

December 8, 2008



## Mission San Luis a treasure of faith, history and tolerance

In this year of *"Faith Engaged! Sharing Christ's Message since 1559,"* the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee encourages Catholics to learn more about the history and heritage of Catholicism in northwest Florida. This is one in an occasional series highlighting great treasures of our faith.

FLORIDA CATHOLIC STAFF REPORT

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Deacon Santiago Molina proclaims the Gospel from the elevated ambo in the church at Mission San Luis in this file photo from December 2006.

McEwan, mission executive director. "Even though they were vastly different, they respected their differences and created a community based on tolerance and acceptance. What better message is there to send during the holiday season?"

The Mass, open to the public and celebrated by Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, commemorates the more than 100 Spanish missions that existed in La Florida during the 16th and 17th centuries. This year's Mass will be offered Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. EST.

*Mission San Luis is at 2021 W. Mission Road in Tallahassee. The site is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. It is managed by the Florida Department of State Bureau of Archaeological Research. For more information on Mission San Luis, call 850-487-3711 or visit [www.missionsanluis.org](http://www.missionsanluis.org).*

**TALLAHASSEE** | Mission San Luis was the western military, administrative and religious capital of Spanish Florida from 1656 to 1704. Spanish friars, soldiers and civilians established Mission San Luis at the request of the Apalachee Indians who voluntarily converted to Catholicism. Apalachees and Spaniards alike attended evening prayers, Sunday Mass, holiday services, choir practice, baptisms and marriage and funeral services.

Today the mission brings the early 1700s to life through costumed interpreters, reconstructed period buildings, exhibits and archaeological excavations. The site is a National Historic Landmark recipient of a 2006 Preserve America Presidential Award. A new visitor center, scheduled to open in 2009, will feature a theater, exhibits, classrooms and a multipurpose space for conferences and functions.

Each year during the Advent-Christmas season a Mass is offered in the dirt-floor church of the Mission San Luis.

"The commemorative Mass at Mission San Luis is the perfect time to reflect on the important history of the Spaniards and Apalachee Indians," said Bonnie