

The History of the

DIOCESE OF WINONA

Our baptism and our communities are the offspring of a long chain of people and events. Let us be knowledgeable of this amazing reality that brought us to life, so we can more consciously pray for it:

In 1680, the first Catholic missionary, a Jesuit, arrived in southern Minnesota to minister to the original people of the area and the new European settlers. Early priest-missionaries spoke their native European language and Latin but also learned English and Lakota to invite local residents into the faith. Father Ravoux was one who published the first catechism in the language of the first people of Minnesota, Dakota (Sioux), entitled, *Wikantanka Ti ki Chanku* (The Path to the House of God). He led the Sioux people regularly in Catholic devotional prayer in their language.

The Minnesota territory had become part of the diocese of St. Louis, MO in 1826 but later (1837) the Pope rearranged the territory so that southern Minnesota became part of the diocese of Dubuque, IA. The Bishop of Dubuque, Mathias Loras, sent Father Lucien Galtier to Minnesota where he offered the first Mass recorded for the Diocese of Winona along the running waters of the Mississippi in Wabasha, MN.

Missionary priests worked with Catholic settlers from Ireland, Germany, the Czech region, and Poland. Historians recorded a large influx of immigrants in the area between the time the region was a territory of the USA (1849) until statehood (1858). In nine short years, settlements and churches sprang up along the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers.

In the meantime, Rome formed the diocese of St. Paul. July of 1850, Father Joseph Cretin became the first bishop of St. Paul, MN. Population was growing in the territories throughout the diocesan territories which included the areas of present day Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, a portion of Wisconsin, and stretching into the Western territories up to the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

German Catholics moved in from St. Charles, MO arrived along the fertile land bordering the Minnesota River Valley. At the bend of the river, they established a new village with a Dakota name - Mankato - meaning blue-colored clay of the riverbed. The people founded the second parish in the diocese -- Saints Peter and Paul - with Father Valentine Sommereisen as the first resident priest in the diocese. Father Sommereisen arrived in Mankato in 1856 and by 1865, he and the bishop called for the help of the School Sisters of Notre Dame of Milwaukee to meet the educational needs of the growing river city. The Notre Dame Sisters opened the first parochial school in southern Minnesota.

In 1877, coadjutor Bishop John Ireland of St. Paul contracted with railroad baron, James J. Hill, for over 100,000 acres of land in southwestern Minnesota. Through newspapers and fliers, he recruited poor Irish and German farmers to settle the rich land. He assembled a committee in St. Paul to distribute the land. This committee drew up contracts with no down payment, interest paid the second year, and payment on the land required in the third year. The coadjutor's loftier goal was to settle the pristine land with Catholics.

By 1888, the Pope named the diocese a province and appointed its coadjutor bishop, John Ireland, Archbishop of the new Archdiocese of St. Paul, MN. Minnesota now had smaller dioceses one of which was the Diocese of Winona.

Father Joseph B. Cotter, a friend of Archbishop John Ireland, and pastor of the Church of St. Thomas in the city of Winona, was appointed the first bishop of the new Diocese of Winona. He was ordained a bishop on December 27, 1889 in the Cathedral at St. Paul. Ten days later he was installed in the pro-cathedral of St. Thomas, Winona, MN.

The Sisters of Saint Francis of the Congregation of our Lady of Lourdes heeded the call to the Diocese of Winona. Mother Alfred Moes moved the Franciscan sisters from Owatonna to Rochester and after the deadly twister in 1882, Mother Alfred called for a hospital in Rochester and offered to build and staff it. She enlisted physicians William and Charles Mayo to take charge of the diagnostic and surgical needs. The Doctors

Mayo and the Sisters of St. Francis opened the doors of the famous Mayo Clinic on September 30, 1889. The sisters also opened the Winona Seminary for Ladies in 1894 which eventually became the College of St Teresa (closed almost 100 years later).

In the first days of Bishop Cotter's term (1889), there were 45 diocesan priests, 4 religious, 109 parishes/missions, and 19 parish schools. By 1909 when Bishop Cotter died, there were 85 diocesan priests and 7 religious, 124 parishes/missions and 28 parish schools.

Today, there are 114 parishes/missions, 111 priests, 365 sisters, 21 brothers, 21 deacons, over 180 professional lay ministers, and 131,280 Catholics. There are 29 Catholic Schools and a Catholic university for women and men, St. Mary's University. The Diocese of Winona covers 13,000 square miles of the southern 20 counties of Minnesota.

The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona (built 1952; renovated 2008) is the home parish of the diocesan bishop and houses the bishop's chair called the "cathedra." Bishop Bernard Harrington was installed in the "cathedra" as the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Winona on January 6, 1999.

On October 15, 2008, Bishop John M. Quinn was appointed as Coadjutor Bishop of Winona. His Mass of Welcome took place December 11, 2008 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Pope Benedict XVI accepted the resignation of Bishop Harrington on May 7, 2009, which was also the date Bishop Harrington celebrated his 50th anniversary of Ordination. Bishop Quinn as installed as Eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Winona that same day.

Suggestion for prayer:

Pray the Rosary, following the Glorious Mysteries, introduced by this reflection:

From the Homily of Pope John Paul II at the Jubilee of Bishops

Sunday 8 October 2000

"*Lo, we have left everything and followed you*" (Mk 10: 28). Peter's statement expresses the radicalness of the choice requested of the apostle. A radicalness which becomes clear in the light of Jesus' demanding conversation with the rich young man. The Teacher indicated the observance of the commandments to him as a condition for eternal life. To his desire for greater perfection, he answered with a loving look and an unconditional proposal: "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mk 10: 21). The sadness of refusal fell on these words of Christ like a sudden darkening of the sky. It was then that Jesus spoke one of his severest sayings: "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk 10: 24). A saying which he himself mitigated in the face of the Apostles' dismay: "all things are possible with God" (Mk 10: 27).

Peter's statement became an expression of the grace by which God transforms man and makes him capable of a total gift. "We have left everything and followed you" (Mk 10: 28). *This is how we become apostles*. And this is how we also experience the fulfillment of Christ's promise about the "hundredfold": the apostle who has left everything to follow Christ already lives a fulfilled and joyful life on this earth, despite the inevitable trials.

Queen of Apostles, pray with us and for us, so that the Holy Spirit will descend in abundance upon the Church, and that she will shine throughout the world ever more united, holy, catholic and apostolic. Amen.

We also suggest a

Visit to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 360 Main Street, in Winona.

Make it an enjoyable day!