

## **Rooted in Faith III**

### **A Guide to Ecumenical and Interreligious Prayer and Service Ministry**

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, New York

November 21, 2024

Sixtieth Anniversary of II Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism

=Please save for future reference=

Prepared by the Diocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

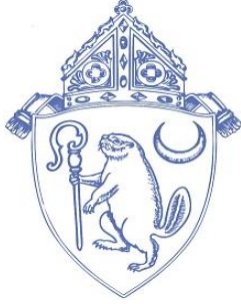
Available online at <https://www.rcda.org/offices/commission-ecumenical-and-interreligious-affairs>



### **Land Acknowledgement**

As part of the mission of the Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, we come in humility to recognize the oppressive history and continued dispossession of the Haudenosaunee people, first caretakers of this land. We acknowledge that this unceded seized territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) is the land that we currently sit, work, and pray on. We reflect on this with profound gratitude and obligation to the Ancestors – past, present, and yet to come – as well as maintaining a debt that can never be repaid.





## Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

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### ECUMENICAL OFFICE

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November 21, 2024

Dear Clergy, Religious and Lay Friends,

“Promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the chief concerns of the Second Sacred Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only.”

-Decree on Ecumenism (#1)

Pope St. John XXIII reminded us that, “what unites us is much greater than what divides us.”

For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism your diocesan Commission for Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs published a document called “Rooted in Faith.” For the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary we published Rooted in Faith II and now for the 60<sup>th</sup> we are pleased to present to you ROOTED IN FAITH III. The attached document includes:

- Occasions for ecumenical/interfaith gatherings/services
- ROMAN MISSAL resources for Masses/Prayers for Christian Unity
- Ecumenical/Interfaith Activities
- Ecumenical/Interfaith Etiquette

It is our hope and prayer that these resources will assist you in fostering ecumenical/interfaith relations in our parish communities, challenged to do our part to help bring about the fullness of Christian unity and fruitful interfaith relations.

In his encyclical “On Commitment to Ecumenism, Pope St. John Paul II wrote: “...ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does...” -Ut Unum Sint (#20)

May it be so.

Rev. Fr. James Kane

Diocesan Director of Ecumenical & interreligious Affairs

Mr. David Amico

Chair of the Diocesan Commission for Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs

