

Bishop: Christian joy through hope will lead faithful through all battles

CROOKSTON, Minn. (CNS) – The sun shone on the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston Dec. 6 for the installation of Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Crookston.

Archbishops and bishops, priests and deacons, Bishop Cozzens' family and the lay faithful from multiple dioceses and archdioceses braved the aftermath of a weekend blizzard to gather and celebrate a new shepherd taking charge of his flock.

Before Mass Bishop Cozzens' family led a Rosary to pray for priests and vocations.

A brass quintet performed "Memorare" by Christine Heidgerken as a prelude to Mass. The processional hymn "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven" began the celebration.

After the clergy processed to their places, Bishop Cozzens knocked on the cathedral door.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis opened the door and presented Bishop Cozzens to Father Joseph Richards, rector of the cathedral, who received the bishop. Accompanied by his entourage, Bishop Cozzens entered the cathedral.

Given an aspergillum and aspersorium, Bishop Cozzens processed through the nave and blessed those in attendance with holy water. While Archbishop Hebda went to the cathedra, or the bishop's chair, Bishop Cozzens assumed his place at the altar.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio, who was a

concelebrant of the Mass along with Archbishop Hebda and other bishops of the region, presided over the rite of canonical possession.

He recognized the gift of Bishop Cozzens' service in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis as an auxiliary for six years. The nuncio referenced Pope Francis' "Beatitudes for Bishops," highlighting the seventh beatitude:

"Blessed is the bishop that works for peace, who accompanies the paths of reconciliation, who sows in the heart of the presbyterate the seed of communion, who accompanies a divided society on the pathway of reconciliation, who takes by hand every man and every woman of goodwill in order to build fraternity: God will recognize him as his son."

"Give your heart to God, the Virgin Mary and your people," Archbishop Pierre told Bishop Cozzens.

As he began his homily, Crookston's new shepherd delivered a greeting in Spanish to the Hispanic faithful.

Switching back to English, Bishop Cozzens shared how in medieval times on Dec. 6, St. Nicholas Day, a boy would be ordained as bishop. Although he didn't choose Dec. 6 for that reason, he said, his hope is to serve the Diocese of Crookston well beyond St. Stephen Day, when the boy bishop would relinquish his office 20 days later.

With warmth and a smile, Bishop Cozzens spoke of how Christians are blessed by God's love and always have hope they are watched over by the Father.

"Our God is a God who saves," he said. "We have hope because God has come to save us."

Hope, a powerful weapon for Christians, is different than many people think, he said.

"Hope, however, is not mere optimism, nor is it Pollyannish

positive thinking,” Bishop Cozzens said. “You know those things we tell ourselves when we don’t want to face sadness or evil. ... ‘It will all work out. It is all going to be OK. It is not that big of a deal.’ These sayings may numb our feelings of sadness for the moment, but they are not hope.”

“Christian hope does not ignore or downplay the reality of evil,” he continued. “We proclaim a hope that is stronger than evil. Christian hope is rooted in the paschal mystery, it is rooted in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God has shown us that he will be faithful to his promises.”

Although evil is in the world, Christian joy through hope will lead the faithful through all battles, he said.

“Thus, we are not afraid to face evil, not afraid to expose evil, not even afraid to acknowledge our sins and weakness, for Christ has conquered all this evil through his death and resurrection and has given us reason to hope,” said Bishop Cozzens.

The path forward is clear to the bishop.

“The Diocese of Crookston has been through real difficulties and struggles – it will not help us to pretend these did not happen or do not exist,” he said. “To have real hope we must face difficulties and struggles head on. With your help we will do that together. Where there have been failures, we must repent for them. We must be ready to seek and to give forgiveness.

“This means each of us looking at the wounds in our hearts and being willing to seek God’s healing through forgiveness. In the Church we call this work reconciliation.”

Bishop Cozzens succeeds Bishop Michael J. Hoepfner, who resigned in April at the request of Pope Francis after a Vatican investigation into allegations that the bishop

mishandled allegations of clergy sexual abuse.

Bishop Richard E. Pates, the retired bishop of Des Moines, Iowa, served as apostolic administrator of the diocese until Bishop Cozzens' installation.

The key to healing, Bishop Cozzens said, is a personal relationship with Jesus in the Church. Each person has that need individually and it can be met through baptism, reception of the Eucharist, confirmation and the sacrament of reconciliation, he said.

Those same ingredients are the key to evangelization, or sharing the love and hope of Christ, he said.

Bishop Cozzens said his first goal is to be a man of prayer, spending time each day before the Eucharist praying for the people of the diocese and seeking to serve them.

"Jesus Christ is alive. He lives in us. He lives in Crookston. No matter what difficulties we experience, he wants us to be his witness," he said.

Whatever state in life, consecrated religious, married, it doesn't matter, Bishop Cozzens said. All are called to "proclaim the God of salvation in the Spirit, a building up of the Church." Everyone is called to be a missionary, he said.

"Today is a beautiful day, but it's really not about me," he said.

"It's about the Church of Crookston. Somebody's got to be bishop, and that's me," Bishop Cozzens said with humor. "But this is for us. It's the work only we can do in northwest Minnesota."

Bishop Cozzens noted that the sugar beet harvest was the largest this fall in the region's history. "Why? Because of the drought," he said. Sugar beets had to grow deeper and longer; they were stretched to reach any available water

underground. And when rain finally did fall, they grew much larger than normal, he said.

“Rain down your grace upon the Diocese of Crookston,” Bishop Cozzens said in a prayer to close his homily. “Let us grow deep roots in you, so we may bear an abundant harvest for (our) salvation.”

After Communion, Bishop Cozzens thanked everyone for celebrating with him, and had a special thank you to his parents, Jack and Judy Cozzens.

“I’m very grateful to my mother and father for all you have given me,” he said.

He also shared with the people of the diocese, “I look forward to many, many days with you.”

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