

Letter written to his Excellency, the Lord Viceroy of New Spain, Don Manuel Antonio Flores, dated October 12, 1787, in which this College reports on the status of the missions of the Provinces of Texas and Nueva Vizcaya.

Most Excellent Lord:

In your letter of September 10, of the present year of 1787, the highness of Your Excellency was pleased to give us orders in accordance with the royal decree of March 27 last, that this your College Apostolic should draw up and send you a report and give exact information of the state in which the missions are in at the present time and how the religious manage affairs in the Provinces of Texas and Vizcaya with an up to date account of the spiritual progress the Indians have made. We acknowledge receipt of these higher orders on September 21 and now as evidence of our blind obedience and desirous to carry out the spirit of such honorable commands, we say: that as regards the Province of Texas and the missions which this Apostolic College has founded since the year 1716 when the first three missions of Nacogdoches, Ayx and Adaes were founded; for the years 1720, and 1721, when the missions of San José de Aguayo and of Espiritu Santo, up to the years 1755 and 1756, when finally the Missions of Nuestra Señora del Rosario and of la Luz de Orcoquiza were founded, and from the year 1772 when the College received the four missions of San Antonio Valero, Purissima Concepