

**Solemn Vespers on the Eve of the Funeral of
Most Rev. John J. Snyder
Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine
Introductory Comments by Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez
October 1, 2019**

“A Compassionate Shepherd”

This Cathedral, the first parish of the United States, welcomed Bishop John J. Snyder, as the 8th Bishop of St. Augustine on December 5, 1979, following the tenure of Bishop Paul Tanner.

This afternoon at 4:00 p.m., nearly 40 years later, this same Cathedral received the beloved bishop to lie in state, after having passed into eternity on September 27. It is the first day of our nine-day period of mourning for him.

We are here to pray Solemn Vespers for a beloved shepherd who faithfully served this particular Church, the mother Diocese of St. Augustine, from December of 1979 until his retirement on October 25 of the year 2000. He remained Diocesan Administrator until August 21 of 2001 when Bishop Victor Galeone was consecrated as the ninth bishop of the diocese.

Bishop Galeone *truly* wanted to be here with us for this event, but his caretakers at the Sisters of the Poor in the Archdiocese of Baltimore dissuaded him from coming, out of concern for his safety and well-being.

I know that Bishop Snyder was ready to return to the Eternal Father’s house. He could not understand why God would not take him sooner, but he accepted God’s Will in all things, and on the memorial of St. Vincent de Paul, Bishop Snyder passed away. There was a certain symbolism to his passing on that feast day because, in a way, Bishop Snyder’s ministry had much in common with the amazing practical charity of St. Vincent de Paul. His was a heartfelt service on behalf of the poor, the needy, the disadvantaged, and the afflicted.

Bishop Snyder was passionate about the pastoral care of migrants and refugees, of people with special needs, and youth suffering from addictions in the three Cenáculo communities in our diocese. He was also a leader in compassionate concern for death row prisoners for whom he was a national advocate, seeking to eliminate the death penalty as a means of punishment for prisoners. He also advocated strongly for the protection of the unborn and vulnerable seniors in danger of euthanasia.

I will always remember him as a most compassionate shepherd. I have not known anyone who witnessed the Eternal Father’s unconditional love for all persons as much as he did.

His episcopal motto was *Peace in Christ*, and the motto was indeed fitting: Bishop John J. Snyder was a true instrument of peace in seeking greater justice and reconciliation in Church and society. His coat of arms will be stored in our Cathedral of St. Augustine until the coming of the Lord as a reminder of his work for unity in the entire Body of Christ, motivated by the sublime desire of Jesus *that all may be one*.