



DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 17, 2024

O Sapientia

To the Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln,

It is with great joy and hope, that I write to you as we prepare for the Jubilee Year of 2025. Pope Francis has proclaimed this a sacred time of grace and mercy with the theme: *Pilgrims of Hope*. I would encourage each of you to be intentional in your planning to make this a year of personal growth in faith as we journey together.

We will begin our observance of the Jubilee Year in the Lincoln Diocese with an Opening Mass on **Sunday, December 29, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.** at the Cathedral of the Risen Christ in Lincoln. I would encourage all priests, religious and parishioners across the diocese to join us as we begin this important year filled with prayer, reflection and celebration.

The Jubilee tradition is based in Sacred Scripture, particularly in the Book of Leviticus, where the Lord commands His people to celebrate a year of release, restoration, and renewal every fifty years. It was a time for debts to be forgiven, slaves to be set free, and land to be restored to its rightful owners—a tangible expression of God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Christian Jubilee in the year 1300, offering the faithful an extraordinary opportunity for spiritual renewal through prayer, pilgrimage, and the Sacraments. Since then, they have occurred every 25 years. Over the centuries, Jubilee Years have become profound moments of grace, reminding us of our eternal destiny and our call to live as disciples of Christ.

Each Jubilee Year brings with it the opportunity for the faithful to gain a Jubilee Indulgence. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) defines an indulgence as “a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints” (CCC 1471).

In other words, an indulgence flows from the treasury of the Church, and is contingent upon the faithful’s reception of the Sacraments, their desire to grow in holiness and rejection of even the attachment to sin as the barrier to their relationship with Christ. Jesus taught us that whatever the Church, through the Successor of St. Peter, “bind[s] on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever [she looses] on Earth will be loosed in Heaven” (Matthew 19:18-20).

Holy Mother Church, out of love for her children and her desire for them to grow in holiness, provides unique moments of grace by which even the *stain of sin* may be wiped away, after the sin itself has been forgiven through Sacramental Confession. While there are many indulgences available to the faithful throughout the year, because the Jubilee Year is one of supreme mercy and forgiveness, the Church provides even more opportunities of spiritual cleansing through Jubilee Indulgences.

These plenary indulgences require the faithful to have no attachment in their heart to sin, even to venial sins. However, should total detachment to sin not be attainable, in these moments the Church still provides a *partial* indulgence to her children who are working towards holiness but are still attached, in some capacity, to their sinful inclinations. The normal conditions to receive an indulgence are: (1) sacramental Confession 20 days before or after the indulgenced activity, (one confession can count for many indulgences); (2) reception of Holy Communion; (3) and prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father ('Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be' is a good option). Finally, a plenary indulgence may be obtained once a day, and may be applied to yourself or to a deceased person—which can be a great way to pray for the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

A way to obtain a Jubilee Indulgence is to visit one of the eight sites in our diocese I have designated as Jubilee pilgrimage sites. These sites are:

The Cathedral of the Risen Christ, Lincoln
The Pink Sisters Chapel, Lincoln
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, North Platte
St. Benedict, Nebraska City

St. Mary, Orleans
St. Anthony, Steinauer
Assumption, Dwight
Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, Arapahoe

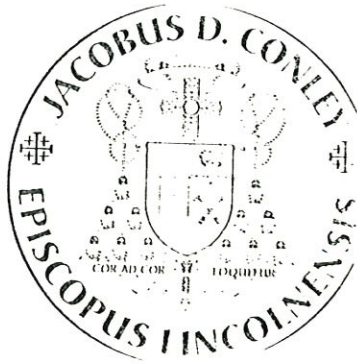
In addition to pilgrimages to these local sanctuaries, or to national or international designated holy sites, one can also obtain an indulgence through works of mercy and acts of penance. This is a year to strive to rediscover the Sacrament, imitate the mercy of the Father by feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and comforting the sorrowful, and spend time in prayer and reflection.

I would especially encourage you to meditate on the Nicene Creed. The Jubilee Year marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), which gave us the Nicene Creed. This prayer is an enduring expression of our shared faith. It is recited at every Sunday Mass and unites us as one body, proclaiming the truths of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the Church. My hope is each time we pray the Nicene Creed, we renew our commitment to live our faith and allow it to shape our lives.

Throughout the Jubilee Year, we in the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln will have the opportunity to celebrate together by participating in special events, prayerful observances and

unique reminders of our faith. We will read and discuss several books together as one diocese. There will be specific nights of adoration when we can pray together. We will invite guest speakers so we can learn together. We will even share 52 “Moments of Hope” together. More details on these and other initiatives will be forthcoming as we work to observe this Holy Year in a significant way.

I look forward to embarking on this journey of faith with you. Let us be inspired by the words of St. Paul: *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”* (Romans 12:12). May this Jubilee Year of 2025 be a time of profound grace for our diocese and for each of you. Together, may we move forward in faith as pilgrims of hope!



Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "James D. Conley".

The Most Reverend James D. Conley
Bishop of Lincoln