



For Immediate Release
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MISSION SAN LUIS CELEBRATES *FIRST CHRISTMAS IN LA FLORIDA*
Bringing the Old World to the New

Friday and Saturday, January 4-5, 2013

TALLAHASSEE ~ Celebrate the true spirit of Christmas at Mission San Luis this January. In commemoration of VIVA Florida 500, Florida's 500th anniversary and the arrival of Juan Ponce de Leon to Florida's east coast, Mission San Luis, partnered with Florida Living History, Inc. is holding a special re-enactment event, *First Christmas in La Florida*. This event will depict Tallahassee in the early 16th century, 1539-40, as "Grand Anhaica," the capital village of Apalachee Province and site of de Soto's winter encampment. Also interpreted will be the early 18th-century village and fort of San Luis. *First Christmas in La Florida* will include living history demonstrations of military arts, foodways, and map-making. There will also be a Mass by Bishop Gregory Parkes, a display of original de Soto-expedition artifacts, Spanish Golden Age drama, Paso Fino horses, period music, a children's *Las Posadas* re-enactment, and more! Admission is FREE.

In 1539, Don Hernando de Soto and his band of some 600 soldiers and 12 Catholic priests had marched north almost 300 miles from their landing place near Tampa before reaching "Grand Anhaica" (today's Tallahassee, FL), the principal town of the native Apalachee, in October. Here, the Spaniards set up camp for the winter and would have observed the first Christmas celebrated in *La Florida*. At the time, Christmas would have been celebrated based on the Julian calendar which puts the holiday on or near January 7. Many Orthodox Christians still celebrate Christmas at this time rather than on December 25 on the current Gregorian calendar.

The *First Christmas in La Florida* holiday, heritage event is presented by Mission San Luis and Florida Living History, Inc. and will tentatively include:

Friday, January 4, 2013, at 7 P.M

A lecture on Hernando de Soto's 16th-century expedition and winter encampment

Finding Soto: Rethinking a 16th Century Florida Expedition by Dr. J. Michael Francis, holder of the Hough Family Endowed Chair in Florida Studies at the University of South Florida (This lecture is funded by a grant to Florida Living History, Inc. from the Florida Humanities Council through the National Endowment for the Humanities.)

Saturday, January 5, 2013, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

- Commemorative Mass by the Bishop of the Tallahassee-Pensacola Diocese, the Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes, in the Mission San Luis Franciscan church (*Noon*)

- Display of original de Soto-expedition artifacts recovered in Florida
- Historical interpreters in period dress, representing de Soto's 16th-century winter encampment in Grand Anhaica
- Military arts of the de Soto *entrada*
- Apalachee life of the period with archery for children and adults
- 18th-century blackpowder weapon firings at the Castillo de San Luis
- Paso Fino Horse demonstrations by the North Florida Paso Fino Horse Association
- Dramatic processional/recessional by *Theater with a Mission*
- Period foodways, music, mapping, navigation, and more
- Make-and-take crafts for children (*Three Kings card*)
- Children's *Las Posadas* re-enactment of Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter (1:30 P.M.)
- Food vendors

First Christmas in La Florida is sponsored by Florida Living History, Inc., the *Tallahassee Democrat*, and the Friends of Mission San Luis, Inc.. Mission San Luis is administered by the Florida Department of State / Division of Historical Resources / Bureau of Archaeological Research. Support for this event was provided by NTE Energy, Inc., and grants from the Florida Humanities Council and Visit Tallahassee.

Florida Living History, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization dedicated to the support of living history activities, events, and portrayals related to the history of colonial Florida. They can be reached at info@floridalivinghistory.org or 1-877-FLA-HIST (1-877-352-4478). www.floridalivinghistory.org

Mission San Luis is *Florida's Apalachee-Spanish Living History Museum*. It was the western capital of Spanish Florida from 1656 to 1704 and is on 63 beautiful acres of north Florida. Today, the 17th century is brought to life through living history guides in period dress, exhibits, archaeology, and reconstructed colonial buildings. The site is located at **2100 West Tennessee Street**. Daily hours are 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., Tuesday through Sunday. For more information please call 850.245.6406 or visit www.missionsanluis.org

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