

## **“A SHEPHERD’S CROOK(STON)”: BISHOP COZZENS HEADS NORTH**

It did not take long to realize that I was sharing a residence with “a man on a mission.” It was the fall of 2005, and I had been sent by Archbishop Flynn to begin a two-year Licentiate program in Rome studying patristic spirituality. This would make me the **third priest** from the Archdiocese studying in Rome and living at the **Casa Santa Maria**, the residence for graduate student priests in Rome. Truthfully, it is not easy to initiate studies in a foreign country and in a foreign language. I would experience the usual ups and downs of being a new student, not to mention one in his early forties! I soon learned something about my other two diocesan brothers. Both **Frs. Scott Carl** and **Andrew Cozzens** were amongst the **most diligent** priests in the house. The three of us were quite “bookish” indeed, a fact duly noted by priests from other dioceses! One remarked to me, “All you three do is study!” Got that right, brother!

The then “Fr.” Cozzens was in his **final year of doctoral studies** and was “in the zone,” to use the proverbial phrase. He was finishing his **dissertation** and was in high gear. I write this because that was **not** my universal experience with the other 75 priests at the Casa. Some had been there for several years working on their studies and while good men to be sure, did not seem to be in any hurry to get home! There are many distractions in Rome— incredible restaurants, churches and museums to name but a few. It was easy to become distracted and to knock off studying to explore the eternal city. That is, unless you were from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul Minneapolis! I write this by way of introduction, as today we honor and bid “farewell” to **Bishop Andrew Cozzens** at our Noon Mass. He began his priestly ministry in this parish in 1997, and it is fitting that he concludes his formal public ministry within our Archdiocese in the same place.

Bishop Cozzens is a most diligent, holy, **zealous** and effective church leader who (according to my Google map!) will travel **precisely 300 miles** in a northwesterly direction from here to lead the clergy, religious and faithful of the Diocese of Crookston as their 8th Bishop. It is not his diligence alone that caught my eye. In the **stressful** environment of completing a doctorate, he remained ever **joyous**, kind and welcoming. No, he did not go “out on the town.” Rather, he made time to minister to the **Missionaries of Charity**, offering Mass and hearing confessions. He was neither trying to make “Vatican connections” or become a “Romaphile.” He was sent for a **particular mission** (to study sacramental theology for the purpose of being a seminary professor, and that is exactly what he did. It is this **attentiveness** to mission that has characterized his ministry in this Archdiocese in whatever capacity he has served. Now he will take this same zeal, attentiveness and pastoral charity to the faithful in Crookston.

When the Diocese of Crookston was **erected in 1910**, St. Paul priest **Fr. Timothy Corbett** was named its first bishop. His consecration was part of an historic event that took place at **St. Mary’s Chapel** at The Saint Paul Seminary on **May 19, 1910**. (Our Cathedral was still under construction!) On that day, Archbishop John Ireland consecrated Corbett as a bishop. But he was not alone in receiving episcopal consecration that day. **Five others** joined him, including the first bishop of the new Bismarck, ND diocese! That “sextuplet” consecration in a single ceremony has **never been repeated** since in this country. I wrote an article marking the 100th anniversary of that day for the Catholic Spirit in 2010. **Click here** or **here** to learn more about that unique day in the history of this Archdiocese.

Spanning **17,210 square miles**, the Diocese of Crookston comprises 14 counties in Northwestern Minnesota. Approximately **32,000 Catholics** live within its territory, including **66 parishes** served

by 32 diocesan priests. Bishop Cozzens is a huge supporter of Catholic schools, and his new diocese is home to eight Catholic grade schools and one Catholic high school (East Grand Forks). **Polaris** (Roseau) and **Arctic Cat** Snowmobiles (Thief River Falls) are based in the diocese—perhaps the bishop will take up some new winter hobbies! He loves the outdoors and I shared with him that I once made a private retreat on Magnuson Island in the Lake of the Woods. Dating back to 1732, **Fort St. Charles** was the longest occupied French post in Minnesota and is the only French fort in the state in which the remains of a contemporary Native habitation have been located nearby. This is the **tip-top** of Minnesota (you have to go through Canada to get there!), making the bishop's new diocese the northernmost diocese in the lower 48! The Knights maintain a rustic cabin on the site of the historic trading post.

If a priest from Crookston were to ask me what they can expect from their new shepherd, I would tell them that they are most blessed, having won the episcopal lottery! He will be a shepherd after their hearts, expending himself **tirelessly** for the good of the faithful, religious, and clergy of the diocese. By Catholic population, Crookston is amongst the **smallest dioceses** in the country, and is the second smallest see city (e.g., city in which the Cathedral is located) next to Gaylord, MI. However, its new shepherd will have amongst the largest hearts of any in the nation! As we bid farewell, we take this opportunity to thank God for the gift of his ministry among us and feel **confident** that God will use him for good. May God who has begun the good work in him, by His grace, bring it to fulfillment.

- We welcome **Bishop Andrew Cozzens** as celebrant of today's **Noon** Mass. He begins his ministry as **Bishop of Crookston** next week! Join us after the Noon Mass for a **reception** in Hayden Hall to offer heartfelt thanks. *Ad multos annos!*
- Did you know that the bishop's **crozier** (or crosier) likely dates to the 7th century? In the West, they symbolize a **shepherd's crook**, (with hooked tops), most useful in hooking the sheep back in line! The first unequivocal reference is in the 27th canon of the Council of Toledo in 633 A.D.
- Counting **sheep**, Cathedral style. In 2018, we averaged **1,822** people attending Mass per weekend. (vs. 1,852 in 2011) This year, we averaged **1,450 per weekend**. That is a **sharp decline**. However, in 2018 we averaged **0 livestream** views (obviously!). In 2021, we **averaged 3,150 weekly "views"** for our Sunday Mass, including from out of state. While a "view" may be brief, it's still a visit, and I'm grateful.
- I hate to burst your bubble, but **historians** surmise the following foods were **not** present at the **1st Thanksgiving** Feast in 1621: mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie (no wheat flour for crust). **Say it ain't so!** Instead, they served venison, fowl (but which variety?), corn bread, cabbage, carrots and cod. I hope you enjoyed your feasting as much as I did!
- We are hosting the ordination to the **diaconate** (permanent) of seven men **this Saturday**, December 4 at 10:00 a.m. All the faithful are invited. Let us pray for these men and their wives and families as they begin their ministry amongst us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector