

The Diocese of St. Augustine 1870 – 2005



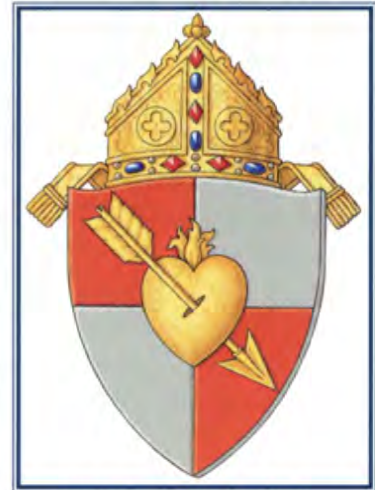
When in 1870 Bishop Augustin Verot crafted the Coat of Arms for his new Diocese of St. Augustine, he chose the emblem of a human heart pierced by a single arrow. This symbol reflected the piercing ray of God's love that affected St. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), after whom the see city and diocese were named, and drew him to the "new commandment" of Jesus

Christ, to love one's neighbor as oneself. If there is one theme that can be taken to describe the advancement of the Catholic Church in Florida from 1877 to the present, apart from its physical and numerical growth, it is the impressive record of Catholic social services to the poor, the sick, the alienated, and the marginalized. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the people of the Diocese of St. Augustine, which until 1958 covered the entire state east of the Apalachicola River, strove to call all races, classes, and religions "neighbors."

In 1876, the year Bishop Verot died, there were only about ten thousand Catholics in the entire state, and ten diocesan priests. The new bishop, John Moore (1877-1901), introduced priests of the Order of St. Benedict, or Benedictines, to what would become Hernando, Pasco, and Citrus counties. In 1888 he invited Jesuits from New Orleans into Tampa and the eight southernmost counties of the state. In 1887-88, Moore lost four of his diocesan priests to the yellow fever epidemic that swept much of Florida. Moore himself contracted the disease. Sister Mary Ann, a member of the Congregation (Sisters) of St. Joseph, whose motherhouse was in St. Augustine, nursed so many victims of the fever in Jacksonville, the Duval County Commission named her "Jacksonville's Angel of Mercy." Three other nursing sisters of the same community in Jacksonville and Fernandina succumbed to the fever: Marie Celenie, S.S.J., Mary de Sales, S.S.J., and Rose de Lima, S.S.J.



Bishop Victor Galeone.



Crest of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

During the late nineteenth century, following Bishop Verot's example, Moore encouraged the building of parochial schools for African-American children. Staffed by both priests and nuns, these schools did not require students to have any connection to the Catholic Church. As a young priest in Charleston, Moore had personally taught catechism classes to the sons and daughters of slaves. Famous non-Catholic leaders took notice of the ecumenical diocesan outreach. When the Cathedral of St. Augustine was gutted by fire in 1887, Florida railroad magnate Henry Flagler and world-famous architect James Renwick both donated treasure and talent to see that the venerable church was rebuilt, and a campanile added west of the façade. When in December 1889 Moore convened the first diocesan synod, the number of diocesan priests had increased to



La Leche Chapel at Mission Nombre de Dios.

thirty-one.

Bishop William J. Kenny (1902-13) was the first American-born bishop of the diocese. Previously he had served as pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Jacksonville, and distinguished himself as a civic leader in the aftermath of the great fire that destroyed much of Jacksonville, including his church, on May 3, 1901. During his tenure he vigorously promoted Catholic education. By the second decade of the new century, the Sisters of St. Joseph were operating six "Academies for Young Women" in Florida, along with fourteen primary schools, and St. Joseph's Orphanage in Jacksonville. Seven of the schools were dedicated to the education of African-American children.

Kenny's successor in 1914, Bishop Michael J. Curley, had to contend with a swelling tide of anti-Catholicism in the state, which at one point, in 1916, led to the arrest of three Sisters of St. Joseph for violating a new law that forbade white persons from teaching African-American children. Curley, at thirty-seven the youngest bishop in the country, eloquently

defended the Sisters. In 1922 he was promoted to Archbishop of Baltimore.

