MESSAGE FROM
BISHOP CONLEY

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pope Francis says that the Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. In the Diocese of Lincoln, we are blessed with families, religious, and priests who have encountered Jesus Christ, and who live their vocations joyfully.

The Joy of the Gospel campaign is an effort to bring the joy of Jesus Christ to every person in our diocese: to strengthen the ministry of our Catholic schools, to support our priests and seminarians, and to proclaim Christ to our friends, neighbors, and communities.

The Diocese of Lincoln needs your support. I pray that you will consider a sacrificial gift to the Joy of the Gospel. With your help, we can continue to encounter Christ together, and to proclaim the Gospel joyfully and fruitfully.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+JDC
INTRODUCTORY

Our Past
Humble Beginnings & A Rich Heritage

On a summer day in 1887, a decree from Pope Leo XIII formed the Diocese of Lincoln. At the time only 5% of the state’s population, 25,000 people were Catholics. The landscape of our newly formed diocese was vast – more than 23,000 square miles of God’s majestic land set just south of the Platte River within the borders of Nebraska. Since those early days, our diocese has experienced incredible growth. The Lord has nurtured and guided the Diocese of Lincoln from the beginning, and by His mercy it will continue into the future.

Our Present
Our Church Today

Today, the Diocese of Lincoln is blessed to serve approximately 100,000 faithful Catholics in 134 parishes. The diocese’s 27 elementary schools and 6 high schools provide a dynamic education to more than 7,700 students, while religious education programs teach many more young people the faith. We are thankful for the men and women who devote their lives to serving others in His name, including 152 priests; 7 deacons; 48 seminarians, many studying at our own seminary, St. Gregory the Great; 141 religious sisters; and tens of thousands of committed volunteers in many ministries. Our Catholic community has heard Christ’s invitation to love one another, to be a family of faith, to pass Christ’s teachings on to every new generation, and to share our faith with those around us. We must continue to answer His call and ensure that our diocese remains steadfast in building His kingdom.

Our Opportunity
Investing In Our Future

In response to our growing needs, the diocese undertook a comprehensive planning study in 2013 to determine the feasibility of a diocesan-wide campaign. The results from this initiative signaled the beginning of the diocese’s largest ever fundraising effort. Entitled the Joy of the Gospel, the campaign will provide funding for our educational and spiritual ministries. The campaign will enable us to give witness to the love of God and ensure that future generations will experience God’s love.

“Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.”

Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, 2013
It is a blessing to be part of a strong Catholic community – but this blessing also brings with it challenges. Because of the success of our schools, our seminary, and our parishes, the Diocese of Lincoln faces new financial obligations. The goal of the Joy of the Gospel campaign is to raise $53,000,000 in pledges to address urgent needs. The primary focus areas for this historic endeavor include:

- Catholic Education
- Priestly Formation
  - St. Gregory the Great Seminary Expansion
  - Seminarian Education
- Retirement Funding
- New Evangelization
- Local Parish Projects

Pope Francis reminds us - “Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow.” We give thanks to God as we witness the ways He manifests His providential care within the Catholic Church of southern Nebraska.
CASE ELEMENTS

Catholic Education and Enrichment: $20,000,000

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lincoln is a cornerstone of our faith. Today, demographic shifts throughout the state, along with increasing costs for personnel and facilities, are challenging our parishes and schools. After much prayer, study, and consultation, the diocese has embarked on a new strategic planning and funding model to address the long-term financing necessary to operate our many schools.

The Joy of the Gospel campaign will help establish the Bishop Glennon Flavin Fund for Excellence in Catholic Education. Bishop Flavin’s goal was that each student in our diocese be prepared to become “a saint, a scholar, and a disciple.” The fund works as a catalyst for sustainability while keeping Catholic education universally accessible—it assists struggling schools in overcoming operational deficits, and incentivizes innovation—in curriculum, teacher compensation, recruitment, development, and marketing. The Flavin Fund ensures that school funding plans are developed, and that sustainability is rooted in self-sufficiency—not dependency.

Funds raised through the Joy of the Gospel campaign will form the Bishop Flavin Fund for Excellence in Catholic Education. The fund will accomplish two goals. First, it will sustain struggling schools with direct annual aid to assist in achieving financial stability. Second, it will provide significant grant opportunities for all diocesan schools to advance excellence in the quality of teaching and curriculum at every school.