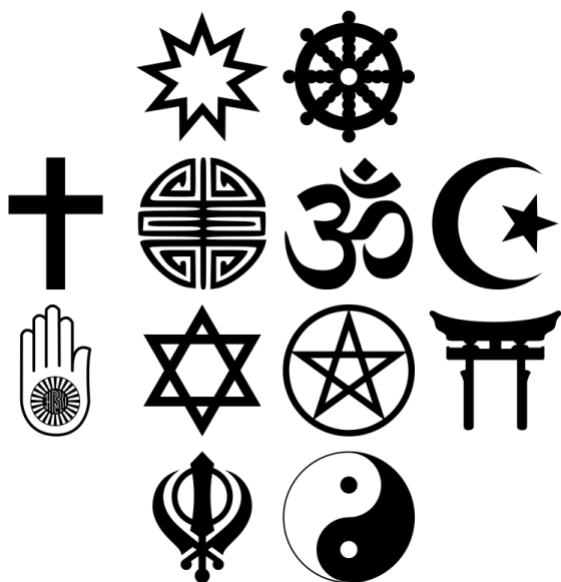
Mrs. Karen Bond

Ad-Hoc ROOTED IN FAITH III Committee

Mrs. Lisa Petrocelli - Secretary

### **Occasions for Ecumenical/Interfaith celebrations/gatherings:**

- Advent (E.g., rotating service/sermon/lunch)
- Christmas Season (E.g., a community-wide “Giving/Bethlehem” Tree; an ecumenical “Carol-Sing,” live crèche; “Blue Christmas”)
- Jan. 7: Note – some Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas today – why not leave Christmas decorations up thru 1/7
- Jan. 1 = World Day of Prayer for Peace
- Epiphany (E.g., “Christingle”/“light” ecumenical service)
- Martin Luther King Day: January 15 or Mon. legal holiday
- Jan. 17: Day of Prayer with the Jews (Italy/Poland)
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Church Unity Octave): Jan. 18-25; Cf. Graymoor
- Jan. 27 = UN Holocaust Remembrance Day
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. of Ordinary Time: Word of God Sun.
- Ecumenical Sunday (follows Week of Prayer): last Sunday of January
- Feb.: “Brotherhood & Sisterhood Week”
- Feb. 4 – World Day of Human Fraternity
- Mardi Gras: E.g., pancake breakfasts; joint palm-burning
- Ash Wed.: Service of the Word with ashes could be done ecumenically.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Sun. of Orthodox Lent = Sunday of Orthodoxy
- Lent: Noontime or Dinner “soup & bread” &/or Services/Speakers/Luncheons, Scriptural Stations of the Cross, etc.
- World Day of Prayer (1<sup>st</sup> Fri. in Mar.)
- Palm Sunday: Ecumenical Blessing of Palm and Procession; Concert
- Holy Thursday (or: “Spy Wed.”): Tenebrae Service/community meal
- Good Friday: “Seven Last Words,” Scriptural Stations of the Cross, and other Services of the Lord’s Passion
- Easter Sunday: sunrise service, Vespers
- Easter Monday: “Day of Joy & Laughter” /Emmaus Day; also April 1: “All Fools Day” (“Fools for Christ’s Sake”: St. Paul)
- Good Shepherd Sunday (church vocations)
- Yom HaShoah (“Holocaust Memorial Day”): c. May 1st – date varies
- National Day of Prayer/for civic leaders/ (1<sup>st</sup> Thurs. in May)
- May Friendship Day (1<sup>st</sup> Fri. in May)
- Pentecost: Vigil &/or Novena – **9 days between Ascension and Pentecost are especially recommended for ecumenical gatherings**
- Environmental Sabbath: weekend near 6/5
- Baccalaureate Service: for Graduates
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- June 22-29: Religious Freedom Week
- World Peace & Prayer Day (June 21st) (Native American)
- Indigenous Peoples Day (October 14)
- Native American Heritage Month (Nov.)
- Independence Day: July 4<sup>th</sup>
- July 26: Feast of Joachim & Anne (celebration of grandparents)
- Vacation Bible School
- Day of Prayer for Peace: Aug 6 (Hiroshima anniversary),
- Sept. 11- (E.g., 8:46 am)
- Sept 1 – Oct. 4: Season of Creation
- Sept. 21 = UN International Day of Peace
- Oct. 4 (St. Francis): an ecumenical pet blessing could be done on or near this date
- Oct. 16 – World Food Day
- Reformation Sunday: nearest Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>
- Election Eve: Prayer Vigil
- World Community Day (1<sup>st</sup> Fri. in Nov.)
- National Bible Week: held each year, usually 3<sup>rd</sup> week in Nov.
- Thanksgiving Day, Eve, or Sunday before (this holiday is the most popular for ecumenical & interfaith prayer services)
- Memorial Services: e.g., for Firefighters, Deceased Residents of Nursing Home or Senior Citizen Apartments, Hospice, SIDS (infants), HIV/AIDS, AMI (mentally ill), Alzheimer’s (E.g., caregivers/families), Et. Al.
- Reconciliation Sunday
- Ad Hoc: events local/national/international that give rise to gather together in prayer.



**ROMAN MISSAL** Resource for Masses/Services  
for Christian Unity:

Lectionary – Vol. IV – Masses for Various Needs  
& Occasions – 1. For the Church (#867-871)  
10. For the Unity of Christians

Missal – Masses & Prayers for Various Needs &  
Occasions” #17. For the Unity of Christians: “A”,  
“B”, “C” – with Preface; Eucharistic Prayers for  
Reconciliation I & II and for Various Needs &  
Occasions – 1<sup>st</sup> form

**BOOK OF BLESSINGS:**

Part I: Chapter 5--

II Order for the Blessing of Ecumenical Groups

III Prayers for Interfaith Gatherings

The Office has suggested ecumenical/interfaith  
petitions for the UNIVERSAL PRAYER (General  
Intercessions).

OCIA Note: When one is received into Full  
Communion with the Catholic Church, their  
Church/Denomination of Baptism is to be  
included in the Universal Prayer.

## ECUMENICAL/INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES

The following ecumenical/interfaith programs and activities are merely “thought teasers” among the myriad of possibilities.

