

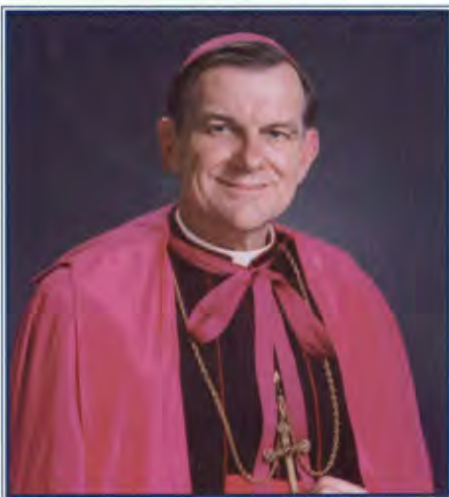
The Diocese of Orlando



The Diocese of Orlando was established on June 18, 1968. Prior to that date, Central Florida was part of the Diocese of St. Augustine, so the history of the two dioceses is a shared one. In 1968, the Diocese of Orlando consisted of fifty parishes and served 128,000 Catholics. Because of the explosive growth of the Orlando metropolitan area, engendered by the opening of Walt Disney World and other tourist destinations, the diocese became one of the fastest growing in the nation. Today it includes 73 parishes, 10 missions, and 37 schools spread over the nine counties of Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Marion, Lake, Volusia, Brevard, Polk, and Sumter. It serves a population of approximately 350,000 Catholics. The patroness of the Diocese of Orlando, established by Bishop Thomas J. Grady, is Mary, the Mother of God.

Orlando's first bishop was William D. Borders who was installed on June 14, 1968. A native of Indiana and a former Army chaplain, Bishop Borders's achievements included establishing parish councils, parish education boards, participation of the laity as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, a Sisters' Council, a migrant ministry apostolate staffed by full-time personnel, and a campus ministry program that was acclaimed nationally. In 1974 the bishop became the second Florida prelate named to head the oldest see in the United States, the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Succeeding Bishop Borders was Bishop Thomas J. Grady, a native of Chicago, who was installed on December 16, 1974. Earlier in his career, he had been director of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., which is one of the largest Catholic churches in the United States. Bishop Grady was shepherd of the diocese during a period of dramatic growth. He established eighteen new parishes; a tourism ministry; San Pedro Center, a centrally-located spiritual life center; liaison with a sister diocese in the Dominican Republic; and greater participation of women in the work of the Church. He was also a much-admired speaker, columnist, and poet. At the end of his tenure in 1990, the Catholic population of the diocese had grown over 76% and the number of parishes had increased by more than a third.



Bishop Thomas G. Wenski.



Crest of the Diocese of Orlando.

The Third Bishop of Orlando, Norbert M. Dorsey, was installed on May 25, 1990. Bishop Dorsey is perhaps one of the most well-traveled bishops in the country, as he has worked in 52 nations on five continents while fulfilling his former responsibilities as assistant general of the Passionist Order. Under Bishop Dorsey's leadership, the diocese has continued to



St. James Cathedral.

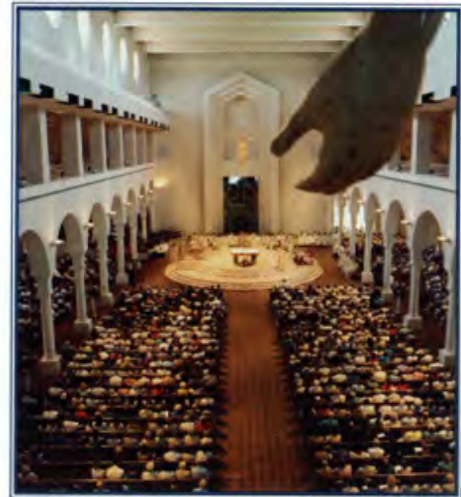
add parishes and schools, as well as to expand its ministry to the growing Hispanic community through the establishment of Radio Paz and health clinics for migrant and farm workers. Bishop Dorsey and Bishop Grady worked together on two projects: the establishment of Mary, Queen of the Universe Shrine, a church built in the midst of tourism, where visitors can pray and attend Mass; and Bishop Grady Villas, a residential community in St. Cloud for adults whose primary diagnosis is mental retardation. Bishop Grady also authored a prayer and mission statement for the Villas and helped with the design of that eleven-acre residential community. He died on April 21, 2002. The Villas opened on January 1, 2004. Bishop Dorsey established a cemetery at San Pedro Retreat Center for priests of the diocese. It is in that cemetery that Bishop Grady is buried.

In July of 2003, the Holy Father appointed Bishop Thomas G. Wenski as the first Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando. The Mass of Welcome for Bishop Wenski was held on August 22, 2003 at Mary, Queen of the Universe Shrine. He is the first Florida-born bishop in the diocese and would become the Bishop of Orlando upon the retirement of Bishop Dorsey. Bishop Wenski served in the Archdiocese of Miami prior to coming to Orlando. He brings to the diocese a strong record of political and spiritual activism on behalf of immigrants and the poor. He is an avid writer whose portrayals of the struggles of immigrants and migrant workers have been published in both Catholic and secular publications. Bishop Wenski is fluent in English, Haitian Creole, and Spanish. He speaks a little Polish as well. His homilies appeal to diverse groups because of his ability to use the gift of language to preach the Word.

On November 13, 2004, Pope John Paul II officially accepted Bishop Dorsey's retirement. Bishop Wenski succeeded him as Fourth Bishop of Orlando.

As a thriving and growing community of Catholic faithful, the Diocese of Orlando looks forward to an increasingly important role in the work of the universal church in Central Florida. The talent and hard work of its clergy, staff, volunteers, and parishioners should continue to have a positive and lasting impact on an increasingly important region on the Florida Catholic Heritage Trail.

For more information visit www.orlandodiocese.org



Mary, Queen of the Universe Shrine.