CELEBRATING FATHER JUNIPERO SERRA IN NEWS!

Our own founder of Mission San Juan Capistrano, Father Junipero Serra has been in the news quite a lot lately. Locals are invited to read on for more information about some of the developments and issues related to the California mission system founder and immediate ways they can help.

As executive director and chief preservation officer of Mission San Juan Capistrano, an early California landmark that was founded by Father Serra (and has the only chapel in California where he celebrated mass still standing), a recent news article caught my attention. Los Angeles Times newspaper dated February 9th, entitled “Swap Ride for Serra” was of great concern to those of us involved in the daily preservation and caretaking of a historic and religious landmark. The California mission system contributes greatly to the commerce of the State of California. Its parallel history coincides with our nation’s founding and is of great interest to local, national and international travelers of many faith traditions. Our mission alone sees over 330,000 visitors each year who come to this area to enjoy history, shopping and dining, and more. Additionally, we educate 68,000 California fourth graders and their teachers each year (from all over Southern California and over 4,000 from Senator Lara’s district) as a meaningful place for learning about California history.

State Senator Lara’s initiation of the relocation of Father Serra’s statue in Washington DC (one of two statues representing California) is cause for the San Juan Capistrano Mission Preservation Foundation’s concern. The statue itself is now historically significant and was installed in 1931 to recognize Serra’s profound and lasting impact on the ultimate framing of the state of California. We believe this project deserves greater discourse and consideration after many facts have been made available to the senator. We are happy to help with this. However, he has already enlisted the support of 18 other state senators to move forward with the removal of this statue.

Father Serra’s legacy some 300 years after his birth and his life’s measurable impact, as seen in the continued existence of “mission towns” that comprise some of California’s most iconic coastal communities, are something to celebrate. His ability to record and document the sacraments of the Native Americans as he brought the Christian/Catholic faith to them, serve today as powerful documentation for subsequent generations of indigenous people in their pursuit of gaining a greater understanding of their people’s history. While Father Serra for some is controversial, he has contributed greatly to the historic landscape and building of our state of California and deserves the level of recognition and respect that comes with his statue being placed in our nations’ capitol as it has been since 1931. He deserves federal recognition for his contributions to the state of California as evidenced by the mission towns that we all have come to enjoy and learn from.

We are inviting your help in preserving the statue’s location, please email or send a letter to Senator Lara’s attention to save our Father Serra statue from being removed from our Nation’s Capitol.
http://sd33.senate.ca.gov/contact

Sincerely,
Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director

On behalf of the Mission Preservation Foundation:
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“Join us as we celebrate and protect mission history for San Juan Capistrano, an original mission town.”