

# The Canonization of **JUNÍPERO SERRA**

## **1784** - Junípero Serra's Death

When Father Junípero Serra died in 1784, he was mourned by the friars and Indians, who referred to him for generations after his death as "el santo" — the saint.

## **1940** - Gathering Historical Documents

The first step in the process of canonization is to gather all historical writings about the candidate, including his or her own writings.

## **1950** - Document Handoff to Vatican

In the summer of 1950, the Diocese of Fresno, Calif., officially handed this research over to the Vatican for the next stage of scrutiny over Serra's life to begin. At this point, Serra was accorded the title "Servant of God."

## **1985** - Declared "Venerable"

Pope John Paul II declared Father Junípero Serra to be "Venerable" on May 9, 1985.

## **1988** - Declared "Blessed"

On Sept. 25, 1988, Junípero Serra was declared "Blessed" by Pope John Paul II after a thorough medical investigation found that there was no explanation for a nun's healing from lupus. The pope affirmed that the sister's healing was miraculous through the intercession of Father Serra.

## **2015** - Canonized

On Jan. 15, 2015, Pope Francis announced that he will canonize Father Serra when he comes to the United States in September 2015.

Source: <http://stjunipero.org>



CNS photo/Bob Mullen

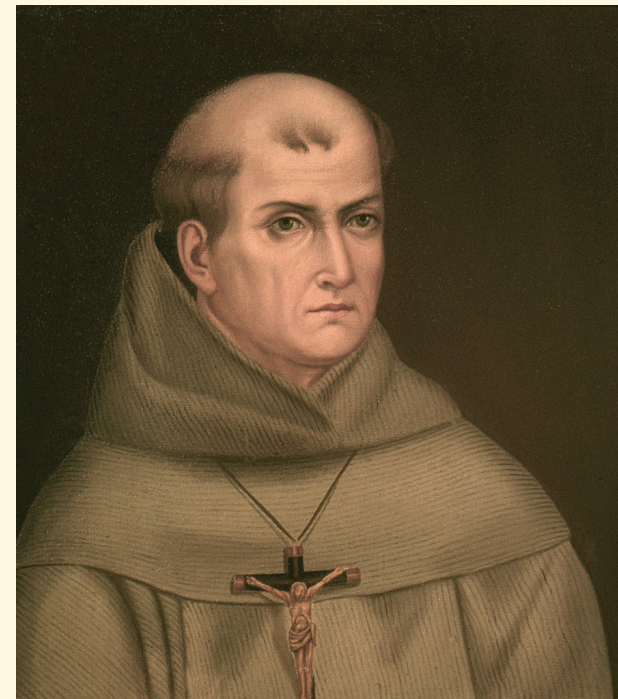
A statue of Blessed Junípero Serra outside *Mission Basilica San Juan Capistrano* in San Juan Capistrano, Calif.

Junípero Serra founded 21 missions between 1769 and 1782 missions that would become the major cities of California including: San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara.

Produced by the Archdiocese of Washington  
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# JUNÍPERO SERRA



## Franciscan Friar Founding Father **SAINT**

November 24, 1713 – August 28, 1784

FEAST DAY: **July 1**

# ALL ABOUT JUNÍPERO SERRA

**J**unípero Serra, an 18th century Franciscan Friar from the small island of Mallorca, off the coast of Spain, **founded 21 missions** between 1769 and 1782 **that would become the major cities of California** including: San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara. As such he is often referred to as one of the founders of modern California.

While his executive ability in founding of the missions is laudable, it is his love for the Lord and missionary passion that mark Junípero a saint. As St. John Paul II noted:

**“At crucial moments in human affairs, God raises up men and women whom he thrusts into roles of decisive importance for the future development of both society and the Church. We rejoice all the more when their achievement is coupled with a holiness of life that can truly be called heroic. So it is with Junípero Serra, who in the providence of God was destined to be the Apostle of California.”**

St. John Paul II at the site of Junípero Serra's missionary headquarters

**J**unípero was a bright student and began his priestly career as a professor of philosophy at the Lullian University at Palma.

In an early series of homilies that have been preserved, Serra repeatedly returns to the theme of Psalm 33 when he says:

**“To anyone who has tasted the gentleness of the Lord even once, all pleasures and delights of this life are anything but that. They are boring.”**

At the age of 36 he felt the call to missionary service in 1749. Along with his student and fellow Franciscan, Brother Palou, he crossed the Atlantic to begin his long missionary career in Mexico, and later, in what is now California. Before leaving his beloved Mallorca, he encouraged his family to seek holiness as he writes:

**“I encourage all to be conscientious in attending church, in going to confession and receiving Communion frequently, in making the Stations of the Cross, in short, in striving in every way to be a good Christian.”**

**I**n 1767, Serra was appointed in charge of the missions. He arrived in the San Diego area in 1769 and, with the exception of one visit to Mexico, never left the country again.

Serra was a zealous in his attention to the native population. On several occasions he confronted the government on their behalf. His devotion to his adopted homeland is also shown in his great devotion to the Blessed Mother, particularly to Our Lady of Guadalupe. He offered the success of his missionary efforts to her intercession.

True to his call to spread the Gospel, Junípero Serra is credited with confirming 5309 individuals, most of whom were Indians who converted to Christianity during the 14 years of his mission work between 1770 and 1784.

Serra is remembered for his personal holiness. Despite having asthma and a chronic leg wound, Serra made his journeys on foot whenever possible. While he was generous in building the mission Churches so as to shine with beauty and imagery, he is also recognized for his own self-denial. Most importantly, his absolute trust in God is shown through his efforts, and made his remarkable legacy possible.

Junípero Serra died at the age of 71 on August 28, 1784, at Mission San Carlos Borromeo.

For more information on Junípero Serra the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has created a new website:

<http://stjunipero.org>