

Jacksonville, Fla., Celebrates First Protestant Prayer in US

Jacksonville, Fla., celebrated its Christian heritage on Tuesday—a heritage many in the U.S. have never heard about.

On May 1, 1562, Jean Ribault sailed into what is now called the St. John's River in Jacksonville. He named it The River of May. He met with the indigenous, Mocama-speaking Timucua Indians on the North side of the river and claimed the land for France by placing a stone onto the ground in her honor.

What many don't know is that Ribault was a French Huguenot. Jacksonville City Council woman **Kimberly Daniels**, who also pastors Spoken Word Ministries in Jacksonville, helped her city celebrate its spiritual heritage. She calls Florida the "First Coast" state."

Daniels points to historical documents that prove that on June 30, 1564, the Huguenots declared a day of thanksgiving and offered the first Protestant **prayer** in America at Fort Caroline: "We sang a psalm of Thanksgiving unto God, beseeching Him that it would please Him to continue His accustomed goodness toward us."

"Some would argue that they only placed a monument—without praying—at Fort Caroline in 1562 and then settled the territory in 1564," Daniels says. "But think about it: After escaping religious persecution and overcoming the challenges of a rough voyage in 1562, I can only imagine that when Ribault and his crew landed at Fort Caroline, they couldn't help but at least say, 'Thank You, Jesus!'"

Daniels also points to a historical account from Charles Bennett in *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline: History and Documents*,

that states: "Ribault sited the east coast of Florida and on May 1 entered the mouth of a majestic river which he named the River of May (now the St. John's). There he landed and prayers were sent heavenward in thanksgiving for safe voyage."

"My prayer is that this monumental celebration will stir the hearts of people of faith to remember the martyrs who lost their lives in this plight for religious liberty," Daniels says. "As the **blood of the martyrs** of our history cries out from the ground, victory is in the air."

Daniels thanks God for the recent Supreme Court decision to stay out of the affairs of the church. As she sees it, that is what the language (not law) of "separation of church and state" is all about—keeping the state out of the church so there will be no government-controlled religions; not keeping the church out of the state!

"It isn't by chance that this case was settled at the beginning of 2012. The word *apostolic* refers also to God's governmental order," Daniels says. "Twelve is the number for government. The spirit realm is colliding with the natural realm, and no matter how things appear to our physical eyes, order is being set!"