



Most Rev. John Moore

Born: June 27, 1834, County Westmeath, Ireland

Educated: College of Courbre, France; Urban College of the Propaganda, Rome

Ordained: April 9, 1860, Rome

Named Bishop of St. Augustine: February 16, 1877

Episcopal Ordination: May 13, 1877, Charleston, S.C.

Installed Bishop of St. Augustine: May 20, 1877

Died: July 30, 1901, St. Augustine



The Vatican turned to an Irish missionary priest matured by the Civil War to be the second bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

Born in County Westmeath, Ireland, John Moore came to the United States in October 1848 at the age of 14 after the death of his father. His family settled in Charleston, S.C., where the parish priest saw a young man with a vocation and sent him to a minor seminary.

Moore returned to Europe to complete his education, studying the classics in France and theology at the Urban College of the Propaganda in Rome, known for educating missionary priests. He returned to Charleston, S.C. as a newly ordained priest just as the Civil War started.

During the war, he assumed enormous responsibilities. Moore's first assignment was assistant priest at the cathedral, but soon he became its pastor. The cathedral was destroyed in 1861 during the frequent bombardments of the city. During the war, he ministered to the soldiers of both armies. When Bishop Patrick Lynch was named by Jefferson Davis as the Confederate delegate to the Vatican and to the court of Napoleon III, Moore became administrator of the diocese, and after the war its vicar general.

When he was named bishop of St. Augustine in 1877, Moore was already well acquainted with the post-war struggles facing Southern Catholics.

*“He was unostentatious,
without attracting attention
to his humility.
He was simple in manner
and easily approached.”*

Father William Kenny,
Moore's successor as bishop

Moore arrived in St. Augustine in May 1877 to assume his duties. He had 10,000 Catholics under his care but only 11 priests. He recruited priests and nuns from his native country of Ireland, enlisted Jesuits to serve in Tampa and Miami and Benedictines for Pasco County. Tampa Jesuit High School and St. Leo University are part of his legacy.

The presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph grew as well to eight convents, six schools, and St. Mary's Home for girls in Jacksonville. And under Bishop Moore, the congregation severed its ties with its motherhouse in France and organized as a diocesan order.

In April 1887, his cathedral was gutted by fire. Architect James Renwick, who designed St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City, witnessed the fire and offered his services to restore and enlarge the cathedral. The project would take 15 years, and Moore would travel all over the country raising funds. Even Henry Flagler donated to the cause.

A year later, the fire was eclipsed by a far more devastating crisis – a yellow fever epidemic.

In 1888, no one knew what caused yellow fever, but everyone knew it was deadly and spread quickly. When it broke out in South Florida, Jacksonville went on the alert, quarantining or arresting anyone who entered the city from the South.

It wasn't enough. Out of a population of 13,000, the fever struck 5,000 people, killing 427. Many Jacksonville residents

tried to flee the city or moved to makeshift camps on the outskirts of town.

Led by Bishop Moore, the priests and nuns of the diocese stood their ground. The Sisters of St. Joseph turned from teaching to nursing the victims of the fever. Priests administered the sacraments, gave the dying the Last Rites, buried the dead and comforted the mourning. But they were not immune. When Father William J. Kenny, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, came down with the fever, Bishop Moore came to Jacksonville to take over his pastoral duties, only to be stricken with the fever, too.

Before it was over, four priests, a quarter of the priests in the state, would die.

In 1899, while traveling in Pennsylvania, Bishop Moore fell ill, probably from a stroke, and died two years later in 1901. He left the diocese much stronger than he found it with 32 priests and more than 2,000 students in Catholic schools throughout the state. Among the churches he founded are St. Joseph Parish in Jacksonville and St. Patrick in Gainesville. Bishop Moore Catholic High School in Orlando is named for him.