



Mission San Juan Capistrano's 2026 Romance of the Mission Gala to Celebrate 250th Anniversary

Broadway Star Sutton Foster is the Featured Concert Artist and the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation will be Honored

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (April 7, 2026) – The annual Romance of the Mission benefit gala returns to Mission San Juan Capistrano on Friday, September 18 while marking the historic landmark's 250th anniversary. Tony Award-winning actor and singer Sutton Foster will showcase her exceptional talent during a live concert and the Mission Preservation Foundation will proudly honor the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation during the evening program.

This year's gala theme, 'A Legacy of Tradition,' will be celebrated throughout the black-tie affair beginning with a private reception in the Mission's Front Courtyard followed by an unparalleled concert in Ruins of the Great Stone Church, circa 1812, and an exquisite candlelight dinner in the Central Courtyard prepared and served by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano.

"Each year, our beautiful gala celebrates the Mission's closest friends and most generous supporters. This year has additional significance since it is the Landmark's 250th anniversary and there's no better time to honor the contributions of our Acjachemen friends, the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation under the leadership of Chairman Nathan K. Banda," said Mission Preservation Foundation President George O'Connell.

A tenth-generation descendant of the historic Rios family of San Juan Capistrano and official Mission San Juan bell ringer, Tribal Chairman Nathan K. Banda will represent the Tribe at the gala in honor of his ancestors, elders, tribal council, and nation at large.

Acclaimed singer and actor Sutton Foster is the headlining concert artist. Renown for her work in musical theater, Sutton is best known for her Tony Award-winning Broadway performances in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002) and *Anything Goes* (2011). She

earned another Tony nomination for her role in *Shrek the Musical* (2008) and remains an influential talent in both theater and entertainment today.

The evening will also feature a variety of musical performances throughout the site including a soulful gospel choir *Singers of Soul*, the Spanish Flamenco band, *Duende Flamenco* and the Bolero Band, *Kimera*.

Significant gala underwriting to date has been pledged by Eden and George O'Connell/O'Connell Family Foundation, Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, Kerry and Gavin S. Herbert Jr./Roger's Gardens, Bright Ideas, D Lighting, Dame Connie and Dr. Peter Spenuzza, Native Hands Wine, Rancho Capistrano Winery, Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation/Kalawpa Consulting and others.

Gala underwriting in support of the Mission's education and preservation programs is now being accepted. For more information, contact Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director at (949) 234-1311 or mlawrence-adams@missionsjc.com.

For general information about Mission San Juan Capistrano, visit www.missionsjc.com.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features exhibits, five-language audio tour, festivals and public programming. As Orange County's only mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, the Ruins of The Great Stone Church (circa 1796) and original padres' quarters.

Founded on November 1, 1776, by Saint Junipero Serra as the seventh of 21 California missions established by Spain and built by indigenous hands, Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and receives no church or state funding. The Mission Preservation Foundation, comprised of business and community leaders, is its fundraising entity committed to preserving its long-term historic and religious significance.

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