Diocese formation took a few centuries

Pope Benedict XVI's U.S. visit almost exactly coincides with the 215th anniversary of the creation of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas.

When it was created April 25, 1793, it became the second Roman Catholic diocese in the United States. The first was the Diocese of Baltimore, which was established Nov. 6, 1789.

As originally constituted, the new diocese included the entire Louisiana territory from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, as well as the entire Gulf Coast and all of Florida.

The region was originally part of the Diocese of Quebec. When Louisiana became Spanish, Rome at first transferred us to the Archdiocese of Santiago, then to the Archdiocese of San Cristobal de la Habana (Havana).

The Diocese of New Orleans became an archdiocese in 1850 — meaning that it is the principal diocese of a group of dioceses that make up a church province. The New Orleans province includes the dioceses of Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Houma-Thibodaux, Lafayette, Lake Charles and Shreveport.

The Diocese of Natchitoches was detached from New Orleans in 1853, but became the Diocese of Alexandria in 1910. That became the Diocese of Alexandria-Shreveport in 1977, and the two were separated into the Alexandria and Shreveport dioceses in 1986.

The Lafayette Diocese was formed in 1918, Baton Rouge in 1951, Houma-Thibodaux in 1977 and Lake Charles in 1980.

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