivacious, articulate Colville/Spokane Indian, she was raised on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho. Genevieve has nine children (one of whom died in infancy), 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She and her husband, Ken, live in Spokane, Washington, where they have been active in the Renew group of St. Aloysius Parish.

"I told my husband we should join the Renew group because we have a lot to offer as Indian people," says Genevieve. "I felt it was about time we stepped forward and let the non-

(Left) The Nak'azdli people of the Carrier Nation, British Columbia, gave Father John Hascall a moose-hide vestment and danced for him during the conference in gratitude for his previous visit to their reserve. (Below) Sadie Pablo and Marisol Damian of Arizona enjoy playing together.



Indian community know about our Indian ways and our Indian spirituality."

Genevieve recalls sharing with the group that some Native Catholics from Montana have readily come to Spokane to help Native Catholics there put on Cursillo and Pilgrimage weekends. "They were just really amazed at how the Indian is so giving and loving in our care for one another," she says. In an interview with *St. Anthony Messenger* during the Tekakwitha Conference, Genevieve muses: "My mom used to say, 'The door is open. Anyone who comes in the area is welcome and can make themselves at home.' The Indian way is when someone comes to visit you, you give them a gift when they're leaving, maybe a beadwork or whatever, in appreciation that they did come."

Her participation in Cursillo and Pilgrimage weekends is an important part of Genevieve's life. "Pilgrimage is for alcoholics and drug addicts," she explains. "It's like Cursillo except you reflect more on yourself. You learn to forgive yourself and love yourself." Pilgrimage was founded by a priest in Browning, Montana, who felt that chemically-addicted Native Catholics needed something more than Cursillo and Alcoholics Anonymous. Genevieve knows all too well the havoc chemical dependencies have wreaked on Native Americans; her first husband was an alcoholic.

The annual Tekakwitha Conference, says Genevieve, is where she gets much of her spiritual strength. "These conferences are absolutely life-giving!" she exclaims. "I get fed from everyone here." Genevieve has been to every national conference in the past decade except one. The year the conference was in Spokane, she was the master of ceremonies. In recent years, she has actively encouraged other Native Catholics to attend the annual meeting so they can have "a really powerful experience."

During the school year, Genevieve is busy tutoring Indian students under a Title IV program. Her students are mostly from single-parent families and range from kindergarten to the sixth grade. "When they first come to me, they are usually very shy and timid," she says. "I always tell them, 'You are so beautiful and so smart!' I like to build up their self-image and self-esteem."

Around Thanksgiving or during an Indian Awareness Week, Genevieve is often asked to give talks at different schools on Indian culture and traditions. One of her first tasks is to point out that "Native Americans are not all the same," says Genevieve. "Non-Indians tend to think that we all have the same customs and traditions. But we don't." In her talks to students, Genevieve will



Genevieve Curry

ask them to identify with some *Indian* experiences of American history:

"I get very emotional," she says softly. "I tell the kids that this is a touchy subject for me. And I ask them, 'How would you like it if somebody would come and knock on your door and say, 'We like where you live. We want your land, your home. You're leaving; we're pushing you someplace else''? I tell them that that's what happened to the Indian people, my people. We were never given any choice."

Genevieve recalls as a child asking her mother why some relatives lived on reservations different from theirs and having the history of the reservation system explained to her.

Too many Native people have gotten away from "the old ways of storytelling and gathering together, having fun and playing games," believes Genevieve. Today, she says, "Indian children are getting all this stuff on TV about brand-name jeans, etc. But they often can't afford such things. And then they think they're really not worthwhile."

Raising her own children off the reservation in Othello, Washington—a Hispanic and white community—wasn't easy, says Genevieve. "But I always told my children what my mother had told me—that all people are equal, no matter what color skin, no matter whether they are rich or poor. No one is better than anyone else because God created us all."

Today, Genevieve believes not only that no one is better than anyone else, but also that in the Church we all need one another. "Native Catholics need to come forward to our non-Indian brothers and sisters and show them our gifts and talents," she says. "Then we can *all* renew our life together!"

