A Pastoral Letter by Black Elk in Šinasapa Wocekeine Taeyanpaha
Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Series 14-1 Collected Publications


This letter refers to the Titanic, the Olympic-class passenger liner that became infamous for her collision with an iceberg and dramatic sinking nearly two years prior on April 14, 1912. Black Elk was familiar with trans-Atlantic travel by steamship from his trips to Europe in 1886 and 1889 (ages 23 and 26). Translated from Lakota to English by Paul Manhart, S.J., 2002.

Announcer.

We have a very fine church indeed: First of all we had a big Thanks, so that is what I shall say, this way: Our church is very large and tall, inside a very large yellow lamp shines, and each day a bell is rung. Yes, my Relatives, it is where you go to and come from home. It is right to examine this house. Though it be dark, it is alright to see with this lamp. And though it be disagreeably hot, it is proper for you to listen for the bell. Since the Catholic Church alone is very large within, there our Lord's Word resides. There is light, this bell, or the priest that show up, so it is appropriate for us to go there and listen to them.

Yes, my Relatives, you know about things of this sort, have seen them, heard of them. You have been instructed in South Dakota as Catholics to strive a bit for this world's honors. And God's honor you do not see much because this is something we will already know.

Men of the United States constructed a very large and fast boat. We made many millions of dollars, so that in a few nights one crossed the ocean. So, great rich men were alone able to do such, and poor men were able to get rich. It was because of great honors that they travelled. They said never would the boat sink.

Yes, those rich men believed it. They did not know what they would come up against. So, one day they struck against something, so that the boat they made sank from blindness, a difficulty that came over them, and their fright was great. There were meantime two priests who were there. Many men in heaven would stop them. And a small boat was there and a tiny one. Yet they were blind and were stopped. Something went on to say this: My God is near to me.

I am near to you. He is near to me. At your cross I now stand. My song is near to me. When that was said they went in. Yes, my Relatives, take a look. There was an accident due to a great honor. The trouble with the world's honor is that the trouble is up above. In worldly honor we twitch. You pay your debts up above when you are up against something. You do not see when you are struck by something large. You wander about, a ghost that will wander about and sinks. There is a grave sin here. Then you will say: "Lord, Lord!" You will say: "That is very troublesome, my Relatives." Desire to be close to our Savior. Desire to stay in our ship. So the Savior says: "For poor men and sinful men I have come." So he speaks to them. In your heart the Savior is born for you. He is such that he has great strength. So he said you will be given something truly the truth. And when God helps you, he wants it to amount to something. Desire to see. That is what should be. So, my Relatives, all about, this is what I announce. Give close attention to it.

My friends, all by grace, I am your friend and shake your hand.

Nick Black Elk Catechist

Source: Marquette University, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records (Series 14-1 General Publications, Šinasapa Wocekeine Taeyanpaha, Box 26 Folder 3, Microfilm reel 19)
FEBRUARY 15, 1914.

Mander son, S. D.
Jan. 6, 1914.

Eyanapa.

Tshipwakan waxji iyona waxse roa unyapí: ne tonseya wopola taka unyapí, nek nece ciem ciem. Tshipwakan unkutasi wapi ne lila taka na lila wakatuya na imbele petiyanje zi wangi lila taka iyonyapí na anpete iyobela riaria wagi karapi. Ho hecel mitakuyepi toki yaipí na yakupi cana tipi kin he akyomwapi kin iyeccefa. Yaku iyonymse na kuselina pase petiyanje, kin he akyomwapi ciem iyeccefa, nakon kute olkielci esas riaria kin he nyagaprapci ciem iyeccefa. Inon Sawaspa Wocziyie ne imala lila taka, imael Iancan unkutasi na Orre nyakka na iyosapí kin he e na riara kin he isin wakaswakan he eni hecel tonkisat ho tanupí amin ciemiyi unyapí iyeccefa na anawinngomtani ciem iyeccefa.

Ho mitakuyepi, leza hecel a sioliyapí na wakasapi na nayonapi na onsapeliyapi hecena esas Same Darios imael. Sawaspa yonip kin maka wowitan kin hecel akitiapi na Wakan tanka to witin kin iyosapí si he their taka wan sioliyapí kete kin le leee. United States wicela kin wan waxji tanka wase kaapí na nakon lila lusa, ke lila mazasa woyawa tanka om on kaapí, heon hanebe conala mikiwana onap oreni hecel wicela wicela tanka kin beza ecei el yonapí ockali na wicela wapanapi kin beza woseni el yanka ockali si, hecel he wowitan tanka on omanipí, he wata kin hecal ahne ni kii kee sais kiyapí. Ho hecel wicela wicela kin beza oyan wicela. Taku kiyapí on kin he sioliyapí si ki heen aca wapanan ame yone yone el yone kiyapí on kin akitiapi, hecel wata kin beza eke ona on wiosa warone hecena wowita kiyapí. Eek ni naa warone wopa hecena wowita kiyapí.

Mitakuyepi, Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí. Mitakuyepi, hecen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecen kakeen naa kiyapí. Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí.

ALFRED BONESHIRE.

Mitakuyepi, Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí. Mitakuyepi, Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí. Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí.

Manda son, Sami, ndiyaka kakeen naa kiyapí. Mitakuyepi, Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí. Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí. Wicela wicela akitiapi na nayonapi, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí, hecel heen kakeen naa kiyapí.

NEWs FROM CHEYENNE R.
RESERVATION.

7 churches here have catechists; 2 haven't yet.

Henry Groce Running is the Catechist of St. Joseph's Cherry Creek. Frank A. Calumet, of Leo's, also Cherry Creek district. Alex LeBane of St. John the Evangelist, near Promontory. Joseph Hinkely, of St. Paul's White Horse. Sam Shoats, of St. Luke's, Thunder Butte.