

is not the appropriate answer. What is needed is study, understanding, delicate discernment, patience, humility, and faith. The Gospel Message is valid for all cultures and should be at home in them all.

20. Study is needed

In order that the delicate and difficult development outlined above may take place, study is needed in each cultural area. You as Native Americans need your own experts in history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and religion who will carefully document and assess your traditions, rituals, stories, oral teachings, dances, initiation rites, prayers and, in a word, your religion and culture.

The more difficult work in the theological area will then have to be grappled with. Says the Second Vatican Council: "Theological investigation must necessarily be stirred up in each major socio-cultural area, as it is called. In this way, under the light of the tradition of the universal Church, a fresh scrutiny will be brought to bear on the deeds and words which God has made known, which have been consigned to sacred Scripture, and which have been unfolded by the Church Fathers and the teaching authority of the Church.

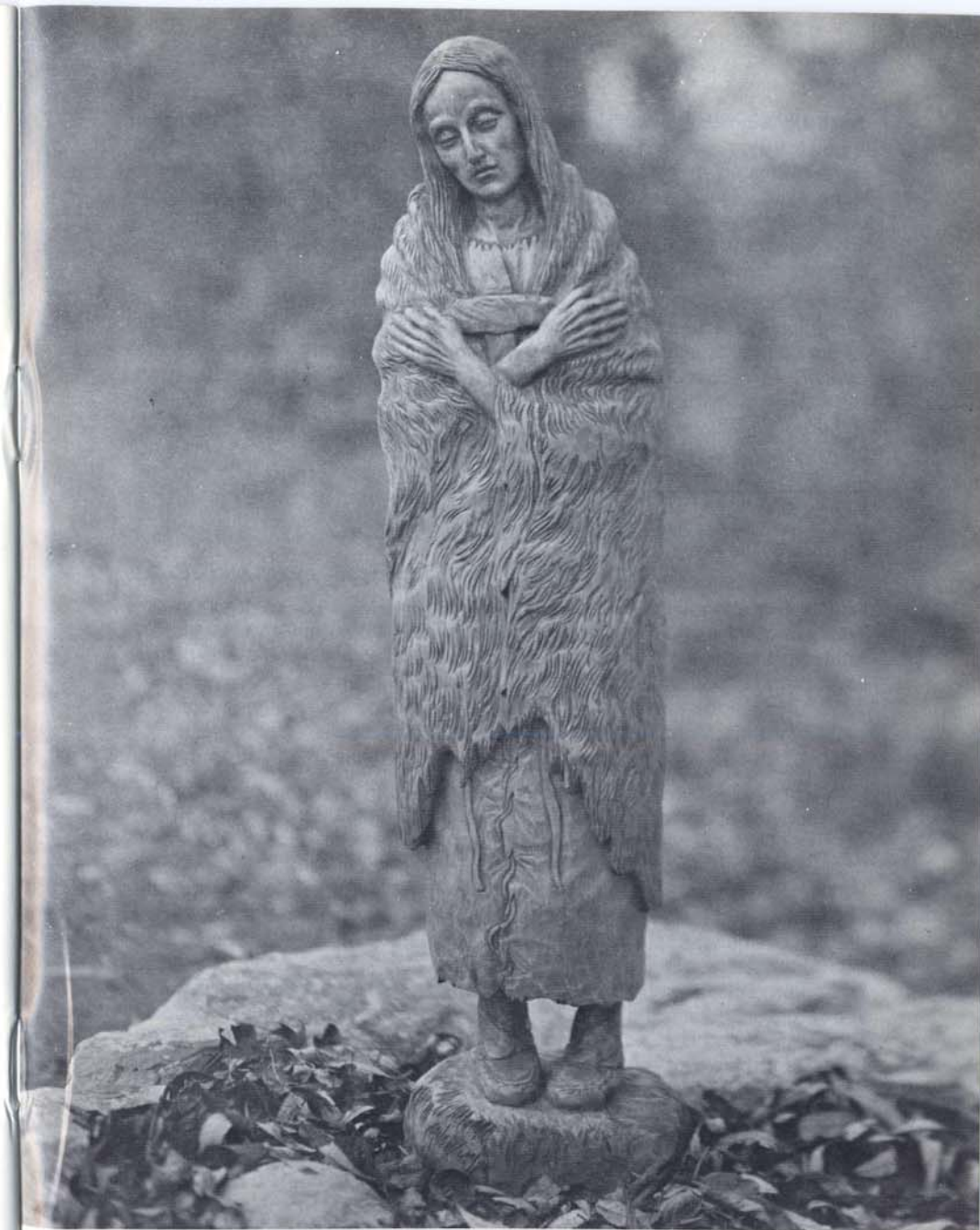
Thus it will be more clearly seen in what says faith can seek for understanding in the philosophy and wisdom of these people. A better view will be gained of how their customs, outlook on life, and social order can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine revelation. As a result, avenues will be opened for a more profound adaptation in the whole area of Christian life. Thanks to such a procedure, every appearance of syncretism and of false particularism can be excluded, and Christian life can be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 22).

All this will need time, talent, patience, faith, humility, communion within the Church and obedience out of love for Christ and the Church.

21. Dialogue and Sharing

One result will be that there will be dialogue, sharing and mutual enrichment within the universal Church and also between peoples and between cultures. The Church promotes healthy variety in her catholic unity. "In virtue of this catholicity each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of other parts and of the whole Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 13). Pope John Paul II told you at Phoenix that your customs benefit not only yourselves but the entire human family. In 1984 he had said something similar to the native peoples at the Shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupré in Canada: "Your encounter with the Gospel has not only enriched you; it has enriched the Church. We are well aware that this has not taken place without its difficulties and, occasionally, its blunders. However, you are experiencing this today, the Gospel does not destroy what is best in you. On the contrary, it enriches, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and gifts that are distinctive of your cultures" (*Address of 10 Sept. 1984*, n. 3, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VII, 2, 1984, p. 407).

One culture and people also dialogues with other cultures and peoples and shares with them. We are one human family. We can and should enrich each



Médard Bourgault sculptisit

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BLESSED KATERI TEKAKWITHA