Burton Pretty On Top: 'Bridge Builder' for World Peace

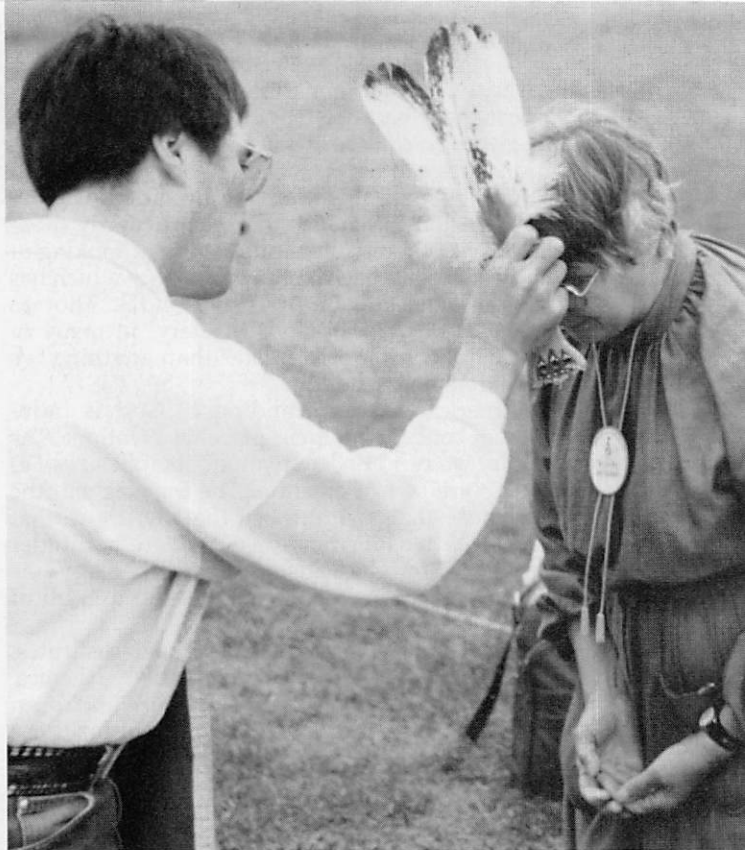
When leaders of the world's religions gathered in Assisi, Italy, for the World Day of Prayer for Peace in October 1986, Burton Pretty On Top, Sr., was among them. He

and his uncle, John Pretty On Top, had been invited by Pope John Paul II to represent the Native peoples and religions of the Western Hemisphere.

"A giant step forward for all Native Americans" is how Burton describes the Assisi event during a Tekakwitha Conference workshop on Native spirituality. "We are rising to new life, we are being accepted," the Crow Indian tells his audience. "The world is now taking a second look at us."

A practicing Catholic and a follower of traditional Native spirituality,

Burton Pretty On Top recalls the Pope's words to him in Assisi: "Tell your people that God loves them very much. Tell them to practice their traditions and sacred



ways as they are all good.'" In an interview with *St. Anthony Messenger*, Burton speaks highly of the Pope. "This Pope, John Paul II, has done more for Native Americans than any pope previous to him. He has reaffirmed us as part of the human race."

Burton Pretty On Top, 41, was brought up by his grandfather in the mountains of the Crow Reservation in Montana. They lived in a one-room cabin with no electricity or running water. Many an evening, Burton sat and listened while his grandfather told him Indian stories. "These stories were so fascinating to me; they just captivated my whole attention," he recalls. "I remember in particular the stories of the relationship we have with Mother Earth and with *Ak-bah-dah-dia*, God our Father."

When Burton entered the public school system at the age of seven, he did not know a word of English. "I was in trouble for the next three years just trying to learn the language," he says. "Not only that, I was confronted by kids my age who were making fun of me because they considered me a 'mountain man.'" In the isolated mountains where his grandfather was a game warden, Burton had known few playmates his own age. But he soon proved himself to his classmates through his abilities as a fistfighter and as an athlete.

In high school, Burton made a name for himself as an all-conference fullback in football, all-conference forward in basketball and track-and-field star. "My ambition at that time was to be like Jim Thorpe, the Indian decathlon champion," he says. Burton received numerous college scholarships and chose Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, because of its "small community atmosphere." Family responsibilities interfered with his academic and athletic pursuits, however. Married at 18, Burton left college after a year and a half to drive trucks full-time to support his growing family.

Burton has been working for the same trucking company for 20 years now. He and his wife, Eleanor, will celebrate their 23rd wedding anniversary in August. They have six children and one grandchild.

Living off the reservation was difficult emotionally



Burton Pretty On Top

(Left) Burton Pretty On Top gives a traditional Native blessing. (Right) Burton poses with Native Bishops Donald Pelotte of Gallup, New Mexico, and Charles Chaput of Rapid City, South Dakota. (Below) Juana Pecos of Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico, relaxes after a water ceremony.



in the early years for Burton. "I wasn't able to deal with the racism," he says. "It made me very bitter because I felt like I was equal to anybody." Once again to prove himself, Burton resorted to using his fists. One night when he was 27, however, he got into two fights—and hurt a man so badly that the man had to be taken to the hospital.

"When I awoke the next morning, the first thing that came to my mind was, 'How bad is he?'" recalls Burton. "And I started thinking, 'You stupid guy, what are you doing with your life? You've gotten away from the teachings of your grandfather. You've gotten away from the things that are so important to you. You're messing up your life and it's going to cost you your family.'"

Burton's confrontation with himself led him to commit to the Catholic Church. Although he had been baptized when he was three years old and his grandfather was a Catholic, Burton had not grown up in the Church. So he took instructions for a year at St. Dennis Church on the Crow Reservation.

"Even though I knew of God, even though I knew of my Indian spirituality and my grandfather's teachings, there was something missing from my life," Burton says. "But when I read the Gospels, the missing link came into my life and that's a man we call Jesus Christ."

