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Pope Francis appoints Monsignor John Thomas Folda as Bishop of Fargo

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Pope Francis has appointed Monsignor John Thomas Folda as bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Fargo, which serves more than 72,000 Catholics and 132 parishes and missions in the eastern half of North Dakota. The Holy See made the announcement today at noon in Rome, 5 a.m. Fargo time.

Bishop-elect Folda will be the eighth Bishop of Fargo. He succeeds Bishop Samuel Aquila, who was named Archbishop of Denver on May 29, 2012. Bishop David Kagan, Bishop of Bismarck, has served as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Fargo since Archbishop Aquila was installed in Denver on July 18, 2012. He continues as Apostolic Administrator until the episcopal ordination of Bishop-elect Folda, which is expected to take place in the second half of June.

A priest of the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., Bishop-elect Folda currently serves as Rector of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, Neb.

Bishops who previously served the Diocese of Fargo include: Bishop John Shanley, 1889-1909; Bishop James O'Reilly, 1910-1934; Bishop Aloisius J. Muench, 1935-1959; Bishop Leo F. Dworschak, 1960-1970; Bishop Justin A. Driscoll, 1970-1984; Bishop James S. Sullivan, 1985-2002; and Bishop Samuel J. Aquila, 2002-2012.

Biography of Bishop-Elect John Thomas Folda

John Thomas Folda, 51, was born on Aug. 8, 1961, in Omaha, Neb., the son of Mabel and the late James Folda. He is the youngest of three children. His brother, James, and his wife, Paula, live in Brookfield, Wis. His sister, Mary, and her husband, Karl, live in Adams, Neb. They have four children and one grandchild.

Bishop-elect Folda grew up in Omaha, where he attended St. Thomas More Grade School and Archbishop Ryan High School. After graduating from high school in 1979, he attended the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, where he studied architecture and electrical engineering.

In August 1983, Bishop-elect Folda entered seminary formation for the Diocese of Lincoln. He attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia and graduated in 1985 with a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy. He continued his theological studies at St. Charles Seminary, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 1988 and a master of arts in theology in 1989.

On May 27, 1989, Bishop-elect Folda was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Lincoln by Bishop Glennon Patrick Flavin. For two years, he served as parochial vicar at Cathedral of the Risen Christ, and was a teacher of religion at Pius X High School in Lincoln.

In 1991, Bishop-elect Folda was sent to Rome, where he earned a licentiate in sacred theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas. Upon returning to the Diocese of Lincoln in 1993, he was assigned as pastor of St. Paulinus Church in Syracuse and Holy Trinity Church in Avoca. He was also guidance counselor and teacher of religion at Lourdes Central Catholic Schools in Nebraska City. During this time, he also served as assistant to the Vicar General of the Diocese of Lincoln.

In 1995, Bishop-elect Folda was appointed pastor of St. Leo Church in Palmyra and St. Martin Church in Douglas, while continuing to work in the diocesan offices. In 1997, he was appointed diocesan Director of Religious Education, Co-Vicar for Religious, Master of Ceremonies, and Censor Librorum. He was also appointed Delegate of the Bishop to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital and continues as vice president of the Board of Directors. Bishop-elect Folda has been a member of the Board of the Nebraska Catholic Conference since 1993. He has also been a member of the Presbyteral Council, College of Consultors, Finance Council, Priests' Continuing Education Committee, Catholic Social Services Board and the Ethics Committee of St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center.

In 1999, Bishop-elect Folda was appointed rector of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, Neb. He served as president of the National Association of College Seminaries from 2008 to 2010. On Oct. 10, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI named him "Chaplain of His Holiness" with the title of Monsignor.

On April 8, 2013, Pope Francis appointed him Bishop of Fargo.

Additional information is available on the diocesan website: www.fargodiocese.org.