

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Priest has seen changes — he's 100

LINCOLN, Neb. (CNS) — In his 65 years as a priest of the Diocese of Lincoln, Msgr. Denis Barry has witnessed some dramatic changes in the church and in society.

He is the first priest in the diocese's 113-year history to reach his 100th birthday, which he celebrated July 12 at Lincoln's Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, where he lives.

The event was marked with a Mass celebrated by Lincoln Bishop Fabian W. Bruskewitz.

Family and friends gathered later for cake and ice cream and to hear the memories of a priest who has known all eight bishops of the diocese.

Msgr. Barry grew up in Agnew, one of six children. From an early age, young Denis had firsthand experience with hard work. He inherited the job of running the family farm when he was only 13, five years after his father died.

In those years, he points out, "everything was done by horses or by hand."

When he was 18, he was eligible for the draft for World War I. "I was called to the local draft board four days after the armistice was signed," he told the *Southern Nebraska Register*, Lincoln's diocesan newspaper.

With the war over and the United States withdrawing its troops, he was not called up for service.

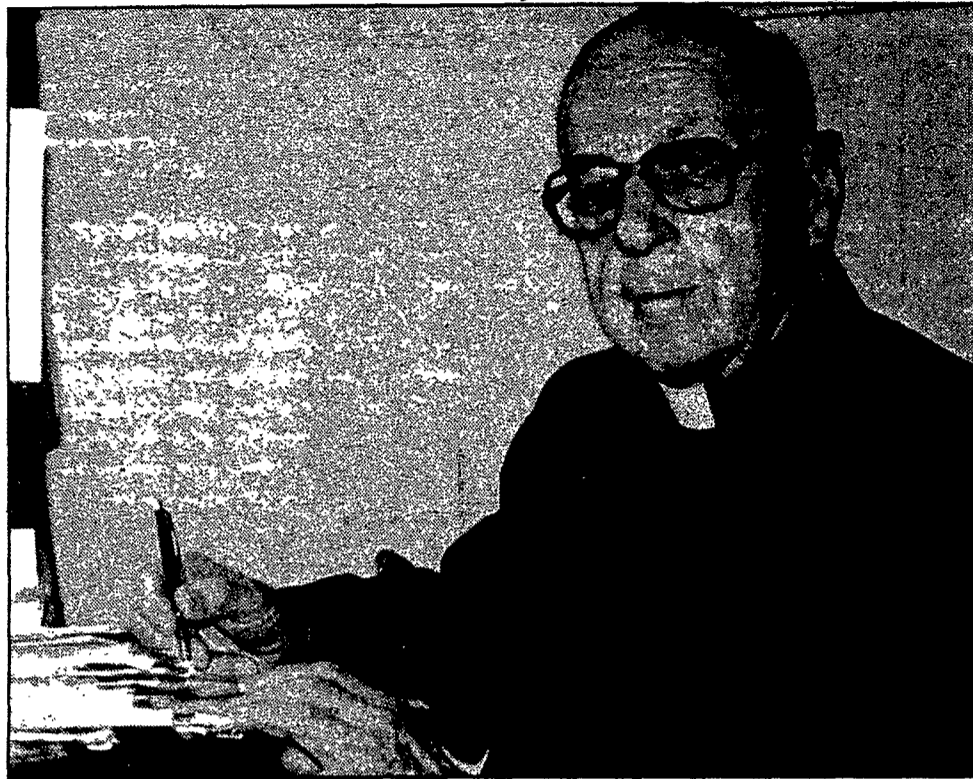
After he finished school, he was undecided about what to do with his life. He credits his mother's influence for his eventually recognizing his calling to the priesthood.

"My mother was always encouraging me to consider the vocation to the priesthood," Msgr. Barry said. "She prayed for me a lot."

He studied for the priesthood at Kenrick Seminary near St. Louis and was ordained to the Diocese of Lincoln in 1935.

In 58 years of active ministry, Msgr. Barry has served the people of southern Nebraska in a variety of ways, including as a pastor and head of a deanery. But there were a "couple of times I almost didn't make it," he said, referring to a fall from a 12-foot-high ladder and to his bout with abdominal cancer.

