



Most Rev. John J. Snyder

Born: October 25, 1925, New York City

Educated: Cathedral College, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, N.Y.

Ordained: June 9, 1951

Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn: December 13, 1972

Episcopal Ordination: February 2, 1973, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Installed Bishop of St. Augustine: December 5, 1979

Retired: December 12, 2000

Died: September 27, 2019, Jacksonville



Bishop John J. Snyder, auxiliary bishop of Brooklyn, found out he was the new bishop of St. Augustine during Pope John Paul II's visit to New York in October 1979.

Two months later he took over a diocese during tremendous change brought on by population growth and the Second Vatican Council.

When Snyder was ordained a priest in 1951, he envisioned himself devoting his life to parish ministry. His bishop had other ideas. After only six years in parish work, he became assistant secretary to Bishop Bryan J. McEntegart and then secretary to Bishop Francis J. Mugavero, both of Brooklyn. In 1972, he was appointed the auxiliary bishop of Brooklyn.

The gregarious New Yorker brought a wealth of experience – and expectations – to his new post. Catholics in North Florida quickly discovered their new bishop embraced the reforms of Vatican II and expected them to do the same.

An advocate of the gospel of mercy, he sought out lay people, especially women, to serve in leadership roles and set up the Ministry Formation Program to train them. He established ministries to reach out to people who felt no connection with the church – the divorced, prisoners, the disabled, minorities, and people with HIV/AIDS.

“I will measure the effectiveness of my leadership by my ability and the willingness of this local church to call forth, develop and utilize the gifts and talents not only of its priests and religious but all the people.”

Bishop John J. Snyder, at his installation



Bishop John Snyder celebrating Mass for inmates at Union Correctional Institution in Raiford.

The Ministry to Persons with Disabilities gained national recognition for Camp I Am Special, a summer camp for the disabled. He visits with the campers each summer and joins in the activities.

To reach out to lapsed Catholics, he expanded the diocesan tribunal and streamlined the annulment process for divorced Catholics.

A strong opponent of the death penalty, Bishop Snyder supported pastoral ministries in the state prisons in the diocese. He visited the men on Death Row, bringing them the sacraments, and kept prayerful vigil outside the prison during

executions. He continued meeting men on Death Row long into retirement.

He also served as chaplain of Comunità Cenacola, a community that serves the needs of people with addictions.

Bishop Snyder consolidated diocesan administration in the new Catholic Center, which he built in Mandarin in 1982. The old Immaculate Conception school in downtown Jacksonville was renovated, renamed the Providence Center and turned into the hub for social services, including an expanded Catholic Charities.



A Mass of Thanksgiving for the 450th anniversary of St. Augustine celebrated by Cardinal Seán O'Malley, OFM Cap., special envoy for Pope Francis. To his left are Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, president of USCCB, and Bishop Snyder, at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine.



Bishop Snyder with Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, a mentor, at the 1988 Respect Life Pilgrimage, Mission Nombre de Dios, St. Augustine.



Bishop Snyder provides remarks at a ceremony for the groundbreaking of the Camp I Am Special Aquatics Center in 2017.



Bishop John Snyder joined the clergy of the diocese for the dedication of the Santa Fe Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in High Springs, December 5, 2015.

Bishop Snyder was active ecumenically, helping found the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville and joining forces with other faith leaders to discuss issues. He was active nationally in the ecumenical efforts of the American bishops, especially the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

He also served as chair of the bishops' Committee on Women and Society and helped draft the pastoral *Strengthening the Bonds of Peace*, which addressed the role of women in the church.

The Catholic population doubled during his tenure to 132,000. He established eight churches, seven elementary schools and a high school that was named in his honor and authorized preliminary plans for St. Francis Academy in Gainesville.

On a riverfront estate south of Mandarin, he established Marywood Retreat and Conference Center. He built a new All Saints Nursing Home and four retirement homes, including one for priests, Casa San Pedro, where he he lived since retiring until his death in 2019.