On August 13, 1958, the Diocese of Miami was created, with 51 parishes, 65 diocesan priests, and 21 religious order clergy ministering to 185,000 Catholics in 16 counties in southern Florida. Most of the rest of the state was covered by the original Diocese of St. Augustine. Bishop Coleman F. Carroll, formerly Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh, was installed as Miami's first bishop on October 7, 1958, at the newly-elevated St. Mary Cathedral.

He immediately moved to build the first minor seminary in the southeastern United States, St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, which was dedicated just thirteen months after Bishop Carroll’s installation. The major seminary of St. Vincent de Paul in Boynton Beach, which now serves every diocese in Florida, opened its doors four years later, in 1963.

Between 1958 and 1963, Bishop Carroll led the new diocese through a tremendous program of expansion. Those first five years saw the number of parishes nearly double, from 51 to 94, and the number of priests more than triple, from 86 to 305.

The church in South Florida also grew due to the tremendous influx of Cuban refugees and Catholics from the northern United States. The diocese bore the brunt of the Cuban exile exodus for a full year prior to receiving federal government assistance. Between 1960 and 1962, Catholic Charities, led by Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh, welcomed, cared for, and placed with temporary guardians or family members more than 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children in what became known as the Pedro Pan exodus. Most were later reunited with their parents.

On May 8, 1968, the ecclesiastical Province of Miami was established. The Diocese of Miami was elevated to the rank of Archdiocese and two new Florida dioceses were created, Orlando and St. Petersburg. Miami yielded eight counties to the new dioceses. It then consisted of 85 parishes and 10 missions, 164 diocesan priests, 141 religious order clergy, and about 900 women religious serving a Catholic population of 400,000.

By the time Archbishop Carroll died in office, on July 26, 1977, the archdiocese had turned into a booming metropolitan see with more than 700,000 Catholics in eight counties. During his tenure, Archbishop Carroll founded close to 100 new parishes, an incredible pace of five per year.
Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy, a native of Cincinnati and founding Bishop of Phoenix, arrived in Miami on September 17, 1976, as coadjutor, succeeding to the see upon the death of Archbishop Carroll.

Whereas Archbishop Carroll was a builder, Archbishop McCarthy saw his mission as blowing Spirit into the edifice built by his predecessor. He continued to found new parishes to keep up with the growing numbers of new Catholics. But he also established a Family Life office and a Lay Ministry office that became models for the rest of the nation. Both were led by lay people, a hallmark of Archbishop McCarthy’s tenure. He consistently strived to call forth the gifts of the laity and to empower them at the archdiocesan level.

Administratively, he re-organized the archdiocese into seven major divisions and oversaw the construction of a new chancery to house them all. The renamed Pastoral Center was dedicated at 9401 Biscayne Boulevard in Miami Shores in April, 1983.

On February 6, 1979, two new auxiliary bishops were appointed for Miami, including the first native Cuban to serve as a bishop in the United States in 200 years: Auxiliary Bishop Agustin Roman. (His “episcopal twin” was Auxiliary Bishop John J. Nevins, another archdiocesan priest.)

In 1980, Archbishop McCarthy announced the start of a five-year plan of evangelization. That same year, the Mariel boatlift brought nearly 125,000 Cuban refugees to South Florida. Haitians began arriving in significant numbers as well. Throughout the next decade, Archbishop McCarthy spoke forcefully on behalf of the Haitians’ right to plead for asylum in this country, and against presidential directives that called for high-seas interdiction of boatloads of Haitian refugees.

On its 25th anniversary in 1983, the eight-county archdiocese included more than 896,000 Catholics, with 135 parishes and three missions, served by 312 diocesan and 210 religious order priests; 643 women religious and 63 men religious; and 45 permanent deacons. In 1984, the P. J. Kenedy & Sons Directory listed the Archdiocese of Miami as the second fastest growing see in the nation.

On July 17, 1984, the archdiocese was divided, yielding Palm Beach and Martin counties to the newly-created Diocese of Palm Beach; and Glades, Hendry, and Collier counties to the newly-created Diocese of Venice. The archdiocese then consisted of three counties, Dade, Broward, and Monroe, with more than 527,000 registered Catholics served by 100 parishes, two missions, 279

St. Mary Cathedral: Mother Church of the Archdiocese

In August, 1929, fourteen men and women organized themselves as the Little River Mission Club. Over the years, this small group grew and worshipped in a small church which was dedicated in 1931. Groundbreaking for the present structure was held in 1955, and the new building was dedicated in 1957. It has seating for 1200 people.

