BUREAU of
CATHOLIC INDIAN
MISSIONS

Established 1874...
Over a Century
of Service
HISTORY OF THE BUREAU

More than one hundred years of dedicated service to the American Indians - that is the record of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. It was June 14, 1881, when the Bureau legally began to exist under the general incorporation laws of the United States.

The Bureau's history has been well preserved, and what took place during those years has attracted the attention of many scholars. Today historians and researchers continue to publish books based on Bureau accounts.

From the earliest days of the colonization of America, the Catholic Church has been interested in Indian people. There is a great tradition of evangelization and pastoral care that began with the Spanish explorers and continues to the present day.

EARLY MISSION CONCERN

Father Issac Jogues is a good example of the Church's concern; his petition to be a foreign missionary and devote ministry to the Indians of the New World territories was granted shortly after ordination as a Jesuit priest in 1636. By 1641 Father Jogues was already well known in New France, as the vast stretches of American land were called, for his zeal and energy in preaching to the Chippewas.

Through the years, from the time of those pioneers to the established rapid advancement of the population of the United States westward, the Church kept pace with the movement of peoples and at the same time was deeply concerned with the evangelization of Native Americans.

Another early missionary was the Belgian born Jesuit Father Peter DeSmet. From the novitiate of young Peter in 1823 at Whitemarsh, Maryland until his death in 1873, the dominant interest and concern in his labors was the salvation of the Red man. The travels of Father DeSmet on the rivers and primitive trails of the mid-West and West were so extensive.

In the book, THE CATHOLIC INDIAN MISSIONS AND GRANT'S PEACE POLICY, 1870-1884, (Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1953) Peter Rahill describes at length the very unstable relationship between the United States Government and the Indians as the West was settled:

"No branch of the national government is so spotted with fraud, so tainted with corruption, so utterly
worthy of a free and enlightened government, as this Indian department."

He also commented on the good qualities of Indian people when he wrote:

"An 1869 decision of the New Mexico Supreme Court declared that less—'vastly less'—crime would be found among a thousand of the worst of the Pueblo Indians than among an equal number of the best Mexicans or Americans in New Mexico'... In every pueblo is erected a church, dedicated to the worship of God, according to the form of the Roman Catholic religion, and in nearly all is to be found a priest of this Church, who is recognized as their spiritual guide and adviser. The criminal records of the courts of the Territory scarcely contain the name of a Pueblo Indian. In short, they are a peaceable, industrious, intelligent, honest and virtuous people." (Rahill p.22)

The Catholic Church has held the Indian people in high regard and the record of the Pueblo Indians is just one reason for that respect. Father DeSmet, known for his fair dealing with the Indians and for his enthusiastic love for them, was often called upon to fulfill "his priestly role of the Ambassador of the Prince of Peace." (Rahill, p.24)

The well known Sioux Chief, Sitting Bull, had sworn to kill the first white man he saw. Father DeSmet the priest, alone, went to the mighty chief amidst 5,000 war-inflamed Sioux in their Southern Dakota camp. It is said Sitting Bull told his braves he had never seen a more courageous person than DeSmet. It was solely due to DeSmet's influence that a treaty of peace was signed on July 2, 1868, by Sitting Bull and other chiefs. (Rahill, p. 24)

With this brief background, then, we can look at two different movements — one a general determination to advance the Catholic Indian apostolate, the other, a reaction to the application of government policy that led to the establishment of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

Around 1859 two brothers, Archbishop Frances Blanchet, the first Vicar Apostolic of the Oregon Territory, and Bishop Abraham Blanchet, Bishop of Walla Walla and Nesqually, Northwestern Territory, saw many Indians in need and were greatly concerned. The bishops focused their attention first on the apostolate to the Indian, seeking to bring them the Good News of Jesus Christ, and at the same time wanted to look after their material wants. They became aware also of flagrant injustices that were the daily lot of the Indian people. Wanting to be supportive and helpful, the bishops approached Archbishop J. Roosevelt Bayley of Baltimore to ask for the appointment of a representative in Washington who would petition the government for help through legislation for the Indians.