- Food Pantry (incl. Christmas/Easter baskets)
- Clothing Ministry
- Ministry to Elderly
- Shelter for Homeless (incl. “Dollar Days”/”Souper Bowl” offering)
- “Habitat for Humanity” projects
- Hospital Ministry
- CROP Walk
- Hosting/Supporting Drug/Alcohol Abuse Programs
- Youth Ministry
- Vacation Bible School
- Church Women United
- Housing Needs
- Community choirs/”Carol-Sings”
- Community “Needs Survey” & Community-wide ministry sign-up
- Mental Health Ministry
- “Fish”/”Steven Ministry” “Alpha” Programs
- American Bible Society
- Racism Issues
- Community-wide Census & Community-wide Stewardship survey
- Pornography Issues
- Refugee Resettlement
- Salvation Army support
- Community-wide collection of items for needy (E.g., coats, boots, gloves, sweaters)
- Blood mobile drives
- Day-care center (s)
- “Soup-Kitchen”
- Food Desert Issues
- Community “seder” (faithful, of course, to the Jewish tradition)
- “Taizé” music/services
- Benefit concerts/performance common causes
- “Living Room Dialogues”: Faith sharing/prayer groups
- Clergy study groups (E.g., to reflect together on upcoming Sunday Scripture texts)
- Shared Thanksgiving Prayer Service
- Shared Good Friday Services
- Pulpit exchanges
- Shared Ash Wednesday Services
- Common Blessing of the Palms
- New pastor: visiting neighbor churches/comgregations
- Cookbook/Recipe sharing
- YOUR creative suggestions



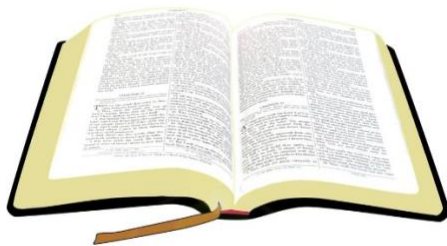
## 5 Practical things to do to seek the Ecumenism of the Possible:

- 1 – Lectionary groups: to study the Scripture texts for next Sunday
- 2 – “News” groups: bring major secular stories and relate them to the Scriptures & compose intercessions
- 3– Church-tours (laity led)
- 4 – Book Exchanges (Bibles, Book of Common Prayer, Roman Missal, Vatican II documents, “Lima Document” of WCC’s, etc.)
- 5 – Small groups draw up appreciative statement about the other & review/discuss

--Fr. Robert Wright (ARCIC/A-RC dialogue)

Factoid:

The Dongan Charter that created the City of Albany (July 22, 1686) was the 1<sup>st</sup> Charter of the ‘new world’ to guarantee religious liberty.



## Other Things you Can Do:

Many of the above activities take place within the context of ecumenical/interfaith groups. Do you know your area group? Is your parish an active member? E.g.,

CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (Albany & So. Renss. Counties: 10 R.C. parishes belong) sponsors “Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism” program – congregational representatives come to each other’s Baptisms to witness to the one sacrament we share in common with other Christians. Ecumenical guests could take part in the signing ceremony at the beginning, be included in the Prayer of the Faithful and procession of gifts. Your parish could do this.

Offer posters, pamphlets, and other materials from ecumenical, interfaith groups/agencies during Church Unity Octave; also it is an ideal time to announce a cooperative project/ program.

Since 1987 there has been a Covenant between our Immaculate Conception Cathedral and the Episcopal Cathedral of All Saints, which includes: Praying for each other every Sunday; sharing their patronal feast days together each year; doing shared Stations of the Cross during Lent; on-going dinners with groups of parishioners from both Cathedrals, hosted by a particular family; shared retreat day during the Week of Prayer for Unity; a Marian devotion, joint pet blessing, Etc. This could be replicated in any parish/ congregation.

**INTERFAITH STORY CIRCLE OF THE TRI-CITY AREA** (for storytellers, parents, teachers, religious leaders, counselors, liturgists, lovers of stories):

A storytelling group for people of all faiths. Persons who minister to others within their faith tradition, shape character and instill values, counsel or simply welcome. Come to tell and/or listen, share resources and methods, and make contact with others who are drawn to the spiritual and moral power of storytelling. This is a free, come when you can opportunity. Books, resources, and handouts on storytelling are available. Feel free to bring a friend. We meet from September to June on the second Tues., Wed., or Thurs. of the month. From 7:00 p.m. (7:00 – 7:30 sharing/telling by facilitator on monthly topic, 7:30-9:00 time for open telling). Each month we are hosted by a different faith community. Listeners are always welcome!!!! For further information and/or to be placed on our mailing list, contact Gert Johnson at 518-374-0637 or [grsjohnson@aol.com](mailto:grsjohnson@aol.com).



