
Documents 1668E

Book printed by the Sodality of St. Francis Xavier of Mexico

*Sources: Book entitled: "Memorial que el P. Diego Lvys de San Vitores, Religioso de la Compañía de Iesus, Rector de las Islas Marianas remitió á la Congregacion del glorioso Apostol de las Indias S. Francisco Xauier de la Ciudad de Mexico, pidiendo le ayuden, y socorran para la fundacion de la Mission de dichas Islas" [= Memorial presented by Fr. Sanvitores, Religious of the Society of Jesus, Rector of the Mariana Islands, to the Sodality of the glorious Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, of Mexico City, asking for their help and relief in order to found the Mission in the said Islands]; printed by Francisco Rodriguez Lupercio, Mexico, 1669 (80 pages); copy in ARSI Fondos Jesuíticos 849, N° 5; cited in Medina's *La impronta en Mexico*, n° 1017 and in Sabin, 76901.¹*

Introductory note, by Fr. Ledesma.

Fr. Sanvitores hurried on from Acapulco to Mexico and presented himself to the Marquis of Mancera, Viceroy of New Spain. The latter did not hesitate to make known his difficulties, and the expense of 10,000 pesos requested of him for the new expedition seemed to have instantly terrified him. However, thanks to the intervention of his consort and principally to the backing of some people who offered to be guarantors for the Father and promised the Viceroy to reimburse to the Royal treasury the 10,000 pesos if within three years His Majesty did not approve the advance of that amount, the Viceroy ordered that the missionary's request be granted.

The generosity of the whole city of Mexico came also to the Father's assistance. The Sodalists of St. Francis Xavier alone collected 10,000 pesos for their old Prefect. Also an enormous amount of alms reached him in the form of vestments, chalices and cloth.

Having thus accomplished satisfactorily the purpose of his voyage to the Capital of New Spain, Fr. Sanvitores had nothing more to do than to say farewell to the world and to confine himself in that corner of the earth so dearly desired by his heart, not without asking, however, for the blessing of the Holy Father, His Holiness Clement IX, three days before his departure (see Doc. 1668G).

1 Ed. note: The memorial itself takes up more than half the pages of this book, there being 9 other documents, 2 of which were also written by Fr. Sanvitores.

Description of the contents of Fr. Sanvitores' Memorial printed in Mexico.

Source: Maggs Bros. Cat. N° 491 (1927), n° 34, pp. 24-25.

The **first section** of this Memorial, which is divided into nine parts, contains 43 pages, and in it Father Luis de Sanvitores points out the advantages offered by the Mariana Islands as a stepping-stone to Australia, and states that he is appending the text of a memorial which the famous Pedro Fernandez de Quiros addressed to Philip III of Spain in 1610, in support of his opinion that Australia would be well worthy of conversion. He calls attention to the statement of Quiros that "the unknown land of Australia comprises one quarter of the globe's territory, inhabited by poor uncivilized heathen, without king or law, and free from the stumbling-blocks which have been placed in the path of our faith in other countries by the tyranny of Princes, the greed and craft of Indian Chiefs or Priests, the infernal sect of Mahomet, and diabolical superstition of idolatry and witchcraft; free, too, from the vices common to other peoples." Among other important matters, he mentions that the old name of the Islands, the Ladrões, was changed to that of the Marianas, both as a dedication to the Virgin Mary and in honor of the Spanish Queen, Maria Ana. He also refers to Japan, and to an offer he had received from a Portuguese Captain and some Chinese sailors, of a passage there.

The **second** section gives a short account of the various islands forming the Mariana group, "ranging as far as Japan."

The **third** section ... occupies 6 pages, and gives the account of the voyage of Alvaro de Mendaña de Neyra for the re-discovery of the Solomon Islands, telling how Mendaña left Callao on 9 April 1595, and of the various South Sea Islands discovered by the expedition, of the death of Mendaña at the Island of Santa Cruz near the New Hebrides [Vanuatu], and of the expedition's failure and the return of the survivors to Manila. Quiros accompanied this expedition as the chief-pilot.