Seminary Expansion and Seminarian Support: $10,000,000

For many, the path to priesthood begins in Catholic school or religious education classes. For some it starts with a conversation with a priest in high school, while others may realize their vocation at a Newman Center during college. For others the calling is found later in life, after years of career experience. No matter how God’s call to priesthood is received, the long journey to ordination is one of tireless faith and dedication.

From the time he graduates high school, a young man in the Diocese of Lincoln will spend at least 8 years in formation for priesthood. In college, at St. Gregory the Great Seminary, he will study philosophy, literature, history, and education. He will learn to pray the ancient prayers of the Church, and he will form life-long bonds of brotherhood. After college, he will spend 4 years in a major seminary, studying the Church’s theology. He will be ordained a deacon. He will learn to celebrate Mass and hear Confessions, to counsel families and to serve the poor. He will be formed as a priest, as a man, and as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In 8 years, he will be prepared for a sacred life of service to Christ and the Church.

It is not easy to become a priest, and the cost of formation is significant. But forming holy priests is at the heart of our Church’s mission. We are blessed with a great number of vocations in the Diocese of Lincoln. As we embark on the Joy of the Gospel campaign, we have the opportunity to strengthen the mission of St. Gregory the Great and to support our seminarians as they prepare to lead our Church for generations to come.
Increasing the Seminarian Fund: $3,000,000

The Diocese of Lincoln has 48 seminarians studying for the priesthood. Between 2010 and 2013, our diocese ordained 15 priests. We are blessed to have a large number of men stepping forward to answer God’s call to serve.

The diocese believes that financial impediments should never stand in the way of young men willing to answer the call to the priesthood. To foster vocations and form future priests, the Diocese of Lincoln spends $1,250,000 annually. The cost to educate a seminarian today is $22,200 during each of a seminarian’s first 4 years and increases to $40,300 per year during his final 4 years in seminary.

The diocese is responsible for most formation expenses, which are paid through our seminarian fund, special collections, and special gifts from lay parishioners. Like many areas, the cost of education will continue to rise. As the diocese projects costs and expenditures, the need to prepare for the future remains an important priority. An increase in funding will allow the diocese to continue to support this essential ministry.

A minimum investment of $3,000,000 for the seminary education fund will support the rising costs associated with encouraging the future vocations in Christ’s Church.

Expanding St. Gregory the Great: $7,000,000

Since the establishment of the Diocese of Lincoln in 1887, the men preparing for the priesthood have been educated in various seminaries throughout the United States and abroad. As the Church developed in southern Nebraska, the advantages of a local seminary became increasingly evident.

The dream of a diocesan seminary began in 1984 with a two-year college program operated at the Good Counsel Retreat House in Waverly, Nebraska. In 1998 a more significant step was taken; that year 23 seminarians enrolled as the first students to the newly established St. Gregory the Great Seminary.

The success of St. Gregory the Great is demonstrated by the 19 priests who have studied there and now serve the Diocese of Lincoln. Our seminary now attracts students from other dioceses, allowing our future priests to benefit from relationships across the country. We have also generated additional revenue as students and their home dioceses pay the tuition, room, and board. St Gregory the Great is a blessing for our diocese, and a gift to the Universal Church.

As the seminary trains men from the Diocese of Lincoln and beyond, St. Gregory the Great has an opportunity to increase its ability to serve the Universal Church. Through study and analysis, planning has begun to expand our campus. The goal is to increase capacity from 53 to 70 students while maintaining the current level of overhead costs.

An investment of $7,000,000 for St. Gregory the Great Seminary will increase the number of student rooms by 14, add priest housing, 5 classrooms, a multi-use lecture hall for students and special diocesan events, and greatly improve the current fitness facilities.
Clergy Retirement:
$9,000,000

After a lifetime of sacrifice, no priest should face retirement with financial uncertainty. While parishes support their priests during their active ministry, once retired, priests must depend on their diocesan retirement income, social security, and personal savings to meet living expenses.

The priests of our diocese have celebrated our marriages, baptized and taught our children, and buried our loved ones. Our priests are a part of our family. Our retired priests are a link to our proud past – the builders and shepherds of our Church. When a priest reaches retirement age at 75, it is our privilege, and our sacred obligation, to ensure he is cared for and loved, just as he has cared and loved for so many during his active ministry.