When the Diocese of Miami was established in 1958, St. Mary was chosen to be the cathedral. Shortly thereafter, Bishop Coleman F. Carroll began renovating the church. This included the building of a Blessed Sacrament Chapel, which features faceted glass executed at Chartres by Gabriel Loire; and a tabernacle made of hand-crafted gold plate embellished with semi-precious stones and enamel cartouches illustrating the life of Christ.

The renovation of 1964 also included the addition of a bronze bell weighing more than two tons and the installation of the cathedral’s first pipe organ. The cathedral’s principal decorative feature is a continuous glass mosaic placed over the sanctuary – 11 feet high, framed in travertine, and extending for an uninterrupted length of 70 feet. Depicting scenes from the life of Mary, Mother of God, it also was executed in Chartres by Gabriel Loire.

In 1980, the sanctuary was enlarged and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel underwent changes to conform to the mandates of Vatican II. The cathedral became the center of world attention on September 10, 1987, when Pope John Paul II made it the first stop of his second U.S. visit.

The cathedral underwent more renovations in 1998, in order to bring out the beauty of its many art treasures. Among the changes, the Moeller organ was redesigned and rebuilt by the Rodgers Organ Company, the baptistry area was redesigned, and a fountain designed by Robert Brown to symbolize the life-giving waters of faith was placed near the niches where the Holy Oils are kept.
diocesan priests, 164 religious order priests, 445 women religious, 63 men religious, and 55 permanent deacons.

In 1985, Archbishop McCarthy convoked the first-ever Archdiocesan Synod and the first synod in Florida in 28 years. The synod’s goal was to renew the life of the Church in South Florida and plan for the 21st century. The first step taken by the synod was the commissioning of a scientific survey of South Florida Catholics, to include their ethnic identities and their levels of religiosity.

Among the statistics: The total Catholic population in Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties might have been as high as 1.1 million, although less than half that number were registered in the parishes; Hispanics made up 62 percent of the Catholics in the archdiocese and 80 percent of the Catholics in Dade County; blacks (African-Americans and Haitians) made up less than four percent of the Catholic population, and Asians about one percent.

On September 10-11, 1987, Pope John Paul II visited Miami as part of his second tour of the United States. After being greeted by President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan at the airport, he traveled to St. Mary Cathedral, where he was formally greeted by Archbishop McCarthy and religious dignitaries, as well as by a cheering throng of Haitians gathered outside.

He traveled to St. Martha Church, next door to the Pastoral Center, for a meeting with representatives of the nation’s priests, then met with President and Mrs. Reagan at the historic Vizcaya mansion on Biscayne Bay. Afterward, he paraded down Biscayne Boulevard in his “popemobile” before retiring to the archbishop’s residence. The next morning, he met with Jewish leaders and toured a Vatican Judaica exhibit at Miami’s Center for Fine Arts before celebrating Mass for nearly a quarter-million people at the Dade County Youth Fairgrounds. Rain and lightning strikes forced an end to the Mass during the Pope’s homily. The Pope and bishops finished celebrating Mass in a nearby trailer before leaving for his next stop in South Carolina.

On its 30th anniversary, October 7, 1988, the archdiocese numbered more than 596,000 registered Catholics in 105 parishes and three missions. They were served by 177 diocesan priests, 146 religious order priests, 432 women religious, 58 men religious, and 72 permanent deacons.

The archdiocesan synod ended in May, 1988, and in October, Archbishop McCarthy promulgated 165 decrees establishing archdiocesan priorities. Chief among them were: a more effective and all-encompassing effort at evangelizing inactive Catholics and the unchurched, with special emphasis

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**Gesu Church: Oldest Church in the City of Miami**

In 1896, Holy Name of Jesus Gesu Catholic Church was founded by a small group of Catholic farmers, merchants, yachtsmen, railroad men and builders. That same year, on July 26, the City of Miami was incorporated with 343 registered voters. Miami's first mayor, John B. Reilly, was a Catholic who helped organize Gesu Church.

In 1898, Henry Flagler donated property for a church, school and rectory complex. On Feb. 6 of that year, a small wooden-steepled church was dedicated by Bishop John Moore of St. Augustine. The mission was immediately challenged to serve 7,000 U.S. troops bivouacked in Miami during the Spanish-American war.