Some years later, a new and radical top level action, promulgated as a solution to the Indian problem, would promote counteraction that created a greater urgency for the establishment of a Catholic Indian Bureau.

NO PEACE WITH "PEACE POLICY"

On December 5, 1870 President Grant, in what seemed to be a move based on frustration over the failure of governmental agencies and agents to relate satisfactorily with the American Indian, issued a very controversial statement that became known as "Grant's Peace Policy." It was the following paragraph, so often cited, that stirred up the lingering controversy:

"Indian agencies being civil offices, I determined to give all the agencies to such religious denominations as had hitherto established missionaries among the Indians and perhaps to some denominations who would undertake the work on the same terms -- that is, as missionary work."

President Grant established a group known as the Board of Indian Commissioners that would advise the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior. But because of the corruption of his political appointees and public scandals, he decided to turn the Indian jurisdictions over to the various Church groups who in turn would select the agents and staff people for the Indian reservations.

The Peace Policy grievously slighted Catholics and caused an uproar from veteran missionaries, the Indians themselves and national Church leaders. The reasons for their outrage were many, several were more serious than others.

"The Board of Indian Commissioners was composed of prominent Protestant laymen. While it was not intended that the members should be formal representatives of their Church bodies or nominated by them, the connection of the Board with the Protestant
Churches was close. There was not a Catholic on the Board and there was no indication that one was seriously considered - despite the long interest of the Catholic Church in Indian affairs. It was just taken for granted that such a religiously oriented public body would be Protestant." (THE CHURCHES AND THE INDIAN SCHOOLS 1888-1912. Francis Paul Prucha, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 1979, p.1)

From 1870 then, all the INDIAN agencies were to be subject to the Board's rule. The agent was expected to administer the civil affairs of his agency in harmony with mission work. All the employees, as well as the agent, were required to be, by precept and example, missionaries in the work of educating and Christianizing Indians. The schools, too, were to be used for inculcating denominational religion and morality.

As understood under his Indian policy, President Grant promised to give the control of each agency to the Church that was at work among the Indians there at the time this policy was inaugurated. It was not the President's intention to give agencies to all the Churches, but only to those that were then at work among the Indians and, as he said "perhaps," but only incidentally to others, i.e., when there had been no missionary work of any kind done previously at the agency. Each agency was to be given to the Church that was there at the time. It was not the number or power in each Church that was to decide, but the extent and duration of its missionary work. Thus, the largest and wealthiest Church might be entitled to but few agencies, perhaps to none, while the smallest and poorest might be entitled to the largest number. The President's Policy was thought to be humane and Christian. No one could heartily oppose it, because while it intended to protect and help the Church of each agency with means and power, it also contemplated leaving their action perfectly free.

But the policy of President Grant was not carried out according to its spirit and letter. Churches other than the Catholic claimed 15,000 Indians. The Catholic Church knew it had 106,000 Native Americans as Catholic and the Church should have had the right to work with at least 38 agencies. The Indian Bureau, though, granted control of only eight Agencies to the Catholic Church. Thus the Church lost control of 30 agencies that came under the President's Policy. The 30 Agencies belonged to Catholic jurisdiction by right -- because the Catholic Church was there at the time of the inauguration of the Policy and the local Indians were Catholic. Missions that for decades had been exclusively Catholic and Indians who professed the Catholic Faith (to the number of 80,000) scattered in these agencies, were given to the charge of different denominations in whom they had no confidence and whose creeds they did not profess. Catholic priests were forbidden time and time again to go on certain reservations to preach and minister to the Indians. They were threatened with arrest, forbidden to teach or minister in any way to the Indian people and stringent means were adopted to prevent the Indians from attending Catholic worship even off the reservation.

