



Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California

By Gregory Orfalea

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The fascinating narrative of the remarkable life of Junípero Serra, the intrepid priest who led Spain and the Catholic Church into California in the 1700s and became a key figure in the making of the American West.

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In the year 1749, at the age of thirty-six, Junípero Serra left his position as a highly regarded priest in Spain for the turbulent and dangerous New World, knowing he would never return. The Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church both sought expansion in Mexico—the former in search of gold, the latter seeking souls—as well as entry into the mysterious land to the north called “California.”

Serra’s mission: to spread Christianity in this unknown world by building churches wherever possible and by converting the native peoples to the Word of God. It was an undertaking that seemed impossible, given the vast distances, the challenges of the unforgiving landscape, and the danger posed by resistant native tribes. Such a journey would require bottomless physical stamina, indomitable psychic strength, and, above all, the deepest faith. Serra, a diminutive man with a stout heart, possessed all of these attributes, as well as an innate humility that allowed him to see the humanity in native people whom the West viewed as savages.

By his death at age seventy-one, Serra had traveled more than 14,000 miles on land and sea through the New World—much of that distance on a chronically infected and painful foot—baptized and confirmed 6,000 Indians, and founded nine of California’s twenty-one missions, with his followers establishing the rest. The names of these missions ring through the history of California— San Diego, San Jose, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Clara, and San Francisco—and served as the epicenters of the arrival of Western civilization, where millions more would follow, creating the California we know today.

An impoverished son, an inspired priest, and a potent political force, Serra was a

complex man who stood at the historic crossroads between Native Americans, the often brutal Spanish soldiers, and the dictates of the Catholic Church, which still practiced punishment by flogging. In this uncertain, violent atmosphere, Serra sought to protect the indigenous peoples from abuse and to bring them the rituals and spiritual comfort of the Church even as the microbes carried by Europeans threatened their existence.

Beginning with Serra's boyhood on the isolated island of Mallorca, venturing into the final days of the Spanish Inquisition, revealing the thriving grandeur of Mexico City, and finally journeying up the untouched California coast, Gregory Orfalea's magisterial biography is a rich epic that cuts new ground in our understanding of the origins of the United States.

Combining biography, European history, knowledge of Catholic doctrine, and anthropology, *Journey to the Sun* brings original research and perspective to America's creation story. Orfalea's poetic and incisive recounting of Serra's life shows how one man changed the future of California and in so doing affected the future of our nation.

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Editorial Review

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One merely has to look at the place names in modern California to confirm the enduring legacy of the Spanish colonization of the area. To a great extent, the initial success of that effort to “civilize” California was due to the labors in the eighteenth century of the Franciscan priest Junipero Serra. Driven by intense religious devotion and a restless, adventurous spirit, Serra abandoned a promising and secure teaching position in Spain in 1749 to sail to the New World. After 15 years as an administrator and preacher in Mexico City, he began the work of founding a series of missions in Alta (upper) California. Here Orfalea reveals the sheer toughness, courage, and even fanaticism of his subject, as Serra founds a series of missions, often traveling in solitude while plagued by a severely ulcerated leg. As Orfalea acknowledges, the results for the Indians who were attached to the missions were mixed and certainly did not prevent the demographic collapse of the Indian population. Still, this admiring and admirable biography pays tribute to an essential figure in the early development of California. --Jay Freeman

Unknown

"A popular, highly readable history of an important figure...Orfalea's book is polished and professional." (LA Times)

"A California story becomes an American story...[a] passionate resurrection of the largely forgotten Spanish Franciscan priest who founded the early missions along the California coast...this sympathetic portrait of the well-meaning though flawed priest...sifts carefully through the record...A doggedly researched and fulsomely argued biography." (Kirkus)

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"*Journey to the Sun* is a highly readable, interpretive account of Junipero Serra's life. Gregory Orfalea brings his vast breadth of knowledge to fleshing out a humanistic narrative of a man whose history is often distorted and confounding. A brilliant biography about a key Hispanic figure in the launching of American history." (Daniel E. Krieger, Professor of History, Emeritus, California Polyte)

"Orfalea's riveting narrative significantly enriches our grasp of the illusive and controverted Junipero Serra with delightful episodes from his life in Spain and Mexico based on the author's painstaking research never before reported. Arguably, Serra comes alive in this volume as in no other. Great story-telling and fast-moving action together with a stupendous familiarity with the bibliography on Serra make this an original and substantive addition to the field. Scholars and the general public will find this volume enlightening and a good read." (Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, Casassa Chair and Professor of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University)

"Orfalea's lively and engaging narrative not only humanizes Junipero Serra, but just as important takes into consideration the cultural perspectives of California Indians as they engaged the Spanish colonial world." (John R. Johnson, Ph.D., Curator of Anthropology, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History)

"Gregory Orfalea's writing combines powerful war stories with a son's search for his father to create a fascinating book. Orfalea is unsurpassed in his ability to describe the reality and horror of life on the front line in World War II. As a bonus he has a gripping story to tell and tells it well." (Stephen Ambrose, Author of *Undaunted Courage* on *Messengers of the Lost Battalion*)

"These essays, recollection Gregory Orfalea's American life, are delightful and wise. I don't think Los Angeles has ever received such lovely valentines from a native son." (Richard Rodriguez, author of *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, on *Angeleno Days*)

"Southern California has produced its distinct literary voices, from Nathaniel West and Joan Didion to Walter Mosley and Michael Connelly. Gregory Orfalea is the next in this series, with his moving essays about a Southern California culture that will ring true to locals and surprise many outsiders. I was delighted to read this addition to the literature of my homeland and recommend it to readers, wherever they are from." (James Fallows, author of *Blind Into Baghdad: America's War in Iraq*, on *Angeleno Days*)

"A California story becomes an American story...[a] passionate resurrection of the largely forgotten Spanish Franciscan priest who founded the early missions along the California coast...this sympathetic portrait of the well-meaning though flawed priest...sifts carefully through the record...A doggedly researched and fulsomely argued biography." (Kirkus)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Janet Maldonado:

Reading a book tends to be new life style within this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world may share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. Plenty of author can inspire all their reader with their story or perhaps their experience. Not only situation that share in the publications. But also they write about the data about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their talent in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write with their book. One of them is this Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California.

Wendell Darnell:

Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California can be one of your nice books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California however doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial imagining.

Randall Hernandez:

Are you kind of stressful person, only have 10 as well as 15 minute in your moment to upgrading your mind talent or thinking skill also analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your limited time to read it because all this time you only find e-book that need more time to be study. Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California can be your answer because it can be read by you actually who have those short spare time problems.

Amy Gutierrez:

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