

## Ancient order of Hibernians in Florida



The Ancient Order of Hibernians is a Catholic lay organization whose roots extend back to 1565 when it was organized to preserve Gaelic values, and to protect the Catholic clergy from the Tudor persecution. Its motto "Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity" was retained when, in 1641, the organization was renamed the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

In 1836, during an era of 19<sup>th</sup> century bigotry when anti-Catholic mobs of the Native American Party, widely known as the "Know Nothing" movement, attacked Catholic clergy and destroyed churches, convents and schools, the American Ancient Order of Hibernians was founded in New York as a means to defend

the Catholic Church. An independent Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians was also founded, with its own board of officers. Both orders played a positive role during that century when "No Irish Need Apply" employment policies prevailed in many American cities. Several Florida AOH Divisions were organized in the Diocese of St. Augustine, after its founding in 1870. All practicing Catholics of Irish birth or ancestry and their spouses are eligible to be members of the Florida Hibernians.

The current Florida AOH State Board includes: President, Joseph LaGuardia; Vice President, Seán Denny; Secretary and Web Master, Walter Fay; Treasurer, Paul (Phil) Mulrenin; Chaplain, Monsignor Michael Devine; Editor, Peter Shaughnessy; Commodore Barry Chairman, Edward Kelly; Historian, Séamus S. ÓhEarcáin; Charities and Missions, Michael Walsh; Catholic Action, John Cullinan; Pro-Life, Paul Finnerty; Organizer, James A. Whelan; and Past President, Edmund Pauly. The Florida LAOH State Board includes: President, Nancy A. Fay; Vice President, Margot Neuendorf; Secretary-Treasurer, Winfred Coonan; Chaplain, Monsignor Michael Devine; Historian, Peggy Smith; Missions, Nora Ryan; Catholic Action, Margaret Egan; and Organizer, Joyce Massei.



*Crest of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.*