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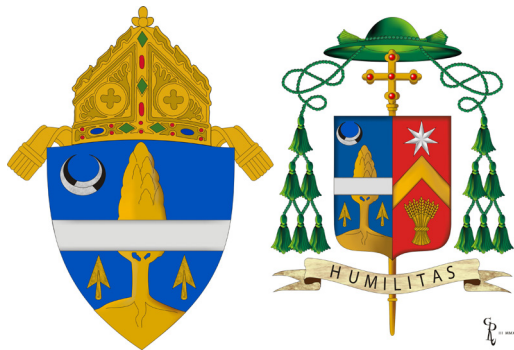
Celebrating 125 Years

Meet Our Founding Member Dioceses

This year, as we mark our 125th anniversary, Catholic Mutual celebrates the six founding member dioceses who came together to form our organization. Our prior newsletters have featured the Archdiocese of Omaha, the Archdiocese of Kansas City and the Diocese of Sioux Falls.

In September, we are proud to spotlight the Diocese of Wichita. Through the course of the year, we will also profile the dioceses of Salina and Lincoln. Just as in 1889, the year we were founded, it is our members who help us stay true to our mission of service to the Church. **We invite you to share this newsletter with any staff, clergy or other members of your diocese whom you think would enjoy it.**

Diocese of Wichita



The Coat of Arms of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wichita (left), the Coat of Arms of the Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme, Diocese of Wichita (right)



Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme, Diocese of Wichita

The Diocese of Wichita began taking conscious action to be a stewardship diocese in 1987 and they've never looked back.

"We believe that what gifts we have as Catholics are to be shared with the Church and with others," says Amy Pavlacka, director of communications for the diocese. "And we believe that our vitality is the fruit of our stewardship."

At times, it's been an uphill battle. When the first bishop to serve, Rev. John Joseph Hennessy, arrived,

the territory was suffering due to a succession of droughts and crop failures. Many settlers had abandoned their farms and there were only three Catholic churches in Wichita.

Facing such a devastating threat to the very existence of a diocese he'd been called to lead, it is little wonder that Bishop Hennessy was one of the six founding bishops of the Catholic Mutual Relief Society.

Wichita and the diocese had a period of growth and prosperity during the first part of the 20th century but a dwindling population of clergy, reduced attendance at Mass and cultural shifts around the Vatican II years, resulted in the closure of many churches and schools between the 1960s-'80s.



The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Enter the stewardship era, which, according to Pavlacka, has had a galvanizing effect that has resulted in an increase in social ministry and Catholic charities, the growth of Catholic schools and the opening of new schools. In fact, during the recent economic downturn, there were no Catholic school closures in the entire diocese.

"We wouldn't be able to do what we have without good partners," says Bryan Coulter, the director of finance and administration for the diocese, who is widely credited with keeping things on the right fiscal track during the recession. "And Catholic Mutual is absolutely part of that team."

Because it is comprised of a lot of rural locations, the Diocese of Wichita has seen its fair share of hail storms, tornadoes and other acts of God, as well as the issues and potential issues that any diocese and its locations face.

Coulter recalls a 1991 tornado that went through a town outside of Wichita and completely wiped out the parish and the rectory. "Catholic Mutual went above and beyond to make sure those buildings got rebuilt," he says.

Perhaps above and beyond compared to some commercial coverage companies. But, like the Diocese of Wichita, at Catholic Mutual, we believe that going above and beyond is the best way to serve the Church and our members.