



2022 History Essay Contest Homeschool 4th Grade Winner

Never Give Up

By Maximilian Sciacca – Dixon, California

Miguel José Serra, who was born on November 24, 1713, was a small person, but he had big dreams and lots of determination. He wanted to be a priest. When he joined the Franciscans at the age of 17, he received a new name, which was Junípero Serra. He constantly dreamed of being a missionary because he wanted to travel to places and teach people about Jesus.

Father Serra was 35 years old when he got a call from the missionaries to go to New Spain, which is now Mexico. He would give up his university position in Palma, Spain. Although he was sad that he would never see his parents again, he wanted to teach the Native Americans about Christianity. His dreams were coming true.

His journey was difficult. The first part of his journey was on a boat. The captain didn't like priests. He threatened to take a knife to Father Serra's throat. He thought about throwing Father Serra overboard. The ship didn't have enough food and water. When he landed on Vera Cruz, Mexico, it took about 250 miles on foot to get to Mexico City. On the way, a poisonous animal bit him and his leg swelled two sizes bigger than his other leg. Someone gave him horses but he refused them. He said that friars should walk on foot because they should live a simple life. Although his journey was difficult, he never gave up.

Finally, he reached Mexico City. He was going to teach the Pame Indians the Christian ways. On Christmas, he did plays about Jesus' birth and on Easter, he carried a heavy cross to show Jesus' sufferings. He also taught them sewing, farming, and basket making. They also built a bigger church together.

After 18 years, he was sent to Alta, California to begin new missions. He traveled with Captain Portolá to San Diego and started the first mission. Some people were sick and some people died. They were all very hungry. They had Native Americans attacking them. Their supply ship was late. Captain Portolá, who was discouraged, decided to abandon the San Diego mission. Father Serra did not want to leave, so he said a novena to St. Joseph that the supply ship would come back soon. Every day, he would climb a mountain and look down at the San Diego Bay to look for the supply ship and he wouldn't see it. Finally, it was the day that Portola wanted to go to Mexico. Father Serra went on top of the mountain. He looked down at the San Diego Bay and saw the supply ship. It was the feast day of Saint Joseph. Father Serra was happy because they would get to stay at the mission.

Father Serra started eight more missions. He traveled hundreds of miles and taught the Spanish and the Native Americans about Jesus and said Mass. He baptized more than six thousand people. He would travel from one mission to another on the El Camino Real, which is now a highway.

Father Serra, who was canonized a saint on September 23, 2015, is important to California because he taught the Native Americans, settlers, and the Spanish about Jesus. Californians should learn from him that he loved the Native Americans and wanted to teach people about Jesus. I learned from Saint Junípero Serra that we should never give up even when things get complicated and we should always love God and our neighbor.

Bibliography

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