



**+ BISHOP JOHN STEPHEN CUMMINS**

**Priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco 1953 - 1962**  
**Priest and Chancellor of the Diocese of Oakland 1962 - 1974**  
**Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento 1974 - 1977**  
**Second Bishop of the Diocese of Oakland 1977 - 2003**  
**Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Oakland 2003 - Present**

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 1

July 2012

No 9

## Fr John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

John Stephen Cummins, the 21<sup>st</sup> native Californian raised to the Episcopal rank, was born in Oakland on March 3, 1928, son of Michael and Mary (Connolly) Cummins. John's parents were natives of Ireland. He received his early education at St Augustine Parish School in Oakland and later declared an interest in the priesthood and enrolled in St Joseph Seminary in Mountain View.

Upon completion of his theological studies at St Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park, John was ordained a priest on January 24, 1953 by Bishop Hugh A Donohoe, auxiliary bishop of San Francisco. John's older brother Ben was also a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and served the archdiocese as Superintendent of Catholic Schools until his untimely death from cancer on January 14, 1974.

During his initial years of priestly ministry, Fr Cummins served as curate at Mission Dolores Basilica in San Francisco and from 1953 to 1957 he was chaplain to the Catholic students at San Francisco State College.

In 1957, Fr Cummins was appointed to teach at Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, a position he held for five years. At the same time, he also served in campus ministry at Mills College in Oakland. During this same period, he was an active member of the Roman Catholic-Baptist Dialogue of the Bishops' Committee on Interreligious and Ecumenical Affairs. He also found time to take courses in history at the Berkeley campus of the University of California.

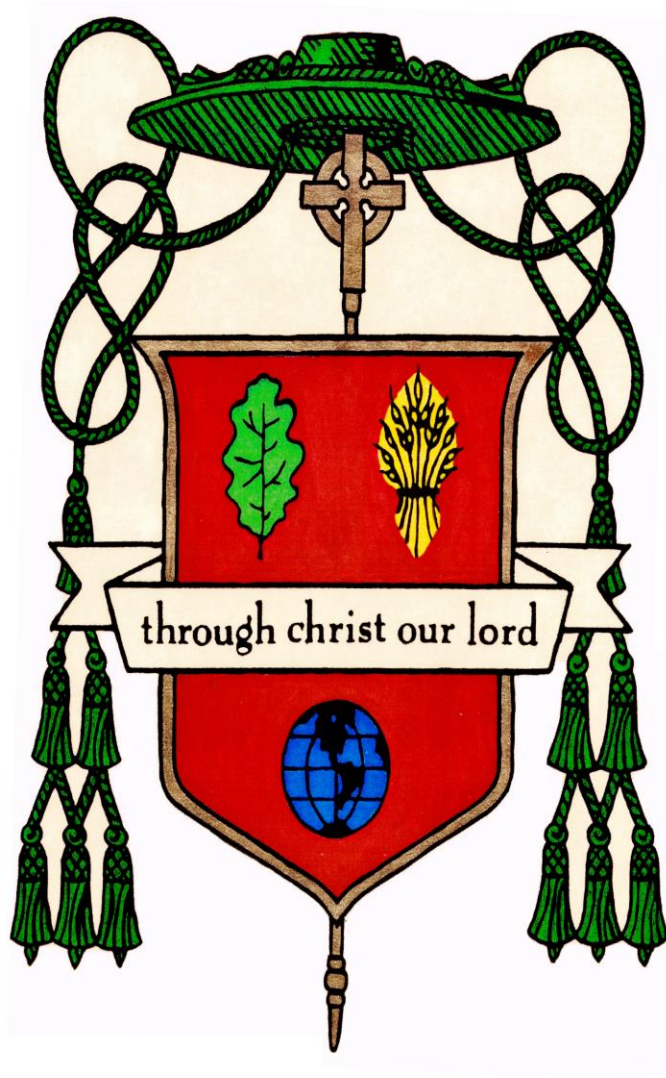
When parts of the Archdiocese of San Francisco were taken to create three new dioceses in the Bay Area and beyond in 1962, John became a priest of the new Diocese of Oakland and its first chancellor. In that position, he was in charge of personnel relationships and the daily activities of the diocesan curia. He coordinated the Social Justice and Ecumenical Commissions and looked after the diocesan insurance program. On July 27, 1963, Fr Cummins was made a Domestic Prelate by Pope Paul VI.

Monsignor Cummins continued as chancellor of the Diocese of Oakland until 1971 when he was appointed executive director of the recently formed California Catholic Conference in Sacramento. In that capacity, he helped channel the functions of the conference into three areas: (1) liaison with state departments and with the California Legislature, (2) information to Catholic associations and organizations, to other state conferences and to the United States Catholic Conference and (3) coordination of inter-diocesan activities in the areas of education, welfare and related items.

During the years he worked at the Catholic Conference in Sacramento, Monsignor Cummins lived in residence at St James Parish, Davis and commuted to work daily. On February 12, 1974, at the age of 46, Monsignor Cummins was appointed by Pope Paul VI to the Titular See of Lambesi and auxiliary bishop of Sacramento. On May 16, 1974, John Stephen Cummins was ordained a bishop by Bishop Alden J Bell and co-consecrators Bishop Floyd Lawrence Begin of Oakland and Bishop Hugh Aloysius Donohoe of Stockton in the Memorial Auditorium in mid-town Sacramento. Bishop Cummins served as auxiliary to Bishop Alden J Bell and traveled the Gold Dust Trails of the diocese for three years serving the People of God of the Sacramento Diocese.

On May 3, 1977, Bishop Cummins was appointed to the Diocese of Oakland as the second bishop, succeeding Bishop Floyd Begin, the founding bishop of Oakland. He was installed as Bishop of Oakland on June 30, 1977 and served in that role for 26 years. During the first decade of his episcopacy, the Bay Area suffered a serious earthquake which caused severe structural damage to the Oakland Cathedral of St Francis de Sales. The cathedral had to be permanently abandoned and Bishop John began the process of securing new land for the construction of a new cathedral. It would be left to his successor, Bishop Allen Vigneron, to complete the planning and construction of the new cathedral called *Christ Our Light Cathedral* overlooking Lake Merritt in the downtown area of Oakland.

Having reached the age of 75 and serving as bishop of Oakland for 26 years, Bishop Cummins retired on October 1, 2003. He continues to live in Oakland in a home provided by the diocese and serves as needed. At the age of 84, Bishop John is still in good health and continues to be active. We wish him health, happiness and good cheer for years to come.



**Bishop John Stephen Cummins' Coat of Arms**

**"Through Christ our Lord"**