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MISSION CELEBRATES 48TH ANNUAL EMPTY SADDLES CEREMONY

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA. – April 5, 2011 -- Mission San Juan Capistrano celebrated the 48th annual Spring Gibby's Mass and Empty Saddles Ceremony with more than 250 El Viaje De Portola riders and their families in Portola Plaza on Friday, April 1.

The El Viaje de Portolá riders each year raise funds to support Orange County's only Mission.

This year's ride was dedicated to Bill Shattuck, who is one of the eight men who founded El Viaje de Portola and are affectionately called the Big Eight.

Beginning at 7:30 a.m. riders and guests walked into the Old Mission's Serra Chapel for the annual "Gibby's Mass," then gathered at the horse statue for the "Empty Saddles Ceremony." Following the ceremony there was a ringing of the old bells by Mike Gastelum as riders and guests gathered to honor those members who have passed away. Those who passed on this year were honored by Tony Moiso.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County's only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$5 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.