He has met every one of Lincoln's eight bishops, beginning with Bishop Thomas Bonacum, who headed the diocese from



CNS/Southern Nebraska Register

Msgr. Denis Barry of the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., was the first in the diocese's history to celebrate his centennial year, turning 100 on July 12.

1887-1911.

"Bishop Bonacum came to Agnew for the sacrament of confirmation in 1910, and he came to our house for dinner," Msgr. Barry said. "It was something to have the bishop come to our house."

Msgr. Barry met Bishops J. Henry Tihen and Charles O'Reilly during parish activities and Bishop Francis Beckman while he was studying for the priesthood. He would later work closely with Bishops Louis Kucera, James Casey and Glennon Flavin during his years as a parish priest.

Bishop Bruskewitz, the current head of the diocese, was installed in Lincoln in March 1992.

Msgr. Barry said perhaps the two biggest changes in his lifetime in the church and in the world were the Second Vatican Council and the automobile.

"Vatican II was a milestone in the church — for priests and the laity," Msgr. Barry said. "Many of the laws, which governed different practices, were modified and the laity assumed a larger role in the participa-

tion of the church."

The automobile, because of the mobility it provided, Msgr. Barry said, might have had the greatest impact on society in the 20th century.

"When I was taking care of our farm I walked behind a single row plow and a single row cultivator," Msgr. Barry said. "We never traveled far from home."

His home town of Agnew had only 60 residents, "but it had a general store, two grain elevators, a blacksmith shop and a doctor," he recalled.

"Only two people had cars in town, the doctor and the druggist," the priest said. "My dad said he would like to ride in a horseless buggy, but died in 1908 and never had the chance."

When asked if he had to make the choice today about becoming a priest, he said yes without hesitation.

The advice he gives to those considering a vocation to the priesthood today is "be faithful in prayer and have people that support you."

Foster family recognized by Knights

By Michael Cox
Catholic News Service

BOSTON (CNS) — The Knights of Columbus named a Massachusetts family of 26 as their International Family of the Year during an Aug. 2 ceremony.

Matthew and Miriam Gannon of Braintree were honored during the Knights' 118th annual international meeting held Aug. 1-3 in Boston.

Since the '60s, the Gannons have adopted 25 children, most of them with special physical or developmental needs. Two of the children are now deceased. They also have one biological child and 13 grandchildren.

"It wasn't that we set out to adopt so many children," explained Miriam, 66, who still cares for 11 of the children in their home, 10 of whom have special needs. "When we saw how sad their situations were, we just knew they deserved better."

The couple's adoptive children were among 50 foster children for whom they began caring in the 1960s after they responded to a plea made by a priest during Mass for more couples to become foster parents.

To accommodate the children, Matthew Gannon, 78, a member of the Braintree Knights of Columbus Council 1462, transformed the family's four-bedroom house into an eight-bedroom home equipped with an elevator, ramp and wide wheelchair-friendly doorways.

Among the success stories, Miriam said the children have entered the professional world in nursing, education, the food service industry and one daughter owns her own computer business.

The Gannons are members of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Braintree, where they are known for their activities in the parish, including Knights.

"If faith, family and the cardinal virtues for Knights of Columbus, the Gannon family is the living embodiment of those qualities," said Supreme Knight Virgil C. Dechant.

Alzheimer's association offers regional assistance

Without a cure for Alzheimer's disease, the number of people affected by it is expected to increase threefold by the year 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Seventy percent of people with Alzheimer's live at home, and the bulk of the caregiving responsibility is falling on family members, the association noted.

In Monroe County, of 91,577 people age 65 and older, 14 percent have been di-

agnosed with Alzheimer's disease, according to the association.

The Rochester Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, which serves the Finger Lakes Region, offers information to help caregivers taking care of loved ones with a memory impairment. Caregivers in the counties of Monroe, Steuben, Ontario, Wayne, Seneca, Livingston, Schuyler, Chemung and Yates may call the regional office for literature on anything from long-

distance caregiving to steps for getting a diagnosis, and enhancing communication with an individual. A resource specialist is available to answer any questions as well, and to refer caregivers to resources in their communities. Support groups are held throughout the nine-county area, with caregivers sharing their experiences.

For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 716/760-5400 or 800/724-0587.



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