

Most Rev. John R. Manz, auxiliary bishop emeritus for the Archdiocese of Chicago and former pastor of St. Agnes of Bohemia Parish on Central Park Avenue in Chicago, passed away Friday, July 14, 2023. He was 77 years old.

Bishop Manz was born on Nov. 14, 1945 in Chicago to Jeanne and Joseph Manz. He grew up in Chicago and Morton Grove and spent summers at his grandmother's farm. He attended Quigley Preparatory Seminary in Chicago, Niles College Seminary in Niles and the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein. He began learning Spanish by working in the kitchen with religious sisters from Mexico and with landscaping crews in the summer. Later, he studied Spanish at Niles College Seminary and became fluent. In the process he came to appreciate and revere the Hispanic people and their culture. His experience in agriculture led him to work in support of Mexican farm workers.

Bishop Manz was ordained to the priesthood on May 12, 1971, by Cardinal John Cody, and he celebrated his first solemn Mass on May 16 of the same year at St. Martha Parish in Morton Grove. A nun who had told the mischievous young John that she would "roll over in her grave if he ever became a priest" attended his first Mass.

After ordination to the priesthood, Bishop Manz served as assistant pastor at Providence of God Parish on 18th Street, as associate pastor at St. Roman Parish on Washtenaw Avenue and later as pastor at St. Agnes of Bohemia where he served for 13 years, all in Chicago.

On Jan. 23, 1996, Bishop Manz was appointed as an auxiliary bishop by Pope John Paul II. He was consecrated on March 5, 1996 by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin with Bishop Wilton Gregory and Bishop Plácido Rodriguez serving as co-consecrators.

In the years after the episcopal ordination, Bishop Manz served on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's (USCCB) Committee on Migration and Refugee Services, as chairman and then as a member of the Committee on the Church in Latin America, as chairman of the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees and Travelers, as chairman of the administrative committee and as a member of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church. Manz retired in 2021.

In an interview with Chicago Catòlico newspaper, Bishop Manz traced his involvement with Hispanic immigrants to his assignment, at 25 years old, to Providence of God Parish where he started his work as an advocate for immigrant rights. "My first parish [Providence of God] was in the Pilsen neighborhood, on 18th Street. It's not there anymore. I was there for seven years. Back then, it was a poor area. I became very fond of that parish."

Cardinal Cupich said that "from his days as a college seminarian, Bishop Manz grasped the meaning of authentic ministry. 'It is not an abstraction, it begins by getting to know people. We all have our prejudices or stereotypes, but the only way to break them down is by getting to know the person. I am a big believer in a common humanity.' Let us pray that all those preparing for ministry will take those words to heart and in that way keep fresh the memory of this great priest and pastor."

"Let us remember our beloved 'Padre Juan'." Cardinal Cupich continued with words Bishop Manz shared in an interview with Chicago Catholic newspaper on his retirement, "'I feel very fortunate. I have had many experiences; I have never been bored and I think it is because I like people. As a priest, I believe I have received more than I have given.'"

Bishop Kevin Birmingham was a seminarian when he was assigned to St. Agnes of Bohemia for a summer while Bishop Manz, the pastor, quickly became his mentor. "When he was ordained a bishop, he brought his keen pastoral abilities to the larger church here in Chicago and across the United States," Bishop Birmingham said. "When I was ordained a bishop, he was a co-consecrator and I followed him as vicar of Vicariate IV. He continued to mentor me with weekly phone calls, always affirming the need to be present to all people and to treat everyone as a cherished child of God. I hope to never forget this lesson and witness."

Very Rev. Esequiel Sanchez, rector of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines, considered Bishop Manz his childhood pastor, vocation recruiter, boss, mentor and friend. "I don't think I would be a priest today were it not for the life and ministry of Bishop John Manz," Father Sanchez continued. "He was a true bishop (spiritual father) to so many in the Latino community and beyond."

“Bishop Manz modeled what it means for a pastor to be one with his people,” said Rev. Sergio Rivas Tamayo, pastor of Good Shepherd and Epiphany Parish. “He loved what they love, suffered with their sufferings, and gave himself completely so they could know God a little better. He was one of the most outstanding models of inculturation seen in our Local Church. It is a great loss for the Archdiocese of Chicago and in particular for Latino Catholics.”

“This is a guy who would go and visit migrants in their villages and sit in their homes,” said Rev. Joseph Mulcrone, classmate and retired archdiocesan priest. “He wanted to connect with people, no matter who they were. When he was a pastor, in the summer, he would hold street Masses in the community.”

Elena Segura, senior coordinator for immigration — national ministry, said Bishop Manz is the godfather of Pastoral Migratoria, the parish-based immigrant-to-immigrant ministry model developed in Chicago. “He embodied Catholic social teaching just by being a bishop for el pueblo, for the people,” Segura said.

Nelly Lorenzo and the staff from the Instituto de Liderazgo Pastoral, *an institution that provides pastoral formation* for the Hispanic community in the Archdiocese of Chicago, issued the following statement: “Bishop Manz created a space of trust for everyone who approached him about important issues. He had the ability to listen, understand and sympathize with those who were by his side. He became one of the people. He had a Hispanic heart: The community grieves his departure, but we know he will continue among us with his humor and affirmations to never give up.”

Bishop Manz is survived by his sister Linda Manz, of Richmond, Va., nieces Cara (Drew) Haynie of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Diane (Rob) Smith of Richmond, Va., Angela Heffner of Richmond, Va., and Christina (Carl) Hultgren of Richmond, Va., great nieces and nephews, and many relatives and close friends.

All funeral services will take place at Holy Name Cathedral, 735 N. State Street, Chicago. Visitation will be on Tuesday, July 25 from 2 – 9 p.m. A rosary will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a vigil starting at 7 p.m. The funeral Mass will take place at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, July 26. Cardinal Cupich will be the main celebrant.

Interment will occur at St. Mary’s Cemetery in Galena.

Livestreams of these services are noted below:

- **Tuesday, July 25, at 2 p.m.: The Rite of Reception of the Body** https://youtube.com/live/SP_rRTtYXs0?feature=share

- **Tuesday, July 25 at 6:30 p.m.: Rosary and vigil** https://youtube.com/live/cr8tbavZpDM?feature=share

- **Wednesday, July 26 at 10 a.m.: Funeral Mass** https://youtube.com/live/BOo9q1Jcvj4?feature=share