Father Paul Prucha wrote that the Methodists who had relatively little mission work to their credit were assigned 14 agencies. The Orthodox Friends received 10, the Presbyterians 9 and so on down the line through Episcopalians, Hicksite Friends, Reformed Dutch, Baptists, Congregationalists, Lutherans and Unitarians. (Prucha p.2)

It was the obligation of the Church, then, to respond to the threat to its work and concern for the welfare of the Native people. The appeal of the Bishops' Blanchet to the foremost member of the hierarchy at that time, Archbishop Bayley, and the inequitable implementation of President Grant's Peace Policy had sown the seed for the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.

**BIRTH OF CATHOLIC INDIAN BUREAU**

The Catholic Indian Bureau actually came into existence through a letter written by Archbishop J. Roosevelt Bayley of Baltimore on January 2, 1874:

> The Catholic bishops of the United States who have Indian missions within the limits of their dioceses feel that they have suffered great injustice at the hands of the Government in connection with those missions, chiefly on account of false and partisan information sent to the department having charge of these matters. Not being able to come to Washington themselves to correct these misrepresentations and to oppose the plans of selfish and interested persons who are constantly at work there, they have earnestly requested me to select and appoint someone living in Washington with whom they could communicate freely and with
confidence and whom they would enable to place the true state of things before the department.

In accordance with their views and at their request, I have appointed General Charles Ewing of Washington to act as their commissioner for these purposes. General Ewing has already done a great deal in behalf of the Indian Catholic Missions, and is in every way fitted to discharge the duties which will be required of him.

As the Indian Missionary Bishops have not the means to pay the necessary expenses of the Commission, some members of the Catholic Union in New York and elsewhere have generously offered to contribute an annual sum for the purpose and I most heartily recommend the Commissioner and the good work in which he is engaged to their favor and support.

Since 1874 to the present day the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions has been a dedicated companion with the many Religious and Indian people in the Indian community.

A CATHOLIC COMMISSIONER

On January 2, 1874 General Charles Ewing was appointed Catholic Indian Commissioner in the United States and Western Territories by Archbishop Bayley. General Ewing was well qualified for the position because of his influence in official Washington circles, his success as an attorney, personal interest for the sake of the Church and the Native Americans. Ewing was familiar with the Indian situation of the day and many missionaries sought his intervention in dealings with Federal officials.

FATHER BROUILLET ~ FIRST DIRECTOR

Soon after his appointment General Ewing sensed the need for a priest advisor and asked for Father John Baptist A. Brouillet to be released from his duties as vicar-General of the Diocese of Nesqually, Washington Territory. Ewing was granted the request and Brouillet went to Washington and worked with him until his death in May 1884. The General's fearless courage and honesty complimented Brouillet's simplicity and vast experience among the Indians of the Northwest and the developing Bureau made progress as a beneficial office.

In response to Ewing's proposal that a permanent Catholic Indian Bureau be founded, the Archbishop of Baltimore ordered the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in 1879 to be an officially recognized office of the U.S. Catholic Church.

For ten years, until his death, General Ewing rendered invaluable service to the Catholic missions. Whether he was accompanying a delegation of Indians to confer with federal officials or commenting upon the "Compilation of Statutory Law as it affects Indian Reservations," or preparing and presenting the "Petition of the Catholic Church for the Agency of the Chippewas of Lake Superior," Ewing was indeed a man of action. He died suddenly at the age of 48 in June 1883.

THE BUREAU TAKES SHAPE

Encouraged by the stability given to the Bureau by General Ewing and the tireless capable efforts of dedicated directors of the Bureau, the support and leadership of all the bishops of the United States became apparent by a decree of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1884. By it the Bureau was recognized as an institution of the Church and placed under a committee of five prelates: the Archbishops of Baltimore and San Francisco and the Bishops of Portland, Helena and Sioux Falls. To these were added in 1893 the Archbishops of Philadelphia and Santa Fe. The committee laid down rules and regulations for the government of the Bureau and designated additional members.

