

## A Place of Prayer and Reflection to Celebrate Diversity

*We are many parts, we are all one body,  
and the gifts we have, we are given to share.*

*~ Marty Haugen*

Our Saint Mary Catholic Community is united at the core in our faith and as beloved children of God. We are also wonderfully diverse in our cultural heritages, some of our ideas, and in the unique gifts God has given to each one of us. Hospitality is important to us. We strive to be a welcoming community that values, as Jesus does, all who come through our doors. We want everyone who enters to find a spiritual home and a place in our community. Each person enriches our community in a unique way that no one else can. As we connect with and come to know each other better, we strengthen our community which is the body of Christ.

Saint Mary Catholic Community has honored and celebrated the diverse cultures in our community over the years in many ways. For example, we once had a tradition of multiethnic dinners at Epiphany. **Father Richard Francesco** made Italian dinners for us. Last December, **Adam Mendez** and his family cooked an excellent Mexican dinner as we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

To continue and expand on this tradition, a concerted effort is underway to honor and celebrate, with food, art and music, the various cultural heritages that make up the Saint Mary community. **For several weeks, beginning on April 17, there will be a special place in the gathering space to pray, celebrate and learn about Saint Kateri Tekakwitha and Native American culture.** The Saint Mary quilting group is making a star quilt for this place and **Charlotte Kelley** is providing a statue of Saint Kateri and information about her and those who have a special devotion to her. **Her place in the gathering space will be blessed in a special ceremony at Mass on Wednesday April 17.**

Saint Kateri, informally known as Lily of the Mohawks because of her chastity, is the first Native American woman to become a saint. She led a holy, inspiring, courageous life. She is known for her steadfast devotion to Jesus. She took the name Kateri, which is Mohawk for Catherine, after Saint Catherine of Sienna. At

least two healing miracles are attributed to her. She was canonized by Pope Benedict in 2012. She is the patroness of ecology and the environment, people in exile and Native Americans. She died on April 17, 1680. Her Feast Day is July 14.

Around the country there are four national shrines, numerous statues and many schools, parishes and other Catholic Institutions named after Saint Kateri. She has a huge following in the United States and is of particular importance to Native Americans. The Tekakwitha Conference meets annually. People gather in Kateri Circles to pray, seeking to become better Catholics.

**This space will also be available to other cultures to use for temporary exhibits to feature their traditions and special saints. Please contact Dawn at the parish office if you are interested in sharing a cherished tradition or devotion with art, music, food or in some other way. All are invited.**