

¡Siempre Adelante!

OLD MISSION SANTA BARBARA

2201 Laguna Street

Santa Barbara, California 93105

Return Service Requested



Fr. Junípero Serra
¡Amar a Dios!

PRAYER FROM THE MASS FOR THE FEAST OF BLESSED JUNÍPERO SERRA, OFM JULY 1ST

O God, in your ineffable mercy, you chose Blessed Junípero Serra as a means of gathering many peoples of the Americas into your Church. Grant that through his intercession our hearts may be united to you in ever greater love so that at all times and in all places we may show forth the image of your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

AMEN.



Devotional & Commemorative Items

Nine-day Novena & Meditation Booklet:	\$5
¡Siempre Adelante! (song in honor of Serra)	
CD and music:	\$12
Songs of the California Missions—	
CD:	\$13

Please send check or money order to
Serra Cause, Old Mission Santa Barbara,
2201 Laguna St., Santa Barbara, CA 93105.
Sales tax and shipping are included in the prices.

Web Sites of Interest

www.sandiegohistory.org/bio/serra/serra.htm
www.catholic-church.org/serra-beth/serra-4.htm
www.newadvent.org/cathen/13730b.htm
www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintj44.htm
www.smart.net/~tak/Patrons/junipero.html
www.sfmuseum.net/bio/jserra.html

CONTACTS:

FR. JOHN VAUGHN, OFM
Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Serra
Old Mission Santa Barbara
2201 Laguna Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
805.682.4713

BR. BONAVENTURE PEARSALL, OFM
Director, Serra Cause
Old Mission San Miguel
PO Box 69
San Miguel, CA 93451
805.467.3256 fr_bonaventure@yahoo.com

TERRY RUSCIN
Editor, ¡Siempre Adelante!
316 Sweet Briar Drive,
Hendersonville, NC 28739
828.698.8371 truscin@earthlink.net

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"Always go forward and never turn back!"

¡SIEMPRE ADELANTE!

Spring/Summer 2008

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUSE OF BLESSED JUNÍPERO SERRA

PADRE JUNÍPERO SERRA, OFM DEVOTED TO BUILDING A SOCIETY OF CHRISTIANS

The following is an abridgement of an address delivered by Fr. John Vaughn, OFM, on July 1, 2007, at Mission San Buenaventura—the ninth and last mission founded by Blessed Serra in Alta California.

Considering the life of Blessed *Fray* Junípero Serra, OFM, from the viewpoint of philanthropy and the natural sciences, one finds much with which to credit him—and also something for which to fault him. If we judge him by the standards of today—two centuries after his death—we can find much for which to praise him, and also something for which to blame him. The same might be said of a number of important figures who lived around the same time, including presidents of the United States who kept slaves and sanctioned raids against Native Americans.

A friend who is a university professor writes that you should “never remove a human being from his context—that is where he belongs and that is where he lives, and [where] mercy and grace dwell *there*, not in some sky-rocket idealism where only angels dwell.” To wit, we should never take Padre Serra from his 18th-century Spanish-type of Christianity and transplant him into our own secular culture and a 21st-century



Blessed Junípero Serra

expression of the faith.

So when I think of Father Serra I measure him not by today’s standards or even by those of his own country and times, but rather by those of the faith that inspired him and made him the man that he was. That same faith today expresses itself somewhat differently than at the time of Junípero. It is still the same but it has insights that were hidden in

his day, just as our expression of the faith will one day be even richer than it is today.

A FRIAR FROM MALLORCA

Serra was a man of his own culture and time; above all he was a man of deep faith and love. He believed God sent his Son to show us the true face of God and to teach us how to become like God. He believed we were made not just for time but for eternity. He loved the people he came to serve. Love, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out to us in his first Encyclical, is a word with many meanings, and the love Serra had was the kind that Jesus taught: Jesus loved us not only as much as himself, but more than himself.

This love is what inspired Serra to become a Franciscan friar, a priest and a missionary to the Americas. He left his native Mallorca at a time when many would think he had achieved his life’s success. He was a university professor in a comfortable style of living, particularly for a Franciscan. Nevertheless, he felt and followed the call of God to spread the Good News, the Gospel of Peace, to other lands.

After overcoming objections from his Franciscan brothers—the first permission to go to the New World got lost between the



La Seu, Cathedral of Palma de Mallorca

porter's office and the superior's room—Serra finally left Spain, stopped in Puerto Rico and eventually landed at Vera Cruz. From there he walked to Mexico City, arriving at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 31, 1749. The following year he began his missionary activity, first around Mexico City and then, after a number of years, in the uncharted territory of the Sierra Gorda, north of the capital. Here Serra worked for another eight years, building five beautiful churches.

TAKING THE GOSPEL TO ALTA CALIFORNIA

In 1767 Serra was called to head an expedition to Baja California to replace the Jesuit missionaries who had been there for almost a century. In 1769 Serra and his companions began the long trek from the lower part of Baja California toward what is now the State of California, reaching present-day San Diego in July of the same year. Here, once again, Serra's faith was tested and not found wanting. The following year the supply ship had not arrived and the leaders of the expedition were ready to return to Baja California. Notwithstanding, Serra would not give up. He made a novena to St. Joseph and on the evening of

March 19—the feast of St. Joseph—tips of a ship's mast were seen off the coast. The following day the ship came into San Diego harbor, and the evangelization of California was saved. Father Serra had been ready to stay even if the ship had not arrived and even if the others would return to Mexico.

