The Hand in Art: Hands on Coins—Peace and Friendship on the United States Coins

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Figure 1 shows the reverse of the 5-cents Jefferson nickel minted in 2004 to commemorate the bicentenary of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803—2003. The design demonstrates clasped hands as the symbols of peace and friendship, a crossed peace pipe and tomahawk, and inscriptions. The left hand, with a military uniform cuff on the wrist, is a symbol of the government. The right hand, with a silver cuff adorned with beads and an emblem of the American eagle, is a symbol of Native Americans.1 The design is adopted from the Indian Peace Medal2 commissioned for Lewis and Clark’s expedition.3 The medal was given to Native American chiefs and other important leaders as gifts of good will.1

With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States (US) purchased 828,000 square miles of territory in Louisiana from France during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. Thus, the US expanded its territory to west of the Mississippi River.4

_E pluribus unum_ is Latin for “Out of many, one.” The phrase implies that out of many states, colonies, peoples, races, religions, languages, and ancestries, a single people and nation has emerged.5

Figure 2 shows the reverse of a 2011 Native American $1 coin. The design shows the hands of Governor John Carver and Supreme Sachem Ouassamequin Massasoit symbolically offering the ceremonial peace pipe after signing the Wampanoag Treaty in 1621, which later led the settlers and Massasoit and his men to join in the first harvest feast. The Wampanoag Treaty
was the first formal written peace alliance between the Wampanoag tribe and English colonists in what later became the US.6,7

The common theme of these 2 coins is that the US sought good relations with the Native American community.

REFERENCES

Hand Made: The Logo for the Nomination of a Kenyan Bishop
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Kenya has a population of approximately 44 million with the predominant religion being Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church represents 23.3% of the population.1 In Kenya, 36 bishops and 1 cardinal have already been nominated.

A hand-made wooden table (Fig. 1) in 2004 for the bishop’s nomination of Machakos in South-Eastern Kenya was manufactured. The bishop at the beginning of his mission produces his logo, a wooden table, making a plan for the diocese for the next years and becoming the moving force of the diocese itself. The sentence “May they all be one” (John 17:21) and the hands of four different colors shaking each other, representing human races, underline the Bishop’s will—that is, all gifts of God should be united in diversity. The cross of Jesus renders the union possible. We took this photograph while completing a humanitarian mission related to pediatric hand surgery in 2014 in Machakos. Note that most patients attending Kenyan Catholic hospitals belong to other churches or religions.

FIGURE 1: The wooden table for the bishop nomination in Machakos, Kenya. Note at the bottom the name of the nominated bishop (Rev. Martin Kivuva Musonde) and the parish name (St. Camillus Hospital Chaplaincy). Dimensions: 70 x 100 cm.

REFERENCES