The **fourth** section ... occupies 8 pages, and contains the famous eighth Memorial of Quiros, addressed to Philip III of Spain in 1610, "On the Colonization and Discovery of the fourth part of the World, Unknown Australia, its wealth and fertility." In this memorial Quiros pleads to be allowed to conduct another expedition for the discovery and conversion of Australia. In a series of 8 divisions he tells the King of his discoveries among the Islands of Australasia, describing their peoples and products, and their great extent. "In longitude they are about equal to all Europe, Asia Minor as far as the Caspian Sea and Persia, with all the Islands of the Mediterranean and those in the region of the Atlantic ocean, including England and Ireland. That unknown region represents a quarter of the globe, and has such possibilities that there may be twice the lands of which your Majesty is now lord." This memorial forms one of the most valuable and historical documents for the early history of the quest for the discovery of Australia. A

crude translation of it, omitting various passages, was published in Purchas in 1613. Dalrymple, in 1770-1, gave a complete translation, and another was published by the Hakluyt Society in 1904.¹

The **fifth** section occupies 8-1/2 pages, and is entitled: "Reasons for not delaying the conversion and education of the Ladron Islands, which would lead to the conversion of innumerable souls throughout that group of islands and the unknown Austral land which is said to occupy one quarter of the globe, and which is as yet under the shadow of death without the light of the Gospel."

The **sixth** section deals with the practical means of establishing this mission.

The seventh section suggests an alternative proposition should the other method not meet the approval of the Spanish Government.

The **eighth** section describes various gifts given by the Jesuits in Mexico to Father San Vitores towards the foundation of this mission, and gives the text of his first letter dated from the Island of Guam, 18 June 1668, describing briefly his voyage, and initial success in the Marianas...

The **ninth**, and last, section contains a letter from another missionary who accompanied Father San Vitores.

Introduction of the book, translation by Fr. Juan Ledesma.²

Your Excellency.

This Brief of Father Diego Luis de San Vitores seeks in Your Excellency the pleasure which its author found and which he was assured with as many guarantees as were the singular favors which he received from Your Excellency. The continuing grant of their favors is something that gives glory to the Princes, because the last ones always enhance the first, and gives credit to the decision which began the following beneficence. Father Diego Luis de San Vitores owes to the generous beneficence of Your Excellency the spiritual enterprise of the Mariana Islands, which is a glorious objective of your apostolic zeal. But its execution was so difficult, as well as so heroic, that it could not be realized until it reached the prudent decision of Your Excellency. With your piety and liberality you were able to convert the difficulties into opportunities, for indeed they are such for the glory of Him who overcomes whatever difficulties there are in enterprises of such great service to both Majesties.

In this regard Your Excellency came to the rescue of the enterprise, in accordance with the orders of his Majesty the King, Don Felipe IV the Great (who is now in Heaven) with 10,000 pesos taken from the Royal treasury of Mexico. To this your Christian piety added great sums from your own property, so that what was generous on your

1 Ed. note: Carlos Sanz has published a facsimile reproduction of the original Madrid 1610 edition, at Madrid in 1963. There was another early English edition by Hodgetts at London in 1617.

2 Ed. note: Translation made by Fr. Ledesma, in *The Cause for Beatification*.

part would become a credit to the Christianity of His Majesty, and the example of Your Excellency a strong impulse for the imitation of the whole of Mexico.

In a special manner the Sodality of St. Francis Xavier, which regards Your Excellency as its protector, held you on this occasion as its ideal so that even on the human level our ambitious largesse could glory itself. For if in the opinion of Casiodorus even the wastefulness deserves the praise of virtue if in what it spends of its property it purchases and acquires applause and fame, what must it be when our expense was the price for the imitation of Your Excellency? And it will always be a precise pledge of your protection and help, never more needed than when the Sodality is greater in applause and esteem, and therefore more exposed to failures and insults. But it will always be safe, if as in divine things it enjoys the patronage of St. Francis Xavier, it also gains on the human level the protection of Your Excellency (with the event that so felicitously took place as has been verified through the news that the vessel of the Philippines brought us this year).

