

Very Rev. Fr. Guradian Fr. Joseph Antonio Bernad

We are very ~~gratefully~~ grateful for the special love and zeal with which Your reverence looks after the best interest of these missions. This lightens our conscience and encourages us and urges us on to bother you with the following account and request, since we are confident that we will find in you the ~~bee-ess~~ necessary support and assistance, which we seek with all our heart.

We understand the many disappointments the missionaries experience, since they are responsible for instructing and guiding the souls when they themselves do not know the language required to preach, hear confessions, etc.

In the six missions under the jurisdiction of this holy College there are different languages in all the missions except in San Antonio, where there is only one language spoken throughout the mission, except for a word or two found in the various ^{pueblos} tribes. Experience has shown that two years after entering the mission, the Bozales, who speak a different language, at least those under twenty-five years of age, generally understand and speak the language well. There are many who speak it but if the missionaries could speak the general language, they could help the entire population living in the mission, even the Mission of San Antonio where there are no Indians who speak the native tongue. Under such circumstances the missionary could help many more people because of the common bond which exists because of long-standing dealings and communications rather than with those of other groups.

These three missions have been administered by this holy College for 26 years and more. They are the most modern of the six the College governs. We do not know the origins of the other three. Your Paternity could easily find out the beginnings of these and also Mission de la Punta, which was the first. We the missionaries have heard the native language of the primitive Indians of these missions, but the poor Indians from the start till now and from the present time on have been, are and will be (if Your Paternity is not acquainted ? with them) unable to understand the missionaries, for the instructions have been well given and the educated Indians have been well trained. By nature they are Indians (though they may be the least ignorant) and like us who dislike their language, since it is not native to us just as our language is not native to them.

It is therefore very danferous for the missionaries to entrust the salvation of the Indians to those translators or interpreters. Experience has taught this to the few zealous missionaries who have unceasingly tried to understand their tongue. This could be made clear by citing cases in which the most competent and able interpreters have erred. We shall omit that story so as not to tire you and also because it is not necessary to move your zeal to correct such harm, which only pressing need would make bearable; there is no such need to risk the salvation of these souls.

The main reasons from which those errors flow are the following (in our opinion): first: that the common language is

very limited in words and besides, it has several ways of paraphrasing as compared to the Spanish which has only one way for translating the idea suggested; besides the translation must be adapted to the limited expressions which the language has. From these one must decide which are the proper ones which express what must be translated. Since the Indians are dull and uneducated they are unable to translate supernatural mysteries, which are never heard and do not enter into their way of life; it is therefore easy

to understand the reason why they make mistakes.

The second reason why the interpreters make mistakes is that they teach what they want and not what they are told. The newly arrived missionaries to these missions and even the older ones (if they are not very diligent) will use uncommon words and so the Indian does not understand them in his own language.

The third reason is that the Indians pay so little attention to what is good. This together with the satisfaction that the missionary does not understand the native tongue and teaches often what comes first to his mind.

The fourth reason is that the interpreters who are more capable try to become teachers in matters pertaining to our sacred mysteries in a sense that seems to them very elegant. It is an apparent folly and a very common conceit in these simple people when they know more than their equals. It is difficult to admit these faults and mistakes, or better said, it is impossible for the one who may be well versed in the language. In like manner it will be difficult for the one not versed in the language to correct such faults.

Because reason urges us on, we do not want to omit the following: it is an honor for this holy College to have missions for the infidels from which the beautiful title of the Propagation of the Faith is derived. It is a pity that the Indians do not receive the Faith first hand from the missionaries rather than from interpreters. And it seems to us no less an error that after having been under the care of this holy College for so many years, the missions will be handed over to the Ordinary as happened with the Mission of la Punta. When a poor clergyman sees that the zealous sons of this holy College in so many years have not translated the prayers, the catechism, rules for confession nor anything else, he will have little encouragement to undertake what so many in so long a time did not do. And if these unfortunate ones are subject to so many mistakes, what will happen?

We understand the complaints that this holy College may have about this matter of the sons it has had and has in these lands. We do not deny them, for in our conscience we feel the responsibility and we have said in the beginning that we would clear them with this report. We also reported publicly that although not all were created equal for everything by God, but among so many there have been zealous missionaries who were aware of what has been mentioned and the other reasons. Encouraged in their zeal and trust in divine favor they have not only worked for many years on the language and all of them have discharged their duties in conscience in these lands but have also formulated many rules which probably surpass the Mexican language, and in substance it lacks nothing but what usage and practice will give it. These are proven by the best interpreters in all our missions who have devoted about eight years

to the task.

The zealous missionaries have applied themselves, some formulating those rules; and though these have worked with more determination than the others, still at the end of many years they have been satisfied with the rules; and with having acquired with them and the continued exercise an understanding of the interpreter in order to know if he speaks what he is told or what pleases him; but those missionaries speak the language (very regularly) and no one has heard them; this leads (for those who do not apply themselves with ^{resolve} regularity) to discouragement to a great degree, for they realize the large degree of the task and the required effort needed and that after all, this and the fact that they ~~those~~ instruct through an interpreter, since those others do not know about the common saying: it is used in that way always.

