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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

August 19, 2015

+Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia, D.D.
Bishop of the Diocese of Monterey
425 Church Street
PO Box 2048
Monterey, CA 93942-2048

Re: Canonization of Friar Junipero Serra

Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia,

Thank you for your letter dated April 13, 2015. Your response to my letter on behalf of the member tribes of the California Association of Tribal Governments (CATG), dated March March 16, 2015 and April 7, 2015, was the only reply we received. By our letters we requested three actions.

First, we requested his Holiness Pope Francis not canonize Father Junipero Serra. Second, we requested a meeting with your Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, and also with his Holiness Pope Francis during his visit to the United States. Third, we requested that his Holiness Pope Francis rescind the Papal Bulls that comprise the Doctrine of Discovery.

To date, we have not response to our requests but your letter wherein you commit yourself within your resources in the Diocese of Monterey to be "as inclusive and caring of our Native People as [you] can be." Your lone response is no comfort to our people who continue to suffer from the historic trauma caused by the horrific cruelty visited upon us by Friar Serra and the Catholic Church.

In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II issued a diverse apology on behalf of the Catholic Church. In his apology Pope John Paul said, "Whenever the truth has been suppressed by governments and their agencies or even by Christian communities, the wrongs done to the indigenous peoples need to be honestly acknowledged...The Church expresses deep regret and asks forgiveness where her children have been or still are party to these wrongs...The past cannot be undone, but honest recognition of past injustices can lead to measures and attitudes that will help to rectify the damaging effects for both the indigenous community and the wider society." The canonization of Friar Serra would again intentionally suppress his brutal wrongs done against our people.

Pope John Paul also said, "An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie, for an excuse is a lie [that is] guarded." How can Friar Junipero Serra be canonized in the light of the truth that is known of his brutal actions and the devastating mission system that he created? His Holiness Pope Francis' intent to canonize Friar Serra does not acknowledge the abuse perpetrated upon our people by Friar Serra and the Catholic Missions. The atrocities perpetrated upon our families at the Friar Serra mission

continues to burden our Tribal citizens with the cumulative psychological and physical impacts of historic trauma. This trauma resulted from the generations of physical and emotional brutality as well as the attempted cultural and spiritual genocide of all California native people. Our ancestors endured this brutality not only during mission times but this legacy continued during the Mexican and American periods with the approval of the Catholic Church.

We seek to find healing from our historic trauma. However, your announcement that you would canonize Friar Junipero Serra is incompatible with our healing. Canonization itself should be incompatible with Friar Serra who caused, directly or indirectly, the deaths of over 100,000 California Indians and the complete extermination of many Native tribes' cultures and languages. The brutality of Friar Serra is indisputable as it is well documented in his own writings.

A book titled "A Cross of Thorns, The Enslavement of California's Indians by the Spanish Missions", by author Elias Castillo, will be released soon. The book is the result of more than six years of research and study of original documents including eyewitness accounts by early travelers, records kept by the friars, and historic letters by church and government authorities in Alta California and Mexico. A Cross of Thorns describes the brutality of Serra and the dark and violent reality of mission life. Castillo wrote, "Even a fellow Franciscan, Fr. Antonio de la Concepcion Horra, wrote in 1799 that The treatment of the Indians is the most cruel I have ever read in history. For the slightest things they receive heavy floggings, are shackled, and put in the stocks, and treated with so much cruelty that they are kept whole days without a drink of *water*." In 1820, the last Spanish Padre Presidente of the missions, Father Mariano Payeras, worriedly wrote his superior in Mexico City that they, "had to come up with an alibi when people started asking where all the Indians had gone. Unless they had an excuse, the Franciscans would be subjected to scorn and scandal. Wrote Payeras: All we have done to the Indians is consecrate them, baptize them and bury them."

Friar Serra's actions were acceptable to the Catholic Church based on the Papal Bull Dum Diversas of June 18, 1452, the Bull Romanus Pontifex of January 8, 1454, and the Bull Inter Caetera of May 4, 1493, known as the Doctrine of Discovery. These bulls, which promoted the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of non-Christian nations, specifically granted the Pope's blessing "to capture, vanquish, and subdue the Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ and put them into perpetual slavery and take all their possessions and their property." These Bulls are not an artifact of history as they form the basis of United States federal Indian law beginning with the US Supreme Court decision in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* in 1823, and has been cited as a principle of modern federal Indian law as recently as 2005 in the US Supreme Court decision in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*. In addition to our request for the Pope to not canonize Friar Serra, we ask the Pope to publicly repudiate and rescind these Bulls and the resulting Doctrine of Discovery. It is also our belief that in addition to canonizing Serra based on Bulls, you are also basing his canonization on the alibi created by the Franciscans and not the reality of his actions.

The California Association of Tribal Governments (CATG) sends this letter with our hope and prayers that someone with influence within the Catholic Church may advise his Holiness Pope Francis to reevaluate his decision to canonize Friar Junipero Serra, that he would meet with us in order that he may reevaluate the Church's relationship with the families of all California Indians taken to the missions for enslavement and murder, and, of essential and paramount importance, that his Holiness Pope Francis rescind the Papal Bulls that comprise the Doctrine of Discovery.

Should you have any questions, please contact the CATG's Executive Director, Mr. Will Micklin, by

telephone at (619) 368-4382 or by email at wmicklin@leaningrock.net. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mark Romero, Chairman

CC:

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