



Backgrounder:

The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee: Its history and its bishops

The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee traces its roots back to the 16th century and the efforts by the Spanish crown to colonize this territory. As the Spanish soldiers and settlers made their homes along these beaches and woodlands, they praised God, and as Catholics have done here ever since, expressed their thanks through the celebration of the Eucharist.

In the 21st century, the Catholic Church of northwest Florida has grown to embrace 49 parishes and eight missions, nine Catholic schools and numerous affiliated organizations, and over 62,000 Catholic people in the 18 most northwestern counties of Florida, covering 14,044 square miles. Throughout the history of the diocese, the faithful in the lands that comprise the diocese have been part of the dioceses of Santiago de Cuba, San Cristobal de Havana, Louisiana and the Floridas, Mobile, Savannah, St. Augustine, and finally, in 1975, the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

The first bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee was Most Rev. Rene H. Gracida, who served from 1975 until 1983, when he became bishop of Corpus Christi, Texas. The second bishop of the diocese was Most Rev. J. Keith Symons, who served from 1983 until 1990, when he was appointed the bishop of Palm Beach. In 1991, the third bishop, Most Rev. John M. Smith, arrived to lead the Pensacola-Tallahassee diocese. He was appointed the Bishop of Trenton in 1996. Most Rev. John H. Ricard, SSJ, became Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee in 1997, a position in which he served until his retirement for health reasons in 2011.

For a more extensive history of the diocese, please log on to:

<http://www.ptdiocese.org/page.asp?pageID=133>

Statistical overview:

Total priests in diocese: 86 (including diocesan active and retired and religious order priests)

Total permanent deacons in diocese: 65

Total religious brothers in diocese: 5

Total religious sisters in diocese: 21

Total students under Catholic instruction: 7,290 (including those in diocesan and parish elementary and secondary schools and parish religious education programs.)

We invite you to visit the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee website at www.ptdiocese.org.