



Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Costanoan/Ohlone Indians
Historically known as "San Juan Bautista Band and San Juan Band" Indians of California
PO Box 5272 | Galt, CA 95622

April 25, 2014

Pope Francis
Bishop of Rome
Sovereign of the Vatican City State
The Vatican, Rome

Your Holiness:

We are writing to thank you for the response to our previous three individual letters mailed to you in late August of 2013. We write to you to update you on our efforts to have the Roman Catholic Church acknowledge and present the true and tragic history of the Indigenous Peoples of California who were forced into the Franciscan Mission in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries. We refer to the Native peoples who were taken to the twenty-one Catholic Franciscan Missions of California, held captive there for the rest of their lives and who suffered terribly at the hands of Franciscan friars.

For nearly two centuries the Roman Catholic Church has claimed that Father Junipero Serra, the Franciscan priest who founded the Missions and established the cruel policies that were suffered by the Native Peoples, was a gentle and loving man who treated the Natives as his children.

There is no truth to this.

Even the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor is aware of this. One has only to read the Order's *The Writings of Junipero Serra* to realize that he not only considered corporal punishment as the only way to control the Indians within the missions, but that he personally ordered the whipping of Indians. He also grievously condemned the Natives and their children to a lifetime of incredible horror within the Mission compounds. Tens of thousands of our people died from disease, mistreatment, forced labor, malnutrition, and severe depression in those 21 sites.

A book that presents irrefutable evidence regarding the brutal treatment of the Indians by the Franciscans is expected to be published early next year. Using Mission records, letters, the descriptions of eyewitnesses, and other accounts, the work, for the first time, presents the nightmare that the Missions forced upon the captive Indians.

Since our last letter, we met with Mr. Ned Dolejsi, executive director of the California Catholic Conference in Sacramento, Calif., to discuss with him our letter dated August 29, 2013 (**see attached**), which we previously sent to Bishop Wilkerson and Bishop Clark of Los Angeles, Calif., Bishop Garcia of Monterey, Calif., and retired Bishop Quinn of Sacramento. The letter presented our suggestions for improving the relationship between the Church and the descendants of those who survived the ordeal of the California Missions.

We consider this of utmost importance in that it will allow the Indigenous descendants and the church to understand our shared history, to focus on the truths that have remained untold, and to help with the healing process that is needed by both the Church and our people. Besides wanting to share the letter with Mr. Dolejsi we were also hoping to learn why no response to it

to help with the healing process that is needed by both the Church and our people. Besides wanting to share the letter with Mr. Dolejsi we were also hoping to learn why no response to it was ever received.

We would also like to learn the reason for the denial to have Dr. Donna Schindler, a psychiatrist, specializing in the historic trauma of Native Americans, and I address the Bishops Conference of California that was held in March of this year. Our goal was to share with the Bishops the true history of the missions and the resultant historic trauma that continues to this day. We were notified on February 17th that our request to speak with the Bishops was refused. The rejection came despite the fact that we had been encouraged to make this request by both Bishop Clark and Bishop Quinn.

It is important that we recognize the positive efforts of Bishop Garcia of the Monterey Diocese in helping us. In December of 2012, Bishop Garcia held a Mass of Reconciliation for our Tribe at Mission San Juan Bautista, an extremely moving and healing event for our Tribe.

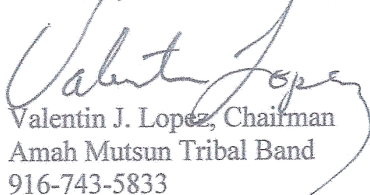
We are currently working with Bishop Garcia to plan a similar event at Mission Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz, Calif. Additionally, on March 3, we met with Bishop Garcia to request that a memorial be placed on the grounds of Mission San Juan Bautista to recognize the thousands of indigenous peoples who died there during the Mission period. We rejoiced in his granting permission to place a memorial within the grounds of the Mission. It was made clear to us that we will have to do all fundraising related to the monument. We presently await answers from Bishop Garcia to other requests we made of him, however we acknowledge and greatly appreciate his willingness to work with our Tribe.

In our previous letter of August 30, we requested that you, Holy Father, offer a mass of reconciliation in California to the indigenous descendants of those forced into the California missions to help with healing for both our Indigenous peoples and the Church.

In this letter, your Holiness, we again make this request.

We thank you for any and all consideration you give to these wishes. Should you have questions or care to discuss the contents of this letter please feel free to contact us at your convenience.

saaretum yuu kansireesum - With prayers and with our heart,



Valentin J. Lopez, Chairman
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