In 1894 the Bureau, as then constituted, was superseded by a new corporation chartered in perpetuity by an act of the General Assembly of Maryland. The new incorporators were the Archbishops of Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York and the corporate name became "The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions." Since 1935 the Board of Directors has also been the same as that of the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians - presently known as the Black and Indian Mission Office.

In a meeting of bishops interested in Indian affairs called by Cardinal Gibbons in Baltimore, November 14, 1899, Archbishop Patrick W. Riordan, D.D. of San Francisco, offered the following resolution in the form of a motion unanimously accepted.

"That we have entire confidence in the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions: that we use the Bureau for all
Indian business, and through this Bureau transact all such business with the Government, and that the bishops should conduct all correspondence on Indian affairs with Government officials through the Bureau."

Under the guidance of its dedicated directors the Bureau has provided the needed stimulus, enthusiasm and dedication to carry on the ministry of evangelization among the Native American people.

**WORKING WITH NATIVE AMERICANS**

The actual services the Bureau has rendered to the Indian missions are too numerous and varied to describe in any detail. A few examples of the Bureau’s activity: the obtaining of tribal and federal funds for mission schools, the elimination of unfair discrimination against Catholic missionaries and Indians, securing the right of Catholic Indian children to adequate religious instruction, obtaining title to properties used for Church and school purposes on Indian reservations, inducing Religious communities to undertake work among the Indians, publicizing the missions and providing financial aid to them.

**MONSIGNOR STEPHAN ~ 1884-1901**

Monsignor Joseph A. Stephan, known as the "fighting" priest was the second director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions succeeding Father Brouillet May 14, 1884. Differing from Father Brouillet, who was adept at negotiation and compromise, Stephan actively sought confrontation. His zeal for the Indians was unbounded and his courage great.

During the major portion of Monsignor Stephan's administration he was constantly in contact with the Indians throughout the length and breadth of the Western States and Territories. He admired the Indians' simple sincerity and steadfast honor when their promise was given. Believing firmly that the Indian race would be saved through education he fought with all his energy against Government efforts to abolish all "Contract" schools. Though his efforts were in vain he did succeed in postponing the Government's effort to close the schools, never giving in to discouragement even when the situation seemed hopeless. He pleaded with the President of the United States, with Congress, the hierarchy of the Church and with the benevolent among the laity, for legislation, for forbearance, for money, for teachers.

**BLESSD KATHARINE DREXEL**

Katharine Drexel, one of three daughters of Francis Drexel, head of an extremely wealthy family in Philadelphia, as a young girl of seventeen, was deeply moved by the concern of Monsignor Stephan for the Native Americans and decided to work closely with him. She committed thousands of dollars yearly (eventually over twenty million dollars) from her family inheritance to be channeled through the Bureau for the education of Indian students. Influenced further by Monsignor Stephan, Katharine decided her life work should be that of a religious Sister and she became the Foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.

*THE INDIAN SENTINEL* magazine, in March 1941, commenting on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, said that "almost every Indian Mission has shared in Mother Katharine's liberality at one time or another. Her timely and generous aid has often been the salvation in times of crisis." The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions continues to be supportive of many of the Missions and Schools founded by Blessed Katharine Drexel.

Mother Katharine was honored by the Church when she was declared BLESSED by Pope John Paul II at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, November 22, 1988.

On September 12, 1901, Monsignor Stephan was called to his eternal reward. He was buried in the cemetery of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania in compliance with a special request made to Mother Katharine Drexel.

**MONSIGNOR KETCHAM ~ 1901-1921**

WAMBLI WAKITA - Watching Eagle - was a name given to Monsignor William H. Ketcham during the Great Catholic Sioux Congress in 1910. Monsignor Ketcham was the third director of the Bureau serving from 1901 through 1921. Quoting from an account of the Catholic Sioux Congress in 1910 in the annual *INDIAN SENTINEL* of 1911, Standing Soldier, President of the Sioux Catholic Congress, said:

"The eagle hovers over the earth looking, watching and our priest from Washington does the same for all Indians. He goes among them looking out for their welfare, spiritual and temporal. For this reason we
name Monsignor Ketcham, WAMBLI WAKITA, Watching Eagle."