“Our collaboration....is not a matter of measured calculation. We do not collaborate simply for the sake of efficiency or reasons of mere strategy or for advantage and influence. We collaborate for the sake of Christ, who urges us to be one with Him...so that the world may believe (Cf., John 17:21)”

- Pope St. John Paul II, 9/11/87 at Ecumenical Service, Columbia, SC.





## **ECUMENICAL/INTERFAITH ETIQUETTE:**

Good ecumenical and interfaith relationships come into practice in personal communications. "Etiquette" is the term governing norms of personal communications and usually comes down to courtesy and common sense, respect for the integrity and personhood of others. The same attitude and approach is essential for Roman Catholics in dealing with brothers and sisters of other denominations and faiths.

We believe that faith is a gift, and the way in which God calls people to respond in faith, a mystery. The essential norm in relating to others, then is respect for the gift of faith and the living presence of God in those other persons.

The following are some suggestions and concerns gathered from experience within this diocese regarding the ways that Roman Catholics communicate with members of other denominations and faiths. It includes some "do's" and "don'ts," with all of them built on the premise that ordinary courtesy and the simple act of inquiry may be the hallmark of good communications.

### **FORMS OF ADDRESS:**

When in doubt, ask. Ask a congregational secretary or clergy person directly, but never be afraid to ask.

## **Examples:**

Episcopal priests are properly called "Father Brown" or "Dr. Brown." They see themselves as ordained "priests," not ministers.

Lutheran clergy are addressed as "Pastor Brown" or "Dr. Brown."

Most other Protestant can be addressed as "Dr. Brown," if they bear the degree; Mr. Brown, Ms., Miss, or Mrs. Brown; or "Pastor Brown"; however, many members of Black Churches prefer to address their clergy as "Reverend".

Protestant lay leaders (Elders, Church Council Presidents, /unordained/Deacons, Session Wardens, Et. Al.) can be addressed as "Lay Leaders."

Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Polish National Catholic clergy are all addressed as "Father."

A Rabbi is addressed as "Rabbi" or "Rabbi Dr."

An Imam is addressed as "Imam"

**Note:** Be truly more "catholic" (universal): If "Christian" can be authentically used, use it in place of "Catholic."

"Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a more perfect realization of the very mystery of Christ and the Church."

**Decree on Ecumenism, #4.**

## **PASTORAL INQUIRIES:**

Directness and honesty are appreciated when clergy or laity contact pastoral leaders of other denominations and faiths.

Funerals and Marriages are often the occasion when sensitivity needs to be kept in mind. For examples, in verifying Baptism of participating partners of ecumenical marriages:

Don't say: "Can you tell me if Harry Jones was baptized and when?" (curt inquiry, lacks respect for non-Catholic church involved, prompts defensive attitude on part of responding clergy).

Do say: "Harry Jones is planning to marry one of the young women from this parish on (DATE) which I am sure you know. One of our requirements is to verify the baptism of both parties. Could you help me out with Harry?"

It is most often better to have clergy deal with clergy on these matters, especially in trying to complete paperwork before marriage **via** contact with non-Catholic clergy.

## **Taking part in ECUMENICAL prayer and worship:**

Keep in mind that most Protestants are offended when the noun "Mass" is used in regard to their church service. Most use the term "Worship Service," "Lord's Supper," "Communion Service." Among the Orthodox, the term is "The Divine Liturgy."

Respect the norms of dress and conduct expected in the host community.

Listen with a respectful heart to the faith experience and spirituality, which is expressed in the service, or prayer group meeting.

Be honest but not overbearing in sharing from your faith and spirituality.

If you wish, mention you are a guest to the "GREETER" at the door. That person will explain the worship procedures, if nursery care is available, post-liturgy fellowship, etc.

Guests should "listen" to the words of invitation from the minister concerning participation in the service; guests are not required to take part in any of the service, if not part of their tenets.

Consult Diocesan Guidelines (Manual) regarding **intercommunion**: attitude & tone are crucial in conveying our policies.