Serra, with a bum leg, was already 55 years old. He and his companions were ignorant of the pathways and trails of the native peoples and were dependent on supplies by ship from Mexico, some of which arrived and some of which were lost. The food they brought was scant and rustic, and they were ignorant and intolerant of the native foods. The civil authorities were at first in favor of the colonization of Alta California in order to prevent the southward expansion of the Russian Empire. The objective of Father Serra, however, was not the advancement of the Kingdom of Spain or New Spain, but the expansion of the Kingship of Christ. Because these two goals were so different in their objectives and means, there was bound to be disagreement and friction at times. Here we can see some of the humanity of Serra and also his great faith and charity—virtues lived to a heroic degree.



Mission Santiago de Jalpan, Querétaro, Sierra Gorda, Mexico

BUILDING A MISSION SYSTEM WITH COMPASSION

While the Kingdom of God is not of this world and is not identified with empire or republic, it is very much of this world when it comes to providing food and clothing—in other words, the basic needs of all peoples.

Reading Serra's letters you notice the absence of pious sayings and preaching. His faith comes out in a different way. He is concerned about building a good mission system because he is convinced that God is using him to give the native population the best of news: the knowledge of a God who is love and who wants us to become like Himself.

Usually the term "worldly" is not a compliment when you reference a person dedicated to spreading the Kingdom of God. Holy Scripture puts the world in opposition to God's Kingdom many times. But in a true sense Padre Serra was worldly. He wanted to make sure his Native-American Christians had enough to eat and enough to wear. It was not always easy, principally for two reasons: sometimes crops were less than they should have been because of weather and sometimes the civil authorities took the provisions meant for the Indians and gave them to the soldiers or sold them to colonists.

Padre Serra must have preached some fiery sermons about the love of God and the need to live good Christian lives. We do not have any copies of these sermons, as far as I know. What we do have are many letters which show Serra's faith in God, his piety and his charity—mostly concerning building and planting. In other words, Serra's chief concern was to provide for the people whom he and his brother missionaries had invited to follow the teachings of Christ. In that sense he was a worldly person, rightly concerned about the needs of other people.

Because Christianity is fundamentally a social structure, Serra's efforts were devoted to building a society of Christians, not merely individuals who could have stayed in their villages, lived the gospel values and gone occasionally for worship. That is a super-

market model. Serra's model looked more like the community we find described in the *Book of Acts* (2:42-47).

Father Serra's work and struggles highlight some of the tension between the two worlds—the world governed by the need for a just order for all, and the world seeking to become the Kingdom of God. The latter world looks not only to the present but also to the world that is to come. The two worlds are not necessarily opposed; it is just that the first one is, in the eyes of Christians, not enough, and needs the second world to give it direction and meaning.

Today the Church expresses this difference by saying that the gospel shows what is truly good in a culture, what needs to be rejected in it and how a culture can be even further ennobled.

NO ONE'S PERFECT

Serra no doubt made some mistakes in judgment, due perhaps to his temperament and culture, or as the result of mistaken information. His fellow missionaries were likewise imperfect. Yet when you judge what they did by the values they professed, they were heroic men who worked to establish the Kingdom of God and to bring to the natives of California not just Spanish culture

and civilization but, most importantly, the truths of the gospel. Perhaps in the Spanish mentality of the times, it was sometimes not easy to distinguish these two kingdoms.

Nonetheless this culture and religion began to unite the various tribes not only with a common language but also with one faith—professing that God is love and to be like God meant to love one's neighbor.

We cannot expect all modern people to admire the mission system. They can see its benefits as far as present norms of civilization go. They count its defects from the same point of view, yet it takes faith to understand what the missionaries did to the best of their ability when faced with a sometimes hostile environment, enemy tribes, and errors sometimes due to their own fault. Serra and his band were well-educated men by the standards of the time, living thousands of miles away from the modest comforts with which they were familiar. In addition they were unable to complete the mission system, due to the secularization of the system in the 1830s. They had been without the customary funds for a number of years due to wars in Europe and then later because of Mexico's independence.

People of faith, like Blessed Serra and his companions, had one eye on earth and the other on heaven—one on time and one

on eternity. This is the only way, I believe, to ponder and interpret the history of the missions of California and elsewhere.



Fr(iar) John Vaughn, OFM
Vice-Postulator for the Cause of
Blessed Junípero Serra, OFM

Prayer Requests

Let us pray, that through the intercession of Blessed Junípero Serra, the Lord may grant the petitions of:

- Leonard T. Baxter—illness
- Patrick Gleeson—healing
- Kaylie Annmarie Hare—colectomy
- Catherine A. & William Mervyn—general good health
- Don Milam—healing
- Christine Mucho—cancer
- Jennifer Nadalet—healing from operation
- Mrs. Frances A. Pytleski—cancer
- Deanna Scott—third-degree burns
- Deacon Fred von Voigt—healing
- Seth Wismer—healing

Favors Received

Let us pray in thanksgiving for favors received:

- Mary E. Eckelberg—healing
- Helen Gillette—free of diagnosed cancer
- Nancy Pastore—free of diagnosed cancer

Deceased

Let us also remember the dead who are at peace with Christ:

- Mrs. Pat Gleeson
- Eileen Sousoures

Donations & Benefactors

- Mr. & Mrs. Roland Bergeron
- Mr. Robert E. Hayes
- Terry Paul Ruscini
- Msgr. Francis J. Weber

Let us pray in thanksgiving for the special generosity of all our donors. To all those who contributed anonymously to help the Serra Cause, we also say THANK YOU!

A NEW BOOK ON SERRA

We are pleased to recommend a new book by Msgr. Francis J. Weber, the most prolific author of Catholic *Californiana*.

Blessed Fray Junípero Serra: An outstanding California Hero (ISBN: 978-2-7468-1896-50), recently published by Éditions du Signe of France, is lavishly illustrated and contains significant original material. Copies are available at many of California's mission gift shops and through www.Amazon.com.