In 1922, the cornerstone was laid for the current masonry church building. It was dedicated Feb. 1, 1923. From 1921 to 1941, Gesu's boundaries extended north to Palm Beach and south to Key West. To keep pace with the growth of the Catholic population in South Florida, Gesu parishioners were called upon to build nine "daughter" churches within 20 years.

In 1931, in the midst of the Depression, Gesu's parishioners founded Catholic Charities. In 1950, Gesu was the site of the first televised religious event in South Florida: a solemn high Mass was televised in its entirety by WTVI.

Today, Gesu is a national historic landmark and a midday refuge for downtown office workers, students and tourists.
on using the media -- radio, television, newspapers; a more profound emphasis on "cradle to grave" religious education, for children as well as adults; and increased sensitivity to the needs and languages of the different cultural and ethnic groups of the archdiocese.

On August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew, the first Category 4 storm to hit a highly populated urban area in the United States, struck South Florida, wreaking vast damage on the southernmost part of Dade County and causing an estimated $130 million in damages to Catholic facilities. Archdiocesan personnel and volunteers from unaffected parishes flocked to repair the damage and aid those left homeless. The task of rebuilding continued for months. To symbolize unity with those affected by the storm, the archdiocese marked its 34th anniversary in October with an outdoor Mass in South Dade. The altar was built out of hurricane debris.

On April 10, 1993, at the Vatican-mandated age of 75, Archbishop McCarthy submitted his resignation to Pope John Paul II, but continued to run the archdiocese until the Holy See appointed a successor.

On October 7, 1993, its 35th anniversary, the archdiocese consisted of 107 parishes and three missions in three counties, with a registered Catholic population of more than 681,000 served by 198 diocesan priests, 127 religious order priests, 406 religious women and 56 men religious, and 103 permanent deacons.

In the summer of 1994, thousands of Cuban rafters again took to the seas, fleeing Communism and dire economic conditions in their homeland. After being rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard, most were placed in temporary detention camps in Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba, where they languished while the Clinton Administration decided whether or not to admit them to the United States. The archdiocese asked Spanish-speaking priests to volunteer to work at the camps for rotating periods of time, and Archbishop McCarthy and Auxiliary Bishop Roman traveled to Guantanamo to visit and bring hope to the refugees.

On November 3, 1994, Bishop John Clement Favalora, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana who had served as Bishop of St. Mary Star of the Sea Church, Key West.

St. Mary Star of the Sea in Key West: Third Oldest Parish in Florida

St. Mary Star of the Sea, established in 1846, proudly boasts of being the oldest parish in the Archdiocese of Miami, and the third oldest in the state of Florida. It dates back to a small Catholic community that formed around 1820, but there are indications that Key West might have been established as a parish as early as 1724, when it was staffed by a Cuban priest. Florida was then a Spanish territory, and Key West probably fell under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Havana until 1821, when the territory was ceded to the United States.

By 1844, the Catholic population in Key West was estimated at 15 families, numbering no more than 100 people. The earliest history of the Catholic Church in Key West is obtained from the baptismal, marriage, and funeral registers of that year. The first recorded Mass was celebrated by a Havana priest in City Hall on Oct. 10, 1846. The first church building was dedicated in February, 1852, under the title "St. Mary, Star of the Sea," because the parish boundaries were set by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The total population of Key West at that time was about 2,000, of whom 300 were Catholic. Among the early congregation were many black families, some free and some slaves belonging to Catholic families from St. Augustine. A part of the church separated from the whites was assigned to them. The fact that black people were members was unique to the Catholics, since other churches on the island maintained "whites only" congregations.

In 1868, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary arrived in Key West from Montreal, Canada, to establish the first Catholic school in South Florida, a school for white girls. They would remain for 115 years, teaching and nursing the people of Key West through yellow fever epidemics, hurricanes, and the Spanish-American War. Since it was the only Catholic church in South Florida at the time, St. Mary Star of the Sea has the records of the baptisms and marriages conducted by a priest who visited several Catholics in May of 1872 "in a place generally known as Miami." The Jesuits arrived in 1899 and staffed the parish continuously until 1970, when they turned it over to the Archdiocese of Miami.

On September 20, 1903, a fire of suspicious origins destroyed the church built in 1852. Three years later, ground was broken for the current building, which was dedicated in 1905. On Sept. 8, 1919, the worst storm in the history of the island raged for 17 hours, causing damage to the school and the city. Three years later, on the feast of the Ascension, May 25, 1922, the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was dedicated. Made of natural rock gathered on school grounds, it was designed by Sister Louis Gabriel, who, according to tradition, said that as long as the grotto stood, "Key West would never experience the full brunt of a hurricane." Since that time, it never has.