Next in episcopal succession was Bishop Patrick Barry (1922-40), one of three distinguished Barrys from County Clare, Ireland, to grace the Florida church. His brother William would be the founding pastor of St. Patrick Church on Miami Beach (1926-67) and his sister Mary Gerald would become an Adrian Dominican nun in the U.S. and found Barry College (now University) in Miami Shores. Two mighty hurricanes struck South Florida in 1926 and 1928, taking thousands of lives and causing immense damage. Bishop Barry directed all churches in the diocese to "take up a special collection for the homeless, those without shelter, and the injured who require medical attention." The disaster prompted the Knights of Columbus, a lay Catholic fraternal service organization, to set up emergency relief stations at churches in South Florida. Using the hurricane relief system as a model, Bishop Barry established an annual "Orphan's Collection" that called on all parishes of the diocese to contribute to a central fund for abandoned children. The bishop and his people also had to confront and overcome two financial calamities: the collapse of the 1920s Florida land boom and the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Bishop Joseph P. Hurley, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and former Vatican diplomat, succeeded Barry in 1940. He transformed Barry's Orphan's Collection into a broader-based Catholic Charities Drive. In the ensuing decades the diocese professionalized this social service so that today the Catholic Charities Bureau of the Diocese of St. Augustine is one of the largest direct service organizations in North Florida. Much like the early diocesan philosophy of aiding all in need, currently ninety-five percent of those receiving aid from Catholic Charities are disadvantaged non-Catholics.

Bishop Hurley was also a great supporter of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Founded in 1930, the group's purpose was "to support, educate and empower all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service." Such lay organizations helped to prepare the diocese for the unprecedented population increase in the decades following World War II, when Catholics from both the snow-belt and Latin America flocked to the Sunshine State. Between 1945 and 1950 Father Thomas J. McDonough was named administrator, and in 1947 Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese, while Bishop Hurley served in



John Moore, Second Bishop of St. Augustine, 1877-1901.

the Vatican Diplomatic Corps overseas. Working closely with lay leaders, Bishop McDonough oversaw the first diocesan fund drive and built many churches and hospitals. At the completion of his diplomatic service in 1949, Hurley received the title Archbishop *ad personam* from Pope Pius XII. From that date until his death in 1967 the archbishop expended all his energies in the task of growing the Church to meet the spiritual demands of millions of new Catholic Floridians. (See accompanying profile.)

Bishop Paul Tanner guided the diocese from 1968 to 1979. "In the broad mission of the Church," Bishop Tanner noted at his installation, "the laity share just as much as the religious, the priests, the bishop, and the Pope." Lay participation increased under Bishop Tanner as the Right to Life Office, Youth Ministry, and Catholic Schools were progressively turned over to lay leadership. This trend flourished under Bishop John J. Snyder, who from 1979 to 2001 entrusted diocesan executive positions to dedicated lay leaders. For the first time, lay women were entrusted with key leadership positions; offices for African-American Catholics, Peace

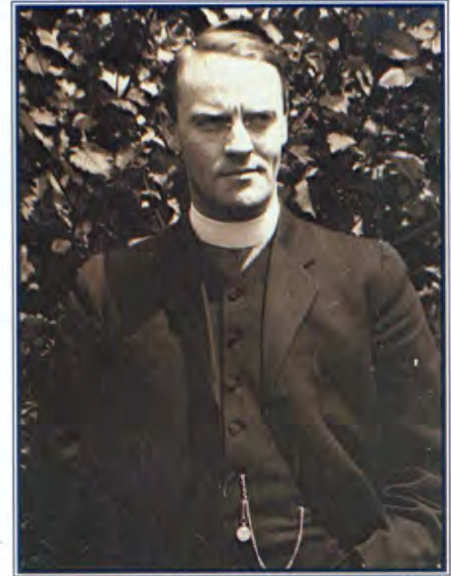
and Social Justice, as well as Gay and Lesbian Catholics were established.

When Bishop Victor Galeone succeeded Bishop Snyder in 2001, he found the North Florida diocese in a state of still continuing growth. As a means to reach out to both Catholic and non-Catholic youth, he has instituted a popular "theology on tap" series of informal lectures. Having spent six years as a missionary in Peru, Bishop Galeone has extended the diocese's outreach to Latino and Latina Catholics. Such efforts continue to show how the present diocese, building on its past, thrusts itself into the future, attentive to the original call of its diocesan patron, St. Augustine of Hippo, to love one's neighbor as oneself.

