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Brief History of the Diocese of Lincoln

On August 2, 1887, the 23,844 square miles of Nebraska located south of the Platte River became the Diocese of Lincoln under Pope Leo XIII. This extensive Diocese is larger than the four states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Delaware whose combined area is 22,067 square miles and includes 13 Dioceses.

The history of God's Kingdom in this Diocese is a study of the Lord's goodness and the gradual unfolding of His plan. The Lord has guided the Church from her beginning, and will continue to care for Her until the end of time. He is worthy of praise and thanksgiving for all the achievements and accomplishments that have been made. Gratitude is a virtue that is unknown, who through the history of this portion of God's vineyard have labored through both joys and sufferings for the salvation of souls. They have been instrumental in weaving the history of the Diocese through their many sacrifices.

One tangible example of progress in the Diocese of Lincoln over the years is the increase in the number of Catholics. There are approximately 25,000 Catholics in Southern Nebraska, constituting 5% of the total estimated population. In the West, there are 1.5 million Catholics, constituting about 16.5% of the total estimated population. It is logical to conclude that the Christian witness of the members of the Church has attracted others to become members of Christ's Mystical Body.

When the Diocese of Lincoln began in 1887, there were 32 priests caring for the needs of souls. Now, there are 150 priests ministering in the Diocese. In 1887, there were 29 churches with resident priests, 46 missions, and 2 parishes. Today, the Diocese has grown to 84 parishes with resident priests and 50 parishes that are missions of those who are not yet baptized. In 1887, there were three religious Communities of women in the Diocese. Currently, seventeen congregations minister in the Diocese: the Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln, the School Sisters of Christ the King, and the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Mercy. There are also two houses of contemplative religious women: the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration, and the Nuns of the Order of Discalced Carmelites.

In the two decades following WWII, there was an era of extensive construction in the Diocese of Lincoln. So far, the Cathedral, Chancery, Catholic Center (which includes a school, retreat house, and motherhouse), and numerous convents, rectories, and parish halls. In 1960, the growth of the Catholic student population at the University

the construction of a Newman Center, which has now outgrown that building. Construction has begun on a new Center, along with a Catholic fraternity and sorority, so that the administration of the Sacraments and sound music can be offered to those Catholics attending UNL.

During the time Bishop Glennon P. Flavin and Bishop Fabian W. Bruskewitz were the Ordinaries, their foresight and generosity of the priests and laity of the Diocese, has enabled further growth and evangelization. Bishop Flavin's education bore tangible fruit in the strengthening of parish schools, numerous ordinations of priests and promotion of the Holy Spirit Adoration Society. He was instrumental in founding the School Sisters of Christ the King, and welcomed the Holy Spirit Adoration Society. Bishop Bruskewitz established St. Gregory the Great Seminary in 1997, and later he welcomed Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, as well as the Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Paul VI Heights, an affordable housing project, was dedicated and opened. In 1995, the Diocese took over sponsorship of Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. In 2001, the Blessed John XXIII Diocesan Center was purchased to expand diocesan offices. A Schoenstatt Shrine was dedicated in 2007, and in 2009, Catholic radio began broadcasting in the city of Lincoln and surrounding communities. New parishes and four Catholic schools were opened. Parishes serving the Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese communities have grown. Recently, St. Gianna Homes for Women opened under the auspices of Catholic Social Services.

We give thanks to God as we continually witness the many ways He manifests His providential care within the Catholic Church of Southern Nebraska.

The History of the Diocese: Volume II (1987-2002) is available for purchase: \$26.75 (pick up), \$31.75 (if mailed within Nebraska), \$29.75 (if mailed outside Nebraska). Checks should be made payable to "Catholic Bishop of Lincoln" and mailed to: Catholic Chancery; PO Box 80328; Lincoln NE 68501.