In 1989, St. Mary Star of the Sea was declared a national and state historical site.
Petersburg since 1989, was appointed to succeed Archbishop McCarthy. He was installed on December 20, 1994, and in early 1995, he, too, paid a visit to the Cubans and Haitians detained at the refugee camps in Guantanamo. A week later, the archdiocese opened Varela Centers at several South Florida Catholic parishes, in order to teach English to Cuban and Haitian children just released from the camps. The schools helped them and their parents prepare for life in the U.S.

On May 27-28, 1995, Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana made an official pastoral visit to South Florida as part of a tour that included stops in New York, Chicago, and Tampa. He celebrated Mass at St. Mary Cathedral, vespers at the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity on Biscayne Bay, and an outdoor Mass at St. Thomas University. Throngs greeted him at every site. The cardinal called for unity among Cubans, both those in exile and those on the island.

On January 25, 1998, Archbishop Favalora led a group of about 180 pilgrims on a nine-hour visit to Havana, Cuba, to attend Pope John Paul II’s Mass in the civic plaza.

On August 13, 1998, its 40th anniversary, the archdiocese consisted of 108 parishes and three missions in three counties, with a registered Catholic population of more than 774,000 served by 265 diocesan priests, 122 religious order priests, 345 women religious and 56 men religious, and 128 permanent deacons.

In September, 1999, Archbishop Favalora announced plans for Vision 2000, a campaign to generate a $75 million endowment that would enable the Church in South Florida to continue its educational and charitable ministries into the 21st century. In December, 2000, Vision 2000 concluded after having raised $110 million in endowments for the archdiocese.

In 2004, the archdiocese consists of 111 parishes and 10 missions in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties. More than 815,000 registered Catholics are served by 258 diocesan priests, 116 religious order priests, 137 permanent deacons, 329 women religious, and 60 men religious. The auxiliary bishop is Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez, appointed on November 21, 2003.

Two Catholic universities are located within the archdiocese: the archdiocesan St. Thomas University, in Miami Gardens, and Barry University, operated by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, in Miami Shores.

For more information visit www.miamiarch.org

National Shrine of Our Lady of Charity

At the beginning of the 17th century, a raging storm threatened the lives of three farm workers caught in its tempest in the Bay of Nipe in Cuba. Turning to God for help, they felt that their prayers were answered as they found floating in the water a statue of Mary holding the child Jesus. An inscription on the statue read: "I am the Virgin of Charity."

The statue became the object of popular devotion among the Cuban people, who built a beautiful shrine for Mary in the city of El Cobre, in the province of Oriente. The Blessed Virgin, honored as Our Lady of Charity, became the patroness of Cuba and the symbol of Cuban faith and culture.

When communism began its growth in Cuba, it forced the exile of thousands who refused to live under such a totalitarian system of government. On September 8, 1961, an important symbol of their religious faith also came in exile; a statue of Our Lady of Charity entered the United States from Cuba via the Panamanian embassy. It was a replica of the statue honored at the National Shrine in El Cobre. Since the arrival of that statue in 1961, Cubans in Miami have celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Charity every year on September 8.

During the celebration of September 8, 1966, the late Archbishop Coleman F. Carroll of Miami asked the Cuban people to build a shrine to honor their patroness. He donated land on Biscayne Bay for the project so that Mary's shrine could stand near the same waters that also bathe the island country of Cuba.

The shrine stands 90 feet high with a width of 80 feet on a foundation of land that itself is 14 feet above sea level. The building has a conical form, which corresponds to the shape of the image of Our Lady of Charity. The temple invites people to enter within the heart of the Virgin, so that in it they can find the precious Word of God. Six columns represent the six traditional Cuban provinces with their 126 municipalities. Under the altar of the shrine there is a stone made of earth, rock and sand brought from the six traditional Cuban provinces and cast with water brought from Cuba on a raft in which 15 refugees perished at sea.

For the wall behind the statue of Mary, a mural was prepared by Teok Carrasco, a painter who was born in Nipe, the place where the original statue was found. In the center of the mural, the Virgin appears over the waters of Nipe holding the infant Jesus in her arms. All around the Virgin and child appears a graphic history of Cuba, from the island's discovery to the present day.