After ordination Monsignor Ketcham was assigned to Muskogee, Oklahoma, a town in the Creek Nation. The territory where he would minister was occupied by Creek, Choctaw, Quapaw, Peoria, Ottawa, Shawnee, Modoc, Wyandotte and Seneca Indians.

Realizing the need to speak the native language to increase his prestige among the Choctaws, Monsignor Ketcham applied himself assiduously to mastering the Choctaw tongue. In 1916, in collaboration with other scholars, he undertook the publication of the first Choctaw catechism and of various prayers and hymns.

Other outstanding achievements Monsignor Ketcham initiated as Director of the Bureau were the revocation of the "Browning Ruling" which had denied Indian parents the right to choose a school for the child, the recognition of the right of Catholic pupils in government schools to attend Catholic services, to receive religious instruction from the priest, and the securing of priests for this work, the use of Tribal Funds for the support and education of Indian pupils in mission schools and the securing of the enactment by Congress in 1909 of a law granting patents in fee simple for the mission and school lands on Indian reservations.

The Society for the Preservation of the Faith among the Indian Children was established by the Bureau through Monsignor Ketcham's initiative in 1901. (An indulit from the Holy See was granted to the Preservation Society December 1904). The Society had an average membership of 45,000 to 50,000 with an annual fee for the benefit of the Indian missions.

MONSIGNOR WILLIAM HUGHES ~ 1921-1935

Monsignor William Hughes guided the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions through rather calm times from 1921 to 1935. He labored, as did his predecessors, for the advancement of Indian causes with special emphasis on the spiritual life and needs of Native Americans throughout the United States. In 1923 the National Catholic Welfare Conference began to function as a service agency of the bishops and many of the concerns and problems that had needed the personal attention of Father Brouillet, Monsignors Stephan and Ketcham were taken care of by the N.C.W.C. Nevertheless, Monsignor Hughes worked assiduously for the Indian people,

contributed enlightening articles to the INDIAN SENTINEL and the Bureau functioned effectively.

FATHER BENJAMIN TENNELLY ~ 1935-1976

In 1935 Father John Benjamin Tennyel, Sulpician, was named the fifth director of the Bureau. He continued the activities of the National Indian Mission Apostolate. A scholarly man and professor of Theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, Father Tennyel edited the INDIAN SENTINEL and wrote extensively of the Catholic Indian Missions. His reputation and pleasing personality were remembered by veteran missionaries and the Indian people. Father Tennyel died October 18, 1981 at the age of 91 years.

MONSIGNOR PAUL A. LENZ ~ 1976-

During the bi-centennial of the United States in 1976 Monsignor Paul A. Lenz, a priest of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was appointed the sixth director of the Bureau. Monsignor continued to advance the evangelization programs of Father Tennyel and the other directors. His background included years of parochial work as a pastor, service as Propagation of the Faith Director, theology teacher at St. Francis College, Loretto, Pennsylvania and Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, Pennsylvania and a missionary in Paraguay, South America working with Indians.

In May 1977 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a Statement on the American Indian: Monsignor Lenz was one of the principal drafters of the Statement.

For over 90 years the Commission for the Catholic Church Among the Colored People and the Indians, together with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, has had a particular responsibility to support efforts to advance the life of the Church among American Indian communities. The historical success of this work reflects the generosity of Catholics in the United States. We are particularly encouraged by the recent revitalization of these organizations and hope to see their efforts renewed and redoubled in coming years.

In 1983 at the Tekakwitha Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Monsignor Lenz was named an honorary
member of the Lakota Sioux Tribe and given the name Thunder Cloud.