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William J. Kenny, Third Bishop of St. Augustine, 1902-1913, is shown second from left in company with noted diocesan priest-missionaries (from left) Patrick J. Bresnahan, Henry Peter Clavreul (traveling companion of Bishop Verot in the 1860s and 70s), and James Veale.



Michael J. Curley, Fourth Bishop of St. Augustine, 1914-1922. He is depicted here while still pastor of St. Peter's in DeLand.



The façade of the Cathedral of St. Augustine as seen today. The campanile, designed by James Renwick, architect of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, was added after fire substantially damaged the cathedral in 1887.



Sanctuary of the Cathedral as enlarged and remodeled for the 400th anniversary of the parish in 1965.

The Builder Bishop

Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, who guided the Diocese of St. Augustine from 1940 to 1967, came to Florida after serving seven years as an attaché in the Papal Secretariat of State, Vatican City, where he oversaw matters relating to the United States. Prior to that assignment he held diplomatic postings to India and Japan. In foreign lands, part of Hurley's diplomatic responsibilities included taking extensive surveys of Church assets, charting Catholic growth patterns, and formulating strategic planning for the institutional Church.

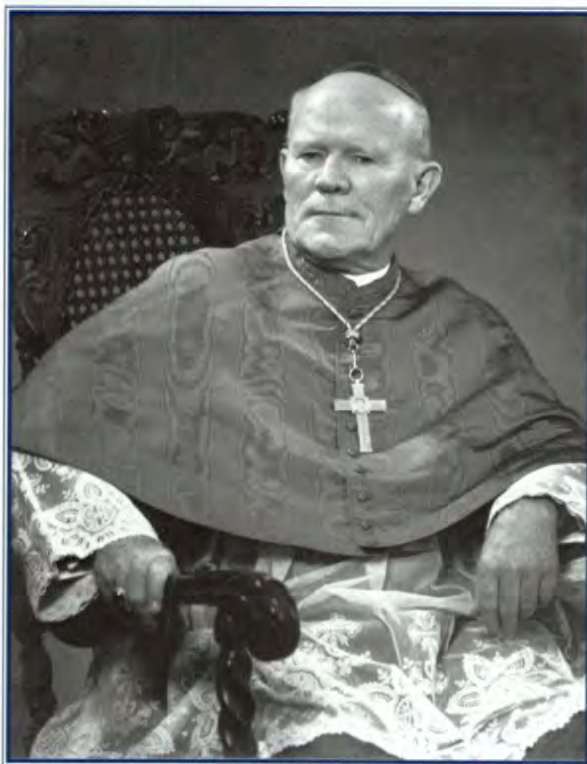
That experience served him well when he took the helm of a Florida diocese that comprised virtually an entire state twice the size of Ireland. When the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, Hurley was sorely pressed finding priests to serve the Catholics among 2.1-million men and women who poured into Florida for military training—a number that exceeded Florida's resident population. And at war's end he had to contend with what he wryly called another "Catholic invasion"—families fleeing northern states to find fifty feet in paradise. To that influx from the snow and ice latitudes he could later add immigrants from the Caribbean and the rest of Latin America.

With 900 new Florida residents arriving each day, many of them Catholics, Hurley had to create parishes and schools for them at a pace that matched the brick-and-mortar period at the turn of the century, when northern dioceses had to build to absorb the high tide of European immigration. To that task he brought a realtor's sagacity and a demographer's prescience that astounded the Florida business community. Criss-crossing counties in small aircraft, he calculated the directions in which cities would expand and he identified the then-wilderness areas where he thought outlying residential communities would be developed. Then, employing sophisticated land purchasing techniques, he bought ten acres here and ten acres there while the prices were still low. When, years later, Florida Catholics marveled that their churches and schools were so strategically well-sited, few knew that this was the legacy of the bishop whom his priests called (but not to his face) "Ten-Acre Joe."

To staff those churches and schools he recruited scores of priests from Ireland and Spain.

Archbishop Hurley's other fine qualities, too numerous to describe in this small space, establish him as one of the great shepherds of the American Church. A powerful orator, a man in love with the beauty of the House of God, a prelate of unwavering faith, maintenance of principle, and uncompromising honesty, he was a bishop to his fingertips.

His deeds will grow in stature with each passing year.



Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, Sixth Bishop of St. Augustine, 1940-1967.