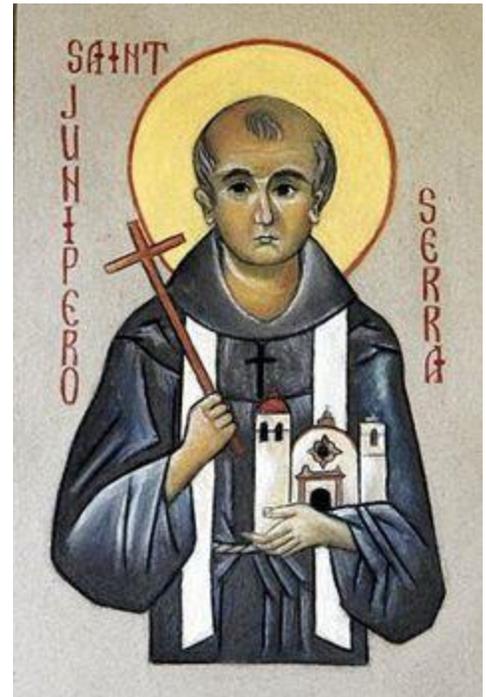


**March 15**

**Saint Junipero Serra**

Hello, good people. May the Lord give you peace.

I'm not too sure how long the saint that we welcome today could sit still. He truly was a man with volcanic energy. Junipero Serra was born in Majorca, Spain. He entered the Franciscan Order and was ordained on the island. There he was highly educated earning a doctorate degree. At the age of 35 he and some companions traveled to New Spain to bring the Christian faith to the Americas. He is well known for founding over 20 missions in what was then known as Baja and Alta California.



We sometimes imagine missionaries joyfully walking to new places and happily founding the missions. This idyllic picture bears no resemblance to the tumultuous environment in which Junipero worked. He had to manage relationships with Spanish colonists, Spanish soldiers, Native American Indian Communities, all with the theological understandings of his day. It was this latter factor that has occasioned a serious look back at his work. Operating as he was out of the understanding that there was no salvation outside of the Church, he worked passionately to save the native population. As misguided as some of his decisions were, one could never question his motivation.

Founding these missions took heroic energy and there was nothing that Fra Junipero would not do. He did everything! Of course, he taught. But if an extra hand at construction was needed, he was there. It is this quality that I hold out for us today. The passionate commitment to advance the Kingdom of God on this earth is a noble and worthy undertaking – and it is not easy. Negotiating his way through the political labyrinth of his day was no task for the timid. Yet, he moved forward with a soul fired by faith. I smile to think that even Margaret Thatcher caught his spirit when she said: "God needs no faint hearts for his ambassadors." Let us then catch that spirit of Junipero Serra and bring energy and enthusiasm to our witness.

Let us pray.

**Lord God, from you comes all that is good, all our talents and abilities. Help us develop these gifts, even when it means hard work. Help us face the reality of working together as a community. When necessary, help us deal with pain and disappointment. Be with us in our endeavors. In the spirit of Junípero Serra, let us never give up. Let this dedication in our lives today help us grow in faith, maturity and life for tomorrow. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Junipero Serra is a friend of God, the company we welcome today.**