

The Archival Spirit

February, 2016

From the Chair

Hello everyone,

With the start of a new year, we start new projects and maybe wrap up a few. At DePauw University Archives we have completed one major project and have begun to tackle a new one. The new project involves processing and describing more than 6000 volumes of church records from Indiana's territorial days to the present. I am sure you can all relate to the feeling of seeing a mountain of work ahead, but also the gratification that comes with little victories such as another new finding aid.

The project just wrapped up involves a commercial vendor who could be of benefit to many religious archives. About 18 months ago, DePauw signed an agreement with Ancestry-dot-com to scan and make available several hundred church record volumes. Ancestry has wonderful commercials on television as many of you, no doubt, have seen. But there is truth to this advertising as my wife can attest, having used Ancestry resources to trace her history to an eighteenth century German-American preacher in western Pennsylvania who happens to also be the ancestor of a DePauw professor and author of one of the DePauw Archives' Civil War diaries. What are the chances of that? – pretty good when one considers that Rev. Weaver had 18 children!

Depending on the size of the collection, when Ancestry scans records in an archives, it may send a scanning technician and set up its own equipment on-site.

Later, it provides access to its resources to the host institution by way of an institutional membership to Ancestry.com. Ancestry also provides access to the digital images and records created from them at no cost to the archives. While some faith traditions may not allow records to be distributed in this way, the United Methodist Church has an open records policy and some of its regional (called conference) archives have signed agreements with Ancestry to digitize their records. Despite my cheerleading, I do not have a financial interest in Ancestry and there are some very good competing companies, but I do like to take advantage of opportunities and I like the word, *free*.

The Archivists of Religious Archives Section steering committee will be meeting in February to begin to firm-up plans for our annual meeting including the program and reception. Look for more information in the *Archival Spirit* as well as on the ARCS website. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering or just have questions or suggestions.

*Wes Wilson, Section Chair
DePauw University Archives
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From the Members

Archives and Catholic Canonization Causes

Currently I find myself taking on an unusual role as the keeper of a petition that requests the start of a canonization effort for Nicholas Black Elk (1866-1950), who was a Lakota Sioux Indian holy man and catechist from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. When it began two years ago, Bishop Robert Gruss of the Catholic Diocese of Rapid City approved of the petition drive. Now, at their Pastoral Ministry Days to be held March 14-15 in Rapid City, the fully compiled petition will be presented to him. At present it includes 99 pages with 1,350 signatures from four countries – USA, Canada, France, and UK – and a few more are still coming in.

In December, at the request of the diocese's Native Concerns Office, a related YouTube video was also created, which is now linked to the website of the Marquette Archives:

This video, [The Life and Holiness of Nicholas Black Elk, Our Brother in Jesus Christ](#) (with [illustrated text and credits and endnotes](#)) and a [handout](#), present a variety of resources from many collections and sources in the Marquette Archives and elsewhere.

It is hoped that this will stimulate study of his life in the classroom, since such materials are not readily available in rural South Dakota. Besides related images online, the Marquette Archives also has more materials available as PDFs.

At times archivists are like flies on the wall. Typically they're not key to major events, but they may see a lot of what's going on and sometimes they're well situated to give events a nudge. In so doing, it's amazing how life's events sometimes move in circles.

In 2012, in conjunction with St. Kateri Tekakwitha's canonization, I was asked to do a photo exhibit for the Vatican Museum. As a result, a special invitation was extended to me and my spouse to attend the canonization ceremony held in the plaza in front of St. Peter's Basilica. We made sure to get to our seats early. Then in the crowd, a lost and solitary Native American elder came and sat next to me. We had not met before and I had no idea who he was, but he held a banner that read, "Our Lady of the Sioux Church, Oglala, South Dakota," which piqued my curiosity. I knew it was on the Pine Ridge Reservation, where I had once worked, and I wondered if we had friends in common.

Soon, without introductions, we struck up a conversation. Without providing names, the elder began to describe a photo of his grandfather teaching his daughter – and also this elder's mother – how to pray the rosary. Immediately, I recognized the image he was referring to and who his grandfather was, since I know the Marquette digital collections well and that image in particular. His grandfather was Nicholas Black Elk, the Lakota Sioux Indian holy man and catechist known to many through the book *Black Elk Speaks*. Then this elder said that he wished his grandfather would be canonized too someday. Wow! That statement truly amazed me – somewhat like St. Paul getting knocked off of his horse on the way to Damascus – as I reflected on the extreme unlikeliness of our chance meeting in this international sea of humanity.

I learned that this elder was George Looks Twice, and later, I heard other Native American elders express similar sentiments, that Black Elk too should be canonized. Eventually another elder initiated the canonization petition drive, and asked me to get involved, and in so doing, I met George Looks Twice again. On March 14th at their diocese's Pastoral Ministry Days, he will lead the presentation of the petition to Bishop Gruss.

Mark Thiel
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Quiz-A-Catholic: Religious Entertainment in the Golden Age of Television

Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Ritter established the Archdiocese of St. Louis's Radio and Television Office in October 1954 when KWK-TV (now KMOX-TV) approached him with a half-hour time slot. The first two television programs that the Archdiocese produced were one-year-long educational series focused on Catholic theology and institution.

Quiz-A-Catholic was its third program, a game show loosely based on the television show Twenty Questions. Quiz-A-Catholic ran from 1956 to 1966 and was one of the Archdiocese's longest running shows. It's no wonder – the program regularly featured local and national celebrities, and recurring panelists were good-humored and lovable. The show represents a unique snapshot of this booming era of television. Even more so, it's a testament to the close-knit, small-town feel of St. Louis Catholic culture. Every Catholic from this generation seems to know someone who was a panelist on the show.

