



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of ORANGE

PASTORAL CENTER: COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

Diocese of Orange History

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange has played a profound role in shaping the cultural and community landscape of Orange County. The multicultural mission and the far-reaching influence of the Diocese of Orange, currently the 10th largest diocese in the nation with more than 1.2 million members and nearly 20,000 students enrolled in its extensive educational system, continues to influence and shape the many communities of Southern California.

Across the United States four times more people identify themselves as Roman Catholic than any other religion according to the PEW Form on Religion and Public Life (2011). In Southern California the historic roots of Orange County and the Catholic Church intertwine and run deep. The importance of the Catholic Church in shaping the growth of Orange County is self-evident. It has been 243 years since the establishment of the first Spanish mission to the creation of the Diocese of Orange. As Orange County has blossomed, changed, and developed a unique identity, so has the county's largest religious organization

The Diocese of Orange was established by Pope Paul VI with 44 parishes and more than 300,000 Catholics in 1976. William Johnson, an auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, was appointed as its first bishop. In accepting his appointment, he said, "The very name, 'Orange,' suggests a golden treasure and the new diocese is all that in its physical characteristics, its people and its traditions. The area is small enough to be unified as a true community and large enough to encompass a substantial number of generous hearted people."

In 1986, the very Reverend Norman McFarland was appointed the second Bishop of Orange. A very spiritual and intellectual man, he was also gifted with a keen financial aptitude that served the Diocese well. History will show that his strategic planning was key in placing the Diocese of Orange in the a strong financial position, some 25 years later acquire the iconic Crystal Cathedral to transform to a Catholic Cathedral located in the very accessible central Orange County.

The Most Reverend Tod D. Brown was appointed the third Bishop of Orange by the Pope John Paul II on June 30, 1998. Bishop Brown shepherded the Catholic community in Orange County through turmoil and success for 14 years and was influential in meeting the goals and needs of the people. Bishop Brown was instrumental in reaching a groundbreaking settlement with victims of clergy sexual abuse and instituted unprecedented reforms including the *Covenant with the Faithful* in 2004. Through the innovative vision and tireless mission of Bishop Brown to build a much needed cathedral for Orange, the Diocese of Orange acquired the Crystal Cathedral campus which would be trans-



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formed into a Catholic Cathedral as a center of worship, mission and culture for the more than 1.2 million Catholics in the Diocese and for Christians all over the world.

The fourth Bishop of Orange, the Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, was installed December 2012 in a very special time of growth, renewed commitment to salvation mission and evangelization and transformation.

Over the past 36 years Orange County has developed into one of the most diverse communities in the world – integrating Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian ethnicities while still respecting their cultures. The multicultural mission of the Diocese of Orange is its hallmark and has paved the way toward a greater respect and knowing appreciation of each other's heritage and traditions by the members of the many different communities. Since the diocese was founded, it has filled a variety of social, economic, and spiritual needs throughout Orange County, the United States and the world. Orange County parishes, Catholic philanthropists and the two Bishops use their global reach to spread the healing mission of the church.

The acquisition of the Crystal Cathedral, a historic center of protestant worship, provides the diocese with a physical and spiritual center for a very diverse and dispersed Catholic community and elevates its stature as the most visible center of Catholicism on the west coast.

In Orange County like anywhere, life and the church will change. Faith remains a deeply personal experience, yet all Catholics celebrate that faith together. The Catholic Church has served as a steady unifying spiritual force over the last two centuries and will continue to care for a diverse community. The Diocese of Orange has evolved as Orange County has, equitably responding to controversy and success. The Diocese remains strong and spiritually rich. The diocese is poised to continue its spiritual as well as physical growth in the coming decades.