

Holy Things, Holy People

Exploring Catholic history in the Northwest through treasures from the past

PART 32: MAP OF THE NEW ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE

1 NOVEMBER 2015

A commonplace map of Washington State, mounted on cardboard, with some scrawled markings on it in thick blue pencil, has been preserved for decades in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Seattle. But this is no ordinary map. The markings were made by Archbishop Thomas Connolly, and they date from the time when Seattle was elevated from a diocese to an archdiocese.

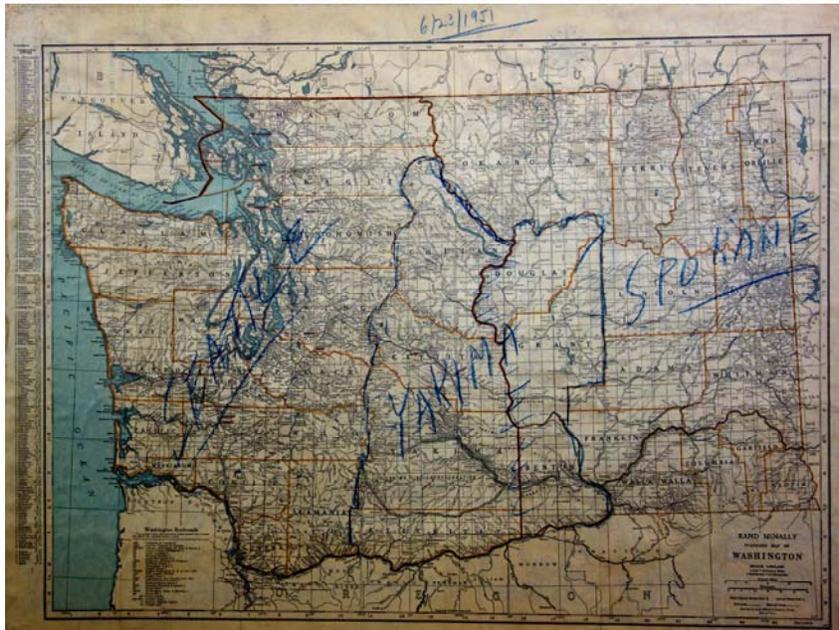
The boundaries of our diocese have changed many times in the 165 years since its creation. From 1853 to 1868, Bishop Blanchet was responsible not only for all of what is now Washington State, but parts of Idaho and Montana as well, as far east

as Missoula. In 1868, the territory was reduced to the boundaries of Washington Territory. In 1913, the boundaries changed again with the creation of the Diocese of Spokane, which split the state roughly in two. Each of these changes reflected the Church's response to the growing population in the area, as resources were reallocated and leadership bolstered to ensure the most effective preaching of the Gospel in the region.

In the years following World War II, Washington State boomed. Between 1940 and 1950, the population increased from 1.2 to nearly 2.4 million. This population growth was not only in the major centers, but in the rural areas, especially in central Washington. The completion of Grand Coulee Dam in 1942 created about one million acres of new farmland. Soon migrant workers from Mexico were pouring into the region, almost all of them Catholic. Bishop Connolly of Seattle and Bishop White of Spokane struggled to respond to their needs.

In September, 1950, the celebration of the Centennial of the Diocese in a newly-reddecorated St. James Cathedral brought 32 bishops to Seattle, along with the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Amleto Cicognani. It was on this occasion that the idea for a new diocese first surfaced. The creation of a new diocese in the Yakima Valley would ensure better spiritual care for the population there, and would allow Seattle and Spokane to focus on their own booming centers. At the same time, elevating Seattle to an Archdiocese would reflect the growing importance of the city as commercial and industrial center. It would also acknowledge the vigor of the local Church, even though the Catholic population was not large compared with other Archdioceses. During Cicognani's visit to Seattle, he and Connolly talked about the possibilities, marking proposed boundaries for the new diocese on a map, scribbling things out, drawing things in.

It took several months, but Pope Pius XII saw things



On this map of Washington State, the boundaries of the new diocese of Yakima were marked in Archbishop Connolly's characteristic soft blue pencil. Courtesy of the Archives of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Connolly's way. On June 23, 1951 (the date scrawled in pencil at the top of the map of Washington State) the Pope issued a decree creating the new diocese of Yakima and appointing Connolly's right-hand man, Msgr. Joseph Dougherty, its first bishop. With the same decree, he elevated Seattle to an Archdiocese, with Connolly as the first Archbishop of Seattle.

On July 18, the changes were formally announced. They made for big news in Seattle. Archbishop Connolly was interviewed by KJR Radio, at the time Seattle's most popular radio station. A recording of the interview survives in the Archives, so

it is possible to hear the deep and mellow voice of our first Archbishop commenting on the news and graciously receiving the congratulations of the radio announcer. "The response has been quite enthusiastic and very friendly," he told KJR's listeners, and observed that it was "very interesting to note the interest of our non-Catholic friends." He added that he expected many of his brother bishops to attend the formal ceremony in September, since "I have expatiated at length on the glories and the beauties of our evergreen playground."

Connolly was right—29 bishops, 20 monsignori, and more than 300 priests attended the ceremonies at St. James Cathedral on September 26, in which Connolly received the pallium, the sign of his new rank, and Msgr. Dougherty was consecrated the first bishop of Yakima. According to the *Progress*, the ceremonies were "thrillingly-perfect," "imposing," and "brilliant with beauty and the light of faith."

Father Thomas Mulligan, SS, formerly the president of St. Edward's Seminary, gave the sermon. His discourse on the role of the bishop could not have been altogether encouraging to the newly-consecrated Bishop Dougherty. "For the love of his flock, the Bishop undertakes a multitude of onerous and unattractive tasks. The government of his diocese involves a great amount of planning, directing, developing, financing, in a complicated work of administration that is never fully done. It involves many heart-breaking responsibilities, and—alas—the shepherd may sometimes be forced to ask hard things of his priests and people, even though in loving them more, he be loved less."

The grand ceremonies closed with the singing of the National Anthem: the elevation of Seattle to an Archdiocese was not only an ecclesiastical moment, but a civic one. And it all began with a few pencil markings on a map!

—Corinna Laughlin, *Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy*