



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

June 2, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am here today on behalf of Archbishop Hebda to express support for you in the transition of your pastor Fr Nels Gjengdahl, as you prepare to welcome Fr Nathan LaLiberte.

I know that you have been blessed for the last two years by the gifts of Fr Gjengdahl, most especially his warm and engaging personality, his deep spiritual life and his inspiring homilies. Many of you have expressed to me and to Archbishop Hebda your sadness about his leaving. Decisions about priest placements are challenging; it is always a combination of the needs of the parish and the needs of the priest. In considering all the factors in this case, it seemed best for Fr Gjengdahl to return to the ministry of teaching in a high school – filling a great need we have in the Archdiocese – even though it is painful that he has to leave Nativity.

I am grateful that we are able to bring in a relatively young, new priest to Nativity, who has been able to successfully lead a parish and school as pastor. I know that you will find in Fr Nathan, like Fr Nels, a vivacious, energetic, dedicated pastor with a heart of service and talent to share the Gospel.

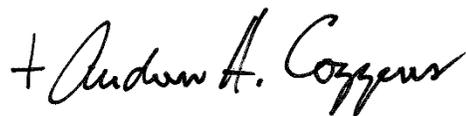
In an effort to make sure that you all are fully informed of the challenges facing the parish, I also need to inform you of a financial challenge that many of you don't know about. Every Catholic parish pays a monthly assessment to the Archdiocese, which funds the services that the Archdiocese provides to all 187 parishes in the 12-county Metro area. In early 2015, Nativity of Mary stopped paying those assessment dollars because of concerns regarding the Archdiocesan Bankruptcy and possible financial settlements. Over the period of three years, the parish ran up a debt of \$450,000. The parish began paying the assessment again this last year.

The decision to withhold the assessment was made before Fr Nels became pastor. Since this is something every parish pays, in justice to all the other parishes who paid their assessments, this debt now needs to be paid. The good news in all of this is that the parish has worked out a zero-interest plan to pay off the debt over 10 years, and has pledged transparent financial communications with you going forward. I understand this news, along with the transition of pastors, may cause confusion and surprise, and in an attempt to answer questions and start the work of transparency, I will be hosting a parish meeting following the 10:30am Mass today (June 2). I invite you all to come and share your questions and concerns.

Please know that Archbishop Hebda and the leadership of the Archdiocese are deeply committed to the success and flourishing of Nativity of Mary. This is why we are sending another talented priest to invest in this community. We are committed to working with parish leadership to make sure that the financial and spiritual future of Nativity is secure. The 70-year history of Nativity is one filled with resilience, hope, faith and service to all. I know the next 70 years will provide opportunities for spiritual growth, service and overcoming other challenges together, guided by the Holy Spirit, drawing many to know and love Jesus Christ.

Let us ask Our Lady, to whose Nativity this parish is dedicated, to pray for us and for our parish and school.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew H. Cozzens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Andrew H Cozzens, STD, DD
Auxiliary Bishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

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