The Diocese of Lincoln regularly reviews the costs and long-term funding associated with caring for all retired clergy. Rising costs led us to increase the retirement fund in 2000 to the current level of $5,000,000. Today there are 23 retired priests actively serving our diocese with prayer, providing confessions and celebrating Masses where needed. The diocese allocates close to $500,000 annually to support their health, housing, and pension needs. Our actuarial audits suggest that because we will soon have more retired priests, along with the ever rising costs for care, our fund should again be increased. The Joy of the Gospel campaign will aim to secure $9,000,000 to support the critical needs of our retired priests.

Bolstering Priest Retirement: A growing number of priests in the Diocese of Lincoln are nearing their retirement years. It is our privilege to ensure their care after a lifetime of ministry. With the rising cost of health care, and an increased life expectancy, there is a significant unfunded retirement need estimated over the next 10 years. Analysis suggests that with 27 clergy expected to retire over the next 15 years, the fund should be increased by $2,250,000 by end of year 2014 alone. The Diocese of Lincoln is committed to supporting our retired priests by bolstering the retirement fund and living options.
New Evangelization: $4,000,000

“The new evangelization,” says Pope Francis, “calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization.”

*With an investment of $4,000,000, the Diocese of Lincoln aims to equip every Catholic with the tools to be an evangelist. The new evangelization is a commitment to proclaim the Gospel with new methods and ardor to those who need the merciful love of Jesus Christ. All are called to evangelize. The Joy of the Gospel campaign allows us to support evangelization in parishes, and across the diocese.*

Feed My Lambs, Tend My Sheep: $2,000,000

**Local Initiatives:** Funds from this portion of the Joy of the Gospel campaign will help parishes address specific needs in new evangelization initiatives, religious education, and youth ministries. Recognizing that each parish has unique circumstances, the diocese will support parishes in initiating new projects or programs in support of evangelization and catechesis.

**Prison Ministry:** At any given time, there are at least 1,000 Catholics held in the prisons and jails in the Diocese of Lincoln. They are often lonely, depressed and forgotten. These men and women are children of God and when we serve them, we serve Jesus Christ. Joy of the Gospel will allow the Diocese of Lincoln to provide Bibles, rosaries, and catechisms, and to train volunteers to lead Bible studies and RCIA classes within Nebraska’s prison system. Most importantly, support will allow us to bring Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist and in the other sacraments, to men and women in need of God’s mercy.

**Hispanic Ministry:** The Hispanic population in Nebraska has dramatically increased in the last decade. This demographic shift, the growth in Spanish Masses, as well as creation of the Hispanic Ministries office has resulted in a need for increased outreach efforts to help integrate new Nebraskans into the communities. Joy of the Gospel will help provide resources to pastors in all areas of the diocese to meet the needs of these individuals.

Marriage and Healing: $500,000

Pope Francis calls us to bring mercy, justice, and truth to the divorced and remarried, especially those who have fallen away from the faith. Across our country, issues related to divorce and remarriage often lead Catholics to distance themselves from Christ and his Church. For this reason, the Marriage Tribunal of the Diocese of Lincoln is called to be an agent of truth, and an agent of mercy.

*Joy of the Gospel will allow our diocese to appoint a full-time priest to visit every part of our diocese, inviting Catholics to return to the Church, and, when needed, helping them begin a tribunal process. It will also provide additional tribunal assistance to pastors. Joy of the Gospel will help the Diocese of Lincoln in our mission of justice, of truth, and of mercy.*

Endowed Chair for Catholic Studies: $1,500,000

The New Evangelization needs leaders. The Church is called to form young men and women to lead from the perspective of faith: to build a culture of life for tomorrow. We are called to the formation of young people—spiritually, and intellectually.

The Bishop Bruskewitz Chair for Catholic Studies will be a partnership between St. Gregory the Great Seminary, the Diocese of Lincoln, and the Newman Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

*Joy of the Gospel will allow us to create an accredited program of academic formation in Catholic theology, philosophy, history, literature, and art. Students attending colleges and universities across our diocese will be able to take these courses, and apply credits earned towards their degrees. Joy of the Gospel will allow us to form Nebraska’s young men and women to be the Catholic leaders of the future.*
Direct Local Support: $6,600,000

Parishes are the center of Catholic community and sacramental life for individuals and families. Through parish ministries, we worship God together, enjoy fellowship, form our children and adults in the faith, and provide for those in need. A primary objective of the Joy of the Gospel campaign will be to strengthen parishes in unison with the diocesan effort.