Pilgrims to the shrine are welcome to pray in the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. They may also receive the sacrament of reconciliation at their request.

This newest Marian shrine in the United States was designed and built by Cuban exiles, and funded by thousands of small donations, primarily the "kilos priores" [tarnished pennies] of a refugee community.

John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia dedicated the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity on December 2, 1973. On September 8, 2000, Archbishop John C. Favalora announced that it had been designated a national shrine by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The shrine now receives between 750,000 and 1 million visitors each year.
St. John Vianney Seminary

St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami was dedicated in 1959, just thirteen months after Bishop Coleman F. Carroll was installed as the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Miami. Until the mid-1970s, it served as a high school seminary for the diocese. Since then, it has served as the minor seminary not only for men studying for the Miami Archdiocese, but also for seminarians from the rest of Florida and the Caribbean. Among its more prominent graduates is Bishop Thomas G. Wenski, of the Diocese of Orlando.

The most striking aspect of the seminary is St. Raphael Chapel, and the mural directly above the sanctuary. Gabriel Loire, a French artist, painted it in 1968 and 1969. The entire mural is done in 27 segments, each following a design from an original cartoon made by the artist himself. When the mural was erected, Loire came to Miami to supervise the work. At the time, he said, "This is most unusual. I painted every inch of that mural and this is the first time I saw it together as one piece of art."

There are many ideas contained in the mural and they all center around the quotation in the center of the picture: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." This is Christ's commission to his priests. In order to emphasize the notion of the whole world, the artist has incorporated the five continents into the work. Also included: the signs of the zodiac, the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, Christ and the 11 at the Last Supper, the seven sacraments, the Jerusalem Cross, Bishop Carroll, the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation.

Activities of the Laiy

Members of the laity are very active in the building up of the Christian community. Hundreds of laymen and laywomen exercise ministries in local parishes, schools, hospitals, and religious centers. These ministries include but are not limited to: Eucharistic ministers, lectors, catechists, youth ministers, elder care, hospice, AIDS ministry, and radio broadcasting.

Throughout the diocese, members of the laity are involved in the apostolic work of parishes through service on parish and school advisory boards. Moreover, numerous lay members serve the bishop through their advice and consultation as members of diocesan advisory boards related to areas such as Finance, Real Estate, Catholic Education, Liturgy, Marriage, and radio stations.
Pedro Pan and Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh

From its earliest beginnings, Miami had seen revolutions come and go in Cuba. It had played host to successive groups of political exiles. These changes had little or no impact on life in Miami. The first few months of 1959 followed the same pattern. But as time went on, and Fidel Castro turned to the Communist Party at home and abroad to consolidate his power, more and more Cubans sought political asylum in Miami.

Unaccompanied children began to be smuggled out of Cuba in 1960. Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh, then head of Catholic Charities in the Miami Diocese, had agreed to help resettle about 200 of the estimated 7,000 refugee children, without asking for Bishop Coleman Carroll’s permission. When the bishop found out, he was furious. “Who do you think you are!” he scolded the priest. “I am the bishop here! We’ll take all 7,000 of them.”

Eventually, the number of children smuggled out by Operation Pedro Pan [Peter Pan] as the secret program became known, reached 14,000. The Catholic Church in South Florida waited for them at the airport and used its own resources to house and feed them for more than a year, until the federal government acknowledged its responsibilities. Afterward, the church continued to care for the children in group or foster homes until their parents could join them. Among the prominent exiles who came via Pedro Pan are Miami’s newest Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Estévez and newly elected U.S. Senator from Florida Mel Martinez.

By January, 1961, Cuban refugees in Miami numbered 100,000. The sisters who staffed Centro Hispano Catolico, the only bilingual social service agency in Miami at the time, sought help from Bishop Carroll, who realized that the needs of the newcomers were beyond what the church or any private charity could meet. He called a meeting of political and business leaders, which resulted in an appeal first to Florida’s governor, then to the federal government. The bishop’s argument: Immigration was a federal responsibility, and if the government was going to allow refugees to come in, then the government had to come to the aid of impacted communities.

Thus the U.S. Cuban Assistance Program came into existence, and for the next 20 years provided help to newly arriving Cuban refugees. This was a historical first. Never before had the federal government come to the aid of a community impacted by refugees. Bishop Carroll played a key role in these events, firmly establishing his place in the minds and hearts of Cuban exiles.