



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

A pastoral letter by Nick Black Elk, undated; published in *Šinasapa Wocekine Taeyanpaha*, St. Michael's Mission, Fort Totten, Fort Totten Indian Reservation, North Dakota, date unknown, possibly from a missing issue in 1908, 1913, or 1916. He discusses the prospect of building a new church, based on information from Fr. Lindebner (died 1922). A new Manderson church was built in 1911. Translated from Lakota to English under Michael F. Steltenkamp, S.J.

When you are to have a meeting remember to pray [invocation] first. That way you will gain wisdom from God, and God will help you in whatever your needs are. Remember that. Although we are poor, we can count on God's blessing. They are going to build a new church. The one building we have will become a meeting house, and Fr. Lindebner told me that somebody donated a lot of money, so they are going to start building St. Agnes Church. And what we should do is start discussing the future.

Throughout the reservation all Catholic members discuss what should be done for their own district societies, have realized that everyone has a deep faith in God. This I found out. When I was visiting a neighbor of mine, all the other people didn't bother talking with me. But this one girl wanted to know about God, so I sat down with her and we prayed the rosary—one bead at a time. And in a very short while, she was able to say the rosary.

Remember that I am just a common man like you. But I was installed as a catechist and I have received instructions. And with those instructions that I have received, this what I am doing. I am a Catechist and that job is to pray with people—teaching them how to pray—that is what I am doing. So if I should come to your house, don't be afraid of me—because I am one of you.

In the generations to come, we should tell the younger generation about the St. Joseph and St. Mary society, we have learned that this is the organization of the Holy Family. In the Bible, Jesus told us that "You should love your neighbor as you love Me." So remember if you get in trouble with your neighbor, remember that God has said, "Love your neighbor." So whatever you have said or if you have done some bad thing to them, go over there and please tell them you are sorry. I will now close here. In closing I will say to you: May the Father, and the Son, and with the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And I remain, Nick Black Elk