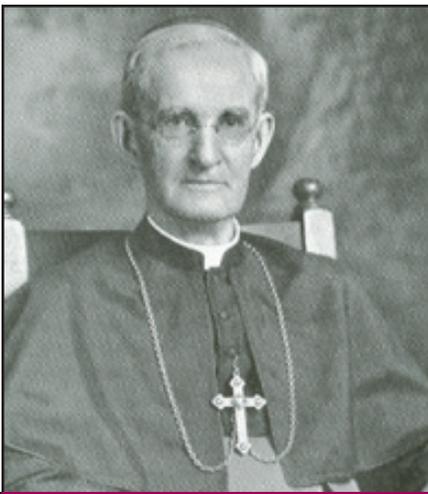


THE DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE SESQUICENTENNIAL

1868-2018
150 years
www.dioc.org/150



Bishop Alexander J.
McGavick, D.D.
1921-1948

Fourth BISHOP OF LA CROSSE

Alexander J. McGavick was born in Fox Lake, Illinois on August 22, 1863 to Irish immigrants James and Catherine McGavick. He was ordained on June 11, 1887, by Archbishop Patrick Feehan. Pope Leo XIII appointed him first auxiliary bishop of Chicago on December 2, 1898 and he was consecrated on May 1, 1899. Pope Benedict XV selected him to succeed Bishop James Schwebach as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse on November 21, 1921.

Bishop McGavick was considered a quiet man although a great preacher and orator. While in Chicago he worked diligently with the Holy Name Society. After coming to Wisconsin, a largely rural state, he focused on the plight of the farm family particularly during the Depression and promoted the Diocesan Rural Life Board. He was also concerned about the decline in businesses in La Crosse, particularly hard hit with prohibition were the number of breweries in the diocese. As the Depression worsened and

more banks failed, he encouraged the priests and the laity to reduce parish debt principals and consequent interest payments with “energy and determination.” Despite the troubled economic times during his episcopacy, Bishop McGavick founded Aquinas High School in 1928 and the Diocesan of Council of Catholic Women in 1934. The first issue of the La Crosse Register (Catholic Times) was printed on August 9, 1936, a dream of Bishop McGavick’s for many years. It was his desire to have each home have the paper which would connect those in the diocese and throughout the Catholic world. He died in office on August 25, 1948.

In our diocese Bishop McGavick’s Coat-of-Arms is the first to bear the processional cross and the Roman hat (gallero) with the six tassels in three rows on each side denoting the office of bishop. The mitre and crozier are also symbols of his office. His motto: *Sursum Corda* is Latin for lift up your hearts, text from Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.

