



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, October 13, 2024

### *Indigenous Peoples' Day*

**Indigenous Peoples' Day is celebrated on Monday, October 14** (the same day as Columbus Day). The day “honors the histories, cultures, and perspectives of Indigenous people and their ancestors who lived on the land which is now known as North America. They lived on this land for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived. This day helps to tell of their struggles, strength, and unique traditions, fostering understanding and unity among diverse cultures.” (*SSJ Center for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, October 2024 Newsletter)

“In 1977, participants at the United Nations International Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous populations in the Americas proposed that Indigenous Peoples' Day replace Columbus Day. **Indigenous Peoples' Day recognizes that Native people are the first inhabitants of the Americas, including the lands that later became the United States of America.** And it urges Americans to rethink history.... [In 2021, President Biden became the first U.S. president to formally commemorate the day with a presidential proclamation, although it is not a recognized holiday under U.S. Federal Law.] Several states and the District of Columbia now observe Native American or Indigenous Peoples' Day in place of or in addition to Columbus Day.” (*Smithsonian Magazine*, 10/12/20)

**On this day, let us celebrate the gifts of Mother Earth, gifts revered by Indigenous people for centuries.** “In Indigenous gift-giving ceremonies, berries are always present. They join us in a wooden bowl. One big bowl and one big spoon, which are passed around the circle, so that each person can taste the sweetness, remembering the gifts, and say thank you. They carry the lesson, passed to us by our ancestors, that the generosity of the land comes to us as one bowl, one spoon. We are all fed from the same bowl that Mother Earth has filled for us. It's not just about the berries, but also about the bowl. **The gifts of the earth are to be shared, but gifts are not limitless.** The generosity of the earth is not an invitation to take it all. Every bowl has a bottom. When it's empty, it's empty. And there is but one spoon, the same size for everyone.” (Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013).

**Action Step:** Today, we know that “fragile ecosystems and vulnerable creatures are already suffering the consequences of climate change, habitat loss, and pollution. The last thing they need is a new oil rig in their backyard.... Yet **recently a plan has been introduced in Congress to increase oil and gas drilling across our public lands....** From the Arctic to Arizona, the plan could turn millions of acres of wilderness into ecological wastelands.... Our public lands deserve protection, not dangerous drilling. [In honor of Indigenous people, the original stewards of the land], [send a message to your U.S. senators opposing expanded drilling on public lands.](#)” (*Environmental Action*, 10/6/24)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).  
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