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NEWS RELEASE

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DIOCESE TO MARK 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A SERIES OF EVENTS

The Diocese of Allentown will mark its 50th anniversary of its founding in 1961 with a series of events beginning with a Mass at the Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena in Allentown this Sunday. Bishop John Barres will celebrate the Mass for priests, deacons and their wives and Diocesan administrative employees and their spouses.

Commenting on the anniversary, Bishop Barres said, "Our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Allentown is a time for us to look back with gratitude and a sort of 'supernatural nostalgia' for the sacrifices of the generations of dedicated Catholics that have gone before us. It is a time for us together to discern in the present, the Holy Spirit's call to holiness and mission. And it is a time for us to look ahead boldly into the 21st Century to realize new opportunities for evangelization. We stand on the shoulders of so many dedicated priests, deacons, religious and lay people. They met the challenges of their time with bold faith and creativity and their living memory inspires us to meet the challenges of the 21st century with a bold faith and creativity uniquely suited for our times."

Pope John XXIII signed the documents creating the Diocese of Allentown from the five northernmost counties of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on January 28, 1961. The creation of the new Diocese was announced in Washington on February 15 of that year.

Parishes of the Diocese are currently selling a 188-page history of the Diocese and its parishes written by John Hanley, a former archivist for the Archdiocese of Atlanta. The Diocese of Allentown's Office of Communications is producing a half-hour DVD on the history of the Diocese for release in the Fall.

Already scheduled are a pilgrimage to the oldest churches in each county of the Diocese in May, a pilgrimage to Rome in September, and a pilgrimage to the National Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC in October.

Other events are planned but not yet scheduled, including a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. John Neumann in Philadelphia. St. John Neumann established several of the parishes in what is now the Diocese of Allentown when he was Bishop of Philadelphia in the 1850s. Also still in the planning stages are a youth rally and a concert by the Diocesan choir.

Some annual Diocesan events including the Wedding Anniversary celebration held in September and the older adult conference held each October will have special 50th anniversary themes.

The newspaper of the Diocese of Allentown, The AD Times, will publish a special commemorative issue in February of 2012 as the Anniversary Year draws to a close. A special closing Mass celebrated by Cardinal Justin Rigali, the Archbishop of Philadelphia will close the Anniversary year on February 12, 2012 at the Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena in Allentown to be followed by a banquet.