In January 2015, Dennis Cavanagh approached the Office of Archives and Records hoping to find footage of his father, Lee Cavanagh. Mr. Cavanagh was a local St. Louis celebrity who hosted television shows for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Dennis graciously offered to foot the bill to digitize every Quiz-A-Catholic episode that the Archives owned. The Archives now has 30 digitized episodes, the majority of which are dated 1956 to 1958, with a few undated outliers presumably from the 1960s.

Cintrex AV, a local media conversion and preservation business in St. Louis, digitized the 16mm films. A few unexpected but not unusual circumstances arose with the films including required splicing, unexpected footage, and vinegar syndrome. While several reels showed signs of vinegar syndrome, only one reel was so damaged that Cintrex AV was unable to extract any footage. Cintrex AV provided DVD copies to Dennis and the Archives paid for extra copies to add to the collection: DVD access copies and H.264 mp4 files to store in our content management software HP Records Manager.

The next step was to go public. The first episode to go online was posted just in time for the feast day of St. Jude Thaddeus on October 28. Starring Danny Thomas in 1961, it spotlights a special introductory interview with him, where he advocates for research and relief for families with childhood illnesses through the founding of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It was, no doubt, one of many public outlets Thomas used to promote the institution that would open its doors in February 1962. Archives staff continue to upload a new compressed version of Quiz-A-Catholic videos on the Archdiocese's YouTube channel ArchSTLmedia about every two weeks.

Don't miss out on this unique slice of Catholic entertainment in the Golden Age of television. Episodes are at: <https://www.youtube.com/archstlmedia>.



How the Game Is Played

Viewers submit Catholic-related subjects via mail in five categories: objects, practices, events, personalities and teachings. Moderated by local radio and television host Lee Cavanagh, the four panelists attempt to guess the topic within 3 minutes using only Yes/No questions. Each episode features a guest priest who provides a brief discourse of the subject after each round. Along with three regular panelists, the fourth spot was open for a guest panelist, which could range from St. Louis laypersons and local personalities to nationally-recognized figures like Danny Thomas, Bob Newhart, Dennis Day and Andy Phillip.

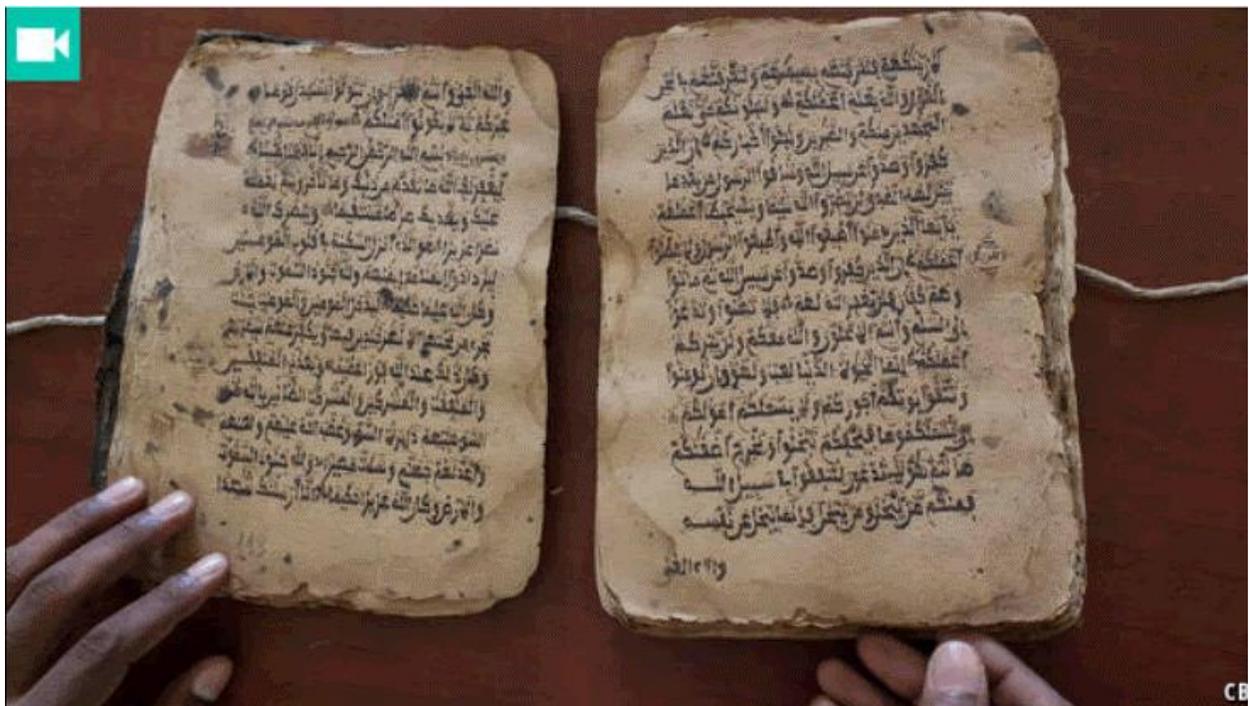
*Rena Schergen
Archdiocese of St. Louis*

In the News

Though a few months old now, this story still offers unusual relevance and inspiration for us as archivists of religious collections.



[*Faith's archivists: Catholic monks in Minnesota preserving Islamic treasures in Mali*](#)



The embedded video is especially good

Postscript

This issue of *Archival Spirit* doesn't reflect well the remarkable diversity to be found in our Section. Articles from all corners of the membership are sought to show what is truly the case. Thanks!