May Heaven grant us that your government last for many happy and long years.

Most Excellent Lord,

I kiss the hands of Your Excellency in the name of the Sodality of St. Francis Xavier, I who am

Your Precentor,

Doctor D. Diego Osorio y Peralta.¹

Other documents printed with the Memorial

Notice of the islands and lands neighboring the Ladrone Island Chain, already called the Mariana Islands, including the narrative [by Quirós] of the Voyage of the frontier Governor Alvaro de Mendaña de Neyra to the discovery of the Solomon Islands

[Document not reproduced here. See Doc. 1696C in Vol. 2.]

Narrative of a Memorial presented to H.M. by Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quirós, regarding the colonization and exploration of the fourth part of the world, the unknown Australia

[Document not reproduced here.]²

1 Ed. note: This is a pen-name used by Fr. Sanvitores.

2 Ed. note: See description of the book, above.

[Section 8, part 1:] List of what the members of the Sodality of our Father St. Francis Xavier gave to Father Diego Luis de Sanvitores, of the Society of Jesus, for the foundation of the New Church of the Mariana Islands.¹

[Section 8, part 2:] Letter written by Fr. Sanvitores at his arrival at the Mariana Islands, dated Island of San Juan, 18 June 1668

[Document reproduced as Doc. 1668J1 below.]

[Section 9:] Part of a letter from one of the Fathers who went with Fr. Sanvitores

[Document reproduced as Doc. 1668J2 below.]

Editor's note regarding the Sodality of St. Francis Xavier in Mexico

Sources: 1) Fr. Gérard Decorme's book: "La obra de los Jesuitas Mexicanos," vol. 1, Mexico, 1941; 2) Fr. Alegre's Historia, vol. 3.

In the middle of the 17th century, many prodigious events and miracles occurred throughout New Spain, and were ascribed to the intercession of St. Francis. The most famous of these was the sweating of a statue of the saint in the College of San Ildefonso in Mexico City, while Fr. José Vidal was Rector. The brother of this Rector, Fr. Cristóbal Vidal, was responsible for recruiting 8 other priests and together they founded the Sodality, attached to the church of Santa Veracruz. The sodality was approved by Archbishop Mateo Segue y Burgueiros in 1658.

The sodality grew rapidly, specially after the approval of Pope Alexander VII was obtained. Men as well as women were admitted; the more famous members at this time was the viceregal couple, the Duke and Duchess of Albuquerque. They year 1661 saw the presence of Fr. Sanvitores in Mexico City. He took a particular interest in this sodality, and preached many "missions" to it. It is claimed that Fr. Sanvitores had with him a chalice that had belonged to St. Francis Xavier himself; this he gave to the Sodality, and it was preserved there for many years. This act is what prompted the Sodality to make a generous gift to Fr. Sanvitores, so that he could purchase all the chalices and church ornaments he needed to found the Mariana Island Mission.

Three feast-days marked for special devotion by the Sodality were: 15 August, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; 17 August, to commemorate the transfer from Malacca to Goa of the body of St. Francis Xavier; and a movable date in January, to honor

¹ Ed. note: The Majordomo of this Sodality was a secular priest, Cristóbal Xavier Vidal, the brother of the Jesuit Fr. José Vidal, then Procurator for the Philippines (see Doc. 1691A).

St. Francis, because his proper feast-day in December was occupied with the celebrations in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The costs of the latter feast were underwritten by a fund set up by Don Fernando de Castilla y Velasco, Count of Santiago.

In 1669, the priests who were associated with this pious work agreed to say two masses per year, one for the living and one for the dead, a practice that soon spread throughout Mexico. Other practices included visits to jails and hospitals, the public Acts of contrition, during which a cross was carried through the streets of the city at night during Lent,¹ assistance to vagrant young women (who would otherwise prostitute themselves), to sick priests, and the poor in general.

By 1700, the Sodality had branches in many other cities in New Spain. In Veracruz, all the local priests and gentlemen were then members.

1 This practice has been introduced by Fr. Sanvitores, a fervent disciple of Fr. Jerónimo Lopez in this regard.