TEKAKWITHA CONFERENCE

Of special note was and continues to be the Board's support and active promotion of the National Catholic Tekakwitha Conference. The Conference was first called into session by the Most Reverend Aloisius J. Muench of Fargo, North Dakota who later was named a Cardinal of the Church. In 1977 there were 48 conference participants at the annual meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota. In 1980 in Denver, Colorado Cardinal John Krol and 23 members of the hierarchy joined in prayer and meetings with 640 representatives at the 41st annual conference.

Now over two thousand delegates annually attend the Tekakwitha Conference gathering. The Conference rotates sites - one year in the West, the next in the East and the third year in the mid-West. Conference meetings have been held in Bozeman, MT; Collegeville, MN; Albuquerque, NM; Syracuse, NY; Seattle, WA; and Tucson, AZ for example.

As a result of the interest there is a full time Tekakwitha Conference Office in Great Falls, Montana. Participants, lay and religious from all corners of the United States, are now dialoguing through the Conference on Native American liturgy, ministry, family life, catechesis, advocacy, inculturation, youth and education. Workshops provide among other things assistance with alcohol and drug prevention.

The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions has been responsible for the growth of the Tekakwitha Conference. Catholic Native People of the Americas and those working with them, hierarchy, religious and lay, are united in a national voice to speak for the spiritual and social needs of the Indian community. The various tribes in the United States, numbering over 600, are united and give encouragement to one another through the Conference.

In many Reservations, city, urban and other jurisdictions there are groups meeting monthly known as Blessed Kateri Circles. The purpose is to assist the Native Americans to strengthen their Faith and participate more actively in the Church.

A monthly Newsletter from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions is now uniting Indian, Eskimo and Aleut families. The Newsletter is sent to Catholic Native Americans, to those working with them and to interested friends. From 1902 until 1964 the INDIAN SENTINEL was published by the Bureau, and now is an archival source of many helpful and interesting historical accounts.

NATIVE AMERICAN BISHOPS

On May 6, 1986 the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, honored Native Americans when the first priest in the United States of Native American ancestry, Father Donald E. Pelotte, was ordained as the Co-Adjutor Bishop of Gallup, New Mexico.

Bishop Pelotte, member of the Abenaki Tribe of Maine, was the Provincial of the Fathers and Brothers of the Blessed Sacrament Community when named bishop. Later he became the Ordinary or bishop in charge of the Diocese of Gallup. A distinguished scholar, Bishop Pelotte is the author of the popular book on the life and trials of the Jesuit, Father John Courtney Murray.

On July 26, 1988, a second Native American, Father Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M., Cap., Superior of the Capuchin Religious Community in Denver, Colorado, was likewise honored by Pope John Paul II and was ordained bishop of the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota. Bishop Chaput, enrolled at birth into the Kansas Potowatomi Tribe, is well known as a theologian and a retreat master.

Both Native American bishops are well respected by the Indian people and are very active with the National Catholic Tekakwitha Conference.

BUREAU ARCHIVES

In 1977 the Bureau began a program in cooperation with Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Century old records filling over 100 file cases as well as 4,000 photos were moved from the Bureau Office in Washington to the archival department of the Marquette University Library. They were processed, cleaned, filed, put into acid free containers, indexed and filmed. Since then many churches, schools and missions have sent their Indian records to Marquette. Now there exists a tremendous deposit of Indian information available to scholars and researchers. Several books have been written using the Bureau archives.
CATHOLIC INDIAN SCHOOLS
At one time the only schools for the education of Native American pupils were those of the churches and religious organizations. The Catholic Church through the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions established and sponsored hundreds of schools. When the Bureau of Indian Affairs became an arm of the Department of the Interior of the federal government, an extensive education program organized schools for the Native students all over the United States. The Bureau still assists many Catholic primary and secondary schools with financial aid.

BLESSED KATERI TEKAKWITHA
The many volumes and issues of the INDIAN SENTINEL and the NEWSLETTER of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions give detailed accounts of efforts of the directors, in dialogue with officials at the Vatican, for the recognition, without any doubt, that should come to the Indian maiden.