Others have worked in a different way, which is: translating talks studied by the missionary and taught to the Indians; and these seem to learn with less effort and profit more; for they teach what they translate and since the language is limited in words; after a few talks they become fluent, but they also depend on what the interpreter says; if they do not have a specific knowledge of the correct meaning, they will be subject to many errors, which are not as many as when the interpreter spoke suddenly, for when the missionary translates he does so word by word, making the Indian do the necessary inflection; but this is an Indian and he cannot change.

Of this second method used by the missionaries there is only one; the one who translated the catechism, the prayers, etc and only in his mission was it used; and though it is true that

it had some errors but none sunstantial, and the Indians showed devotion in using it, and above all, they understood what they said, but what resulted from this was not how and what could and should be corrected but thatthat such opposition and criticism against that missionary should be let loose from all his brohthers as I already said but is no longer rememembered in that mission.

We know well that in order to translate the catechism, the rules for confession, the mysteries and prayers, the most precise way should be sought so that there be a fixed point relative to what is to be taught; if not, it is justifiably forbidden; and such an archbishopric excommunicates those who teach a new translation without the approval of the Ordinary, and it is the Nona which places the confessors withtin the permission granted. But it seems to us that they do not give us fundamental reason so as not to put in practice the translating for the Indians the christian doctrine in their language; on the contrary, many reasons to do the opposite, but that it be done as it should.

The argument which could be offerred so it seems to us, is hhe limited possibility that in the Indian language the mysteries of our holy Faith cannot be translated. To this we answer that the observation is not valid; for accepting the fact that the Indian language lacks some words, enough of what was wanted has been expressed. We do not find it inconvenient to hispanize some of the Indian terms; for us even though Spanish is so rich in words, it latinizes those it needs. The most comvincing reason is: either the Indians of our missions are educated or not to pretend they are not is unreasonable. Not even their respective teachers would agree.

For if they are educated, in what language? in French, Spanish (or at least the Bozales who are the most numerous). Educated in their language: well, if they are educated in their language and this is spoken by an educated and rustic man, how much better may they be by the spoken ~~ti~~ tongue of their missionaries, previously and closely observed by whoever may be subject to it?

After considering slowly all that has been said, we reach the conclusion (as we understand it), that art must be, that it be the principle guide in making a complete manual of whatever needs to be translated; but since for many years there exist the opinion of some people, of what use then is art to us, if the language cannot be spoken. It has been used in such a way always, etc. (what we have evidently is the temptation of the devil), from it is derived said art, for the present it will serve more as an obstacle than a help, so that the missionaries cease to be ashamed of talking to the Indians in their own language. This would be achieved if they had a guide manual for speaking to them.

We say also that if Your Paternity helps us and grants us what we ask for, it will be easier (with God's help) for the missionaries to administer the Sacraments and to teach the Indians in their own language. What we ask Your Paternity to do is to prepare for us a manual in their language that will contain all the needed details for the proper administration, a catechism and rules for confession; for when we have it printed, all the missionaries will be able to hear confessions and teach by just reading it. Many other advantages will follow from this for the Indians and for the missionaries, those entering and for those leaving.

Let us now consider this holy College, which with good reasons asks us missionaries for this manual, which we requested of Your Paternity, because if those who for many years have dealt with the problem of the Indians and their language do not translate it, how will someone who never heard or worked with it translate it? We can say that these Indians from the very beginning and up till

now have not understood their missionary. The missionary because of his position dictated by his being limited in space of action, he must first look after and take care of mission duties and he lacks time or strength or all that is needed. In the second place this task of translating requires ample knowledge on the subject, and though there may be and have been competent teachers for the task in these missions, he always considers himself alone, and is consequently afraid of making mistakes in a matter so important.

In the third place, the common language (as I said before) differs somewhat in different towns and no one who is a missionary in one mission will be able to compare what he translates with the Indians of other missions, much more so when the missions of the Rio Grande are separated from those where they are not needed, perhaps because of the cattle or the planting or harvesting season, or because of concern with the souls of the sick or of those in good health, no matter how great the desire or zeal of the missionary. There are few times when he accomplishes what he plans; and because pursuing this task is hateful to the devil, rarely are no obstacles found in the way, and since pursuing these ends is the result of applying the proper and due methods, the best of those already considered so that the missionaries have an approved and printed

him all we can, This we promise and ask for now; and we feel that if this is not granted, it will not be easy to find much comfort because though God's power is not limited (and much less to our inadequacy), but we see that the wisdom of the rules and the words in the language are not learned in two days and God now has living beings with some intelligence and they are somewhat loquacious but who knows the future.

Because this report is based on truth, it is presented in all clarity and we address it to Your Paternity not as a Prelate but as our holy Father and though it seems that the subject matter demanded that this narrative be made to the Ven. Discretorio (Council Board), we do not do so so as not to cause you any trouble on our part; and so that Your Paternity may see if there is or is not some inconvenience in this and if it seems proper to you to present it to the Ven. Discretorio, you may do so; and we on our part shall be appreciative. The same holds good relative to any other decision that Your Paternity may take concerning us, for we are sure that it will please God. We ask Him to keep you in perfect health and good graces for many years for the good of these souls and for ^{our} the consolation of many. We humbly offer ourselves to obey your commands as your least subjects with the good health that the Lord grants us. In this Mission of our Father St, Francis of Espada, April 8, 1759.

Very Rev. Fr. Guardian, your most faithful and humble subjects kiss the feet of Your Paternity.

fr. Acizclos Valverde

Fr. Bartholome Garcia

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