The efforts of our parishes will account for $33,000,000 of the overall $53,000,000 campaign goal. Each parish will raise funds for its own specific local needs. These needs may include building expansion, repairs and renovations, debt reduction, endowments, or a base of funding for parish ministries. Parishes will receive 20% of funds raised up to the local goal and will receive 50% of funds raised in excess of the local goal.

HELP
HOW YOU CAN HELP

Support the Joy of the Gospel

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.” — Proverbs 3:9-10

At this important moment in our history, let us keep in mind the many blessings the Lord has given us. The Gospel asks us to give generously of these gifts in thanksgiving for God’s generosity and goodness. Your gift to the Joy of the Gospel campaign is an opportunity to leave a legacy for generations to come. Scripture tells us that Christian stewardship goes beyond giving from our surplus. Stewardship requires a sacrifice.

The Joy of the Gospel campaign is seeking your support in a variety of ways.

- Pray for the success of the campaign. With God’s grace, we will be blessed with a successful endeavor.
- Volunteer to become a leader within the campaign. A project of this kind provides numerous possibilities to contribute one’s time and talents.
- Speak about the campaign with others. The Joy of the Gospel campaign provides promise for the future of our diocese. Share your personal experiences and testimonials with fellow parishioners.
- Pledge a gift to the campaign.

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.” — Proverbs 3:9-10
Many Ways to be Generous
You Can Make a Difference:

When the time comes, you will be glad you contributed to this historic initiative. The *Joy of the Gospel* campaign seeks pledges payable over a three-to-five year period. The campaign’s pledge redemption plans afford great flexibility, and gifts may be made in any number of ways. Pledges and outright gifts may be paid by:

- Cash/Check
- Electronic Funds Transfer/Credit Card
- Appreciated Publicly Traded Securities
- Real Estate
- Corporate Matching Gifts
- Gifts of Grain
- Gifts of Livestock

Should you wish to make a gift via methods not mentioned above, please contact the Campaign Office at 877-499-8554 to determine how best to proceed.

**Pledges**
The campaign encourages pledges payable over a three-to-five year period. At the time of the pledge intention the donor may determine their individual payment schedule. Pledges are not legally binding, but rather are good faith intentions. Pledges can be fulfilled via cash payments, check, money order, Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) or credit card.

**Planned Gifts**
Planned giving options are available for donors who wish to fulfill their commitment through a bequest, will, trust, life insurance policy, or annuities. This giving vehicle allows the donor to receive benefits during their lifetime and bequeath the remaining funds to the Church. The *Joy of the Gospel* office should be consulted to obtain instructions on planned giving.

**Stocks and Securities**
A donor can give appreciated securities and usually deduct the full fair market value, avoiding the tax on the value of the securities on the date it is transferred to the diocese. The *Joy of the Gospel* office should be consulted to obtain instructions on electronic stock transfers.

**Gifts in Kind - Grain**
A donor can give grain and avoid including the sale of the agriculture gift in farm income. If taxes are itemized, a donor will receive a donation receipt for tax purposes. Otherwise, the gift will reduce the income paid on taxes. Expenses to grow the donated crop are not separated out; the expense of raising the gift is still deducted. The gift can be made from current or prior year’s crops and must be from unsold inventory with no prior sale commitment, and not in warehouse receipts. The *Joy of the Gospel* office should be consulted to obtain instructions on gifts of grain.
To meet the spiritual and material demands of God’s Church today, while preparing for the future, the Diocese of Lincoln has launched a historic campaign. *Joy of the Gospel* will be conducted in all parishes from August 2014 through October 2015, and will address the most pressing needs of the Church. The funds supported by these funds will significantly influence the scope of our mission long into the future. The challenge is great, but so too are the faith, hope, vision, and generosity of the people of the Diocese of Lincoln.

Bishop James D. Conley will lead this effort with the support of clergy and lay leaders in every parish. Every Catholic household in southern Nebraska will be asked to consider a sacrificial pledge to the *Joy of the Gospel*.

From its humble beginnings as a diocese more than 125 years ago, the Diocese of Lincoln has matured into a Church family that continues to respond to the needs of its people, and those in need within and beyond our local communities. This is an exciting time in the history of our diocese. We face distinct challenges, but those challenges bring opportunities which we will address as we embark on the most significant fundraising campaign in our history.

Through your participation, your stewardship, and your generosity, we can respond to the needs of our Church. Through the *Joy of the Gospel*, we can pass our faith on to future generations, ensuring they will also experience God’s love and live in the light of Christ in the Diocese of Lincoln.