On the 22nd of June, 1980, in a very impressive ceremony at the Vatican, Kateri was declared BLESSED by Pope John Paul II. The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions was in charge of the arrangements for the many Native American and other pilgrims who traveled to Rome and the Vatican.

At an impressive ceremony, November 16, 1992, attended by over two hundred and fifty members of the hierarchy, a beautiful new statue of Blessed Kateri was placed in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C. by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. It was blessed by His Eminence, John Cardinal O’Connor, President of the Bureau. Two hundred and fifty members of the hierarchy, many Native Americans and others participated.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY
As in the days of General Charles Ewing, a continual concern for the political, economic, social and religious well being of Native Americans has continued. At times testimony has been given at Congressional hearings in regard to Indian legislation. The Indians gave, in solemn treaties with the United States government, most of their home lands in return for the promises of the United States to provide for their needs through the years ahead. It has been well said, “the Indians have prepaid in the giving of the land on which the United States now rest for their health care, education and social development programs.” Somehow members of Congress often fail to recall the contribution made to the United States by the American Indians and Alaska Natives and need to be reminded of their obligations.

Father Ted Zuern, S.J., as Associate Director of the Bureau, has written the column, “Bread and Freedom...Justice and Faith,” beginning in 1980, for each issue of the Bureau’s Newsletter. He has actively engaged in seeking political, social and economic justice for the Indians as he visits both houses of Congress.

THE FUTURE
Revitalization is the word that may sum up the what has happened in the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in the past two decades. Since the 1977 Statement of the Bishops, sincere efforts have been made to advance programs and there has been a renewed enthusiasm evident in the top ranks of Church leaders involved with the Native Americans.

The Church leader primarily responsible for the revitalization was John Cardinal Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia and President of the Bureau Board when the 1977 Statement was issued. Working with him and with the same enthusiasm were Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York and Archbishop William Donald Borders of Baltimore. Since then other leaders like John Cardinal O’Connor of New York, Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua of Philadelphia and William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore, Board members, have been most supportive of the Native American apostolate and have been advocates of the programs set forth and put into operation by the Bureau Office in Washington.

Over a century of existence - with a history that would need volumes if all the meaningful details could be recorded and put into proper perspective - that is the legacy of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions as it moves along into the future. But let an Indian woman give a final insight into the richness that the Church’s more than a century old history of concern and love for Indian people is still only beginning to tap:

"Every tribe of Indians is unique. Each has its own language, tribal customs, moral code, priorities and each has its own religious life. Before the invasion of
the White people Indian tribes had religious beliefs and practices directly related to their spiritual needs, to their particular mode of life and to the land. Whether in the mountains, the plains, or valleys, their territorial home was a core value to the whole of their lives and was intimately linked to their spirituality. What they all have in common is: 1) a relationship of awe for the Supreme Being; 2) a spirituality that is intimately related to their land, to nature and the whole cosmos; 3) communal tribal experiences of religious expression and 4) ritual.

The Indian concept of religion is all pervasive. The White person may tend to categorize it, associating it with going to church, praying before meals and the like. Not so the Red people. Their lives are integrated and whole, centered on the conviction of the ever present power of the Supernatural One. One can say quite truthfully that religion is their way of life. For them the presence, the spirit of the Supreme Power is everything. (Sister Mary Charles Bryce, O.S.B., Cherokee Indian, in Living Light Journal, Spring 1977).

It can truly be said that for over one hundred years and for many decades after, the Catholic Church has been faithful in bringing the truth and message of the Gospels to the American Indians in every corner of the United States.

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Compiled and written by Monsignor Paul A. Lenz

Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Directors

Father John A. Baptista Brouillet 1874 - 1884
Monsignor Joseph A. Stephan 1884 - 1901

Monsignor William H. Ketcham 1901 - 1921
Monsignor William Hughes 1921 - 1935

Father Benjamin Tennelly, S.S. 1935 - 1976
Monsignor Paul A. Lenz 1976 --

...Over a Century of Service...