## Some Helpful Norms in **INTERFAITH RELATIONS & PRAYER SERVICES** involving **JEWS**:

**Worship Services:** Some congregations require head coverings (yarmulke) for men. Take cue from the worshippers. If required, they will be supplied at the door entrance. At Orthodox Synagogues, men and women are separated (as in some Eastern Rite Christian churches).

**Funerals:** The best way to show sympathy is to take part in one of the mourning prayer nights (“shiva”) in the home (do not visit the family before the funeral); contribute to a charity in the name of the deceased (at most Jewish Funerals: no flowers, plants); bring food to homes (be sure it’s kosher).

**Weddings:** Traditional Jewish Law recognizes a marriage between a Jew and a Gentile as being legally valid in the secular sense, but as invalid in Jewish religious law. Some Reform Rabbis, however, may still choose to officiate in some capacity. Rabbis, however, are not being impolite or insensitive when they cannot in conscience take part in a Jewish-Christian Wedding. When such marriages take place, consult Diocesan Guidelines (Manual). Refrain from Trinitarian references & referring to Jesus as the Christ.

### **Interfaith Services:**

-Jews do not use the word “Yahweh” (nor, as by request of Pope Benedict XVI, should we) verbally or written (some even write G-d); Lord/Sovereign is an appropriate substitute.

-In planning an interfaith service (the word “ecumenical” is reserved for services among Christians only), be sure to include on the planning committee (or at least as a consultant) a knowledgeable representative of the Jewish/Muslim community along with the other participants.

-At Wedding receptions, service club luncheons, Scout and sporting banquets, and similar gatherings, where there are non-Christians present, avoid addressing the Trinity and Christ in invocations, grace before meals,

benedictions, etc. Addressing God as Creator, Sovereign/King of the Universe, Lord God, is appropriate.

-In planning for the music at an interfaith service be sure to check that the hymns do not have reference to the Trinity or Christ (watch those 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> verses too!)

-Do not use Deuterocanonical/Apocrypha texts (not recognized as Scripture by Jews or Protestants): Baruch, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Sirach, Tobit, Wisdom, & parts of Esther (Chs A-F), & Daniel (3:24-90, 13:1-64, 14:1-42).

-Do not ask a Jew to read from the New Testament. The “Old Testament” can be referred to as the “Hebrew Scriptures,” the New Testament can also be referred to as the “Apostolic Writings” (however, “Christian Scriptures” may seem to imply that the Old Testament is not part of the Christian Bible!)

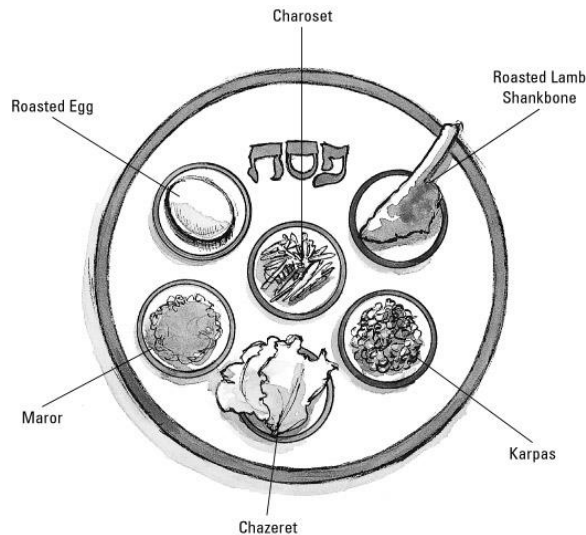
-Jewish Sabbath is from sunset Friday through sunset Saturday: ordinarily Jews will not take part in an interfaith service at that time. Sabbath rest is often taken seriously: for Orthodox Jews that includes not answering phones, turning on lights, stoves, etc.

**Holiday Greetings:** Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is a day of solemn fasting. Happy Yom Kippur is not a thing, but it is appropriate to say to the person observing to have an easy fast. Greetings are appropriate for Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Passover; also, for Chanukah (but be careful not to allude to it as being somehow a “Jewish Christmas”!)

**Seders:** offer us the honor to learn about the Jewish Passover – a pivotal story of self-understanding for Jews and also on the Lord’s Supper, which is believed to have taken place at a seder. However, do not ‘baptize’ the ceremony; use it as an internal service of itself (our Office has approved texts), & be respectful of the Jewish traditions. It is not the proper setting for Mass. Passover or Pesach commemorates (makes real again) the Hebrews’ exodus from slavery in

Egypt to freedom in Israel. If you are a guest at a seder, it is appropriate to bring wine or flowers.

