

## Florida catholic conference



The Florida Catholic Conference is an agency of the Catholic bishops, established on February 1, 1969. The bishops of the seven dioceses in Florida constitute its Board of Directors. The Conference speaks for the bishops in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the Church and secular agencies. The Conference has acted in many policy areas, including social matters such as migrants, housing, welfare, criminal justice reform; educational matters, including parochial and public schools; right to life issues, including abortion and euthanasia; and matters affecting human sexuality, marriage, and the family unit.

To commemorate the new home of the Florida Catholic Conference in Tallahassee, an advisory committee envisioned artwork that would depict the heritage of the Catholic faith in Florida, while making a lasting aesthetic contribution to the community. Drawing upon Catholic life in the early Spanish missions, a design was developed incorporating elements of Florida's rich natural and cultural history.

The outline of the design is a cross measuring 7.5 feet wide by 12 feet tall. It depicts a friar, Spanish father, Indian mother and baby symbolizing the blended families of Spanish Florida and the beginnings of Hispanic-American culture in our state. The baptismal font and rosary are based on artifacts recovered at Mission San Luis in Tallahassee. Plants of *La Florida* are integrated as decorative elements throughout the sculpture.

On November 8, 2004, Bishop John H. Ricard, S.S.J., Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, joined committee members, donors, and Florida Catholic Conference staff members to bless and dedicate the monument.



*The Florida Catholic Heritage Monument is displayed on the outside wall of the Florida Catholic Conference building in Tallahassee.*