His "conversion" to Catholicism, says Burton, "reversed my whole outlook about life. It literally just changed me. And the teachings of my grandfather became much more visible to me."

During the past 13 years, Burton and his family have been very active in their parish on the Crow Reservation—an hour's drive from their home in Billings. Burton is a member of the parish council after serving as its president for seven years. He is also a lector, a member of the Franciscan Secular Order and involved with the Cursillo movement.

A "major blessing" in his life, says Burton, is "being associated with the National Tekakwitha Conference." The unity it fosters among Native Catholics from different tribes is one of the conference's greatest accomplishments, he feels. "Through the National Tekakwitha Conference, I'm able to sit next to a Lakota Sioux Indian,



a Cheyenne, a Blackfeet, an Arapaho, whomever. We all hold hands and pray together. The love and the unity are so strong!"

Since he began attending the annual meetings of the conference in 1981, Burton has become one of its Native lay leaders. "Through the National Tekakwitha Conference, I'm able to go all over the United States with my ministry to my Native brothers and sisters and also to the non-Indian," he says.

"My people have suffered," continues Burton. "I have seen the hurt and brokenness of my people, the injustices we have experienced over the past 200 years in this great country of ours. I need to tell my people that it's time to let go of the hurt. This is a new beginning for us. We're rising to new life as Native Americans."

In his talks to Native Catholics, Burton encourages them to "be proud of who you are as a people" and to "teach your children our Indian ways, languages and spirituality." His ministry with his people, so many of whom are financially struggling, makes Burton feel in solidarity "with all the other poor people on the face of this earth—the voiceless ones." It is not surprising that Mother Teresa is one of the people he admires most. "Meeting her and praying with her at the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi was such an honor!" he exclaims.

In reaching out to the non-Indian, "I feel like I'm actually a bridge builder," says Burton. The World Day of Prayer for Peace convinced him that "all races are one; we are one big human family." World peace and peace in our communities will occur when we recognize this family unity, when we begin to respect and understand one another, he believes. One of the ways Burton honors

(Below) Dani Madrigal, Brandy, and Lela Sandaval enjoy the youth Mass celebrated by Father John Hascall. "I love you; you're beautiful!" says Father John in his homily. "I want you to know that God has made you just perfect and that God will always love you."



the commitment he made in Assisi to work for peace is by educating non-Indians about Native American culture and spirituality.

Burton has followed Native spiritual traditions all of his life. On different occasions, he prays with his sacred pipe, purifies himself through the sweat lodge, leads peyote religious ceremonies in a tepee, and undertakes severe fasts in the wilderness for world peace.

"My mission on this earth is to serve people, to work for peace," explains Burton. He is motivated by "my love for the Creator" which in turn causes him "to love all my brothers and sisters throughout the world." His four-day fasts without food and water in the Crazy Mountains of Montana are part of his Indian way of praying for and deepening his commitment to world peace.

Practicing his Native spirituality helps Burton to be a devout Catholic. "To me, my Indian spirituality and my Catholic faith enrich each other," he says. "And together, they blend into one."

Through his national public speaking ministry, Burton shares with Indian and non-Indian alike his work to protect the environment and the human rights of the Native American people. He wants to ensure that the resources of Mother Earth are preserved for future generations. That American Indians will always be able to practice their traditional religions freely—a right guaranteed by the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act passed by the U.S. Congress—is also one of his goals.

"Thirteen years ago, I wouldn't have believed I'd be doing these things," says Burton. "It's just the way God is using me today."

"God will use simple and ordinary people like myself to teach others about his great love for them," reflects Burton Pretty On Top. "God loves us all. Remember we are God's children—the sacred keepers of this land and of each other. Know that in heaven there are neither Hindus, nor Christians, nor Muslims, nor Jews nor Native Americans. All are children of God." ■

Catherine Walsh is an assistant editor of this publication. She graduated with distinction in history from Colby College in Waterville, Maine, in 1984. Attending the 1988 Tekakwitha Conference, she says, was "one of the most powerful spiritual experiences" she has ever had.

Poetry

TEKAKWITHA'S TRAIL

*In His footsteps
Kateri trod—
gently as a fawn
at evening,
shyly as a hare
in the sedge
and surely as an elk
on the ledge—
her trillium-lined
thorny trail to God.*

—Jean Gier

AN ESCAPED SOUL

*"At this time I was sharing an
office with a colleague who often
wished aloud that he was a Jew."*

—Bernard Malamud

*Hasidic tales
turn me on,
and play with
my mind for hours.
I love the way
they tell of man,
but speak of God.
Born in 1939,
I wonder if I'm
a soul escaped
from a persecuted Jew,
for as I read
Holocaust tales
it seems like a form
of déjà vu.
My dreams each night
take me to a train ramp
where I see myself
stepping out of a boxcar,
and when I look up
the sign reads:
Auschwitz.*

—Benedict Auer, O.S.B.