**Kosher**": Religious dietary laws do not allow Jews (or Muslims) to eat shellfish or pork, in any of its forms; for some Jews, meat and poultry must be slaughtered and prepared by a kosher butcher; dairy and meat products are not served together at the same meal or course or on the same plate.



Note:

Outside our Cathedral is a sculpture: PORTAL- A Jew & Christian in embrace, commemorating a Service of Healing & Atonement, "From Fear to Friendship" held at I.C.C. on March 23, 1986



### Some Helpful Norms in **INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND PRAYER SERVICES** with **MUSLIMS**:

Muslims ("Muslims" is preferred, rather than "Moslems" or "Mohammedans;") use "Muslim" for the person, "Islam" for the religion) are monotheistic; they worship the one God (calling God "Allah"), seeing Abraham as their "father in faith." Hence, "infidels," "pagans," while inappropriate terminology to describe any person of faith, is particularly not apt for Muslims.

Any secular or comic references to God or the Prophets, especially Muhammed, and including Jesus, is offensive.; The Islamic holy book is the Qur'an (Koran). Friday has a requirement for the community prayer at noon (participation at an interfaith service, luncheon or meeting is not permitted at this time). As with a number of Eastern religious traditions, shoes are removed before entering a mosque. Women are seated separate from men & may be expected to have a head covering, but not always. It is always okay to ask.

Muslims do not eat pork or shellfish, nor drink alcohol. Meat should be prepared by a "Halal" butcher. Dairy & meat may be served together.

Respect the varied traditions within Islam (do not use the word "sects" to refer to Sunnis or Shiites). In the midst of Mid-East political tensions, remember that terrorism is not a tenet of Islam, "jihad" is a nuanced expression that can't simply be rendered as "holy war", not all Muslims are Arabs, not all Arabs are Muslims (e.g., Indonesia, the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world, is not an Arab country; some Arabs are Christians.



## **OTHER INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES:**

### **Some Helpful Information in INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND PRAYER SERVICES with NATIVE AMERICANS, FIRST NATIONS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:**

Many Native American ceremonies are open to the public. Sometimes there is public participation in rituals, dances, and other ceremonies, and the host group will let you know if this is the case.

Photographs are often allowed, but it is imperative to ask permission first.

You may hear middle-age and older people referred to as “Uncle,” “Aunt,” “Grandmother,” and “Grandfather.” These are respectful titles used by the younger generation, and people may or may not be blood related.

Do not come in regalia unless you are a member of a Native tribe.

Native Americans will call themselves “Native,” “Indigenous,” “Indian,” and others. Use whatever term you are asked to, and if you don’t know how to reference, ask.

Older men and women are often referred to as Elder, either in reference to a person or as an introduction. It is a term of respect and honor.

At the beginning of a ceremony, there is often a purifying ritual. This is done with the four sacred plants (cedar, sweetgrass, sage, and tobacco). You may choose to participate, or not. There is nothing in this ritual that contradicts other religious practices.

There is also a Thanksgiving Address or *Greetings to the Natural World*. They are called the *Words Before All Else*, and they come before any significant ceremony. The message is always the same, but the words may change depending on the speaker.



Again, if in doubt, ask.

## **IN ALL CASES:**

Be sure to invite ecumenical/interfaith neighbor clergy/congregations to attend/participate as able in significant parish/institutional events (e.g., parish anniversary celebrations, pastor installations).

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Consult the Diocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (518-453-6660, [ecumenical@rcda.org](mailto:ecumenical@rcda.org)) or for publishing information on such books as:

- [How to be a Perfect Stranger](#) (2 vols.):  
A Guide to Etiquette in Other People’s Religious Ceremonies, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2015
- [The Cult Around the Corner](#):  
A Handbook on Dealing with other People’s Religions, 2011
- [Believers and Beliefs](#):  
A Practical Guide to Religious Etiquette for Business & Social Occasions
- [Knowing My Neighbor](#):  
Religious Beliefs and Cultural Traditions at Times of Illness and Death
- [World Religions for Healthcare Professionals](#):  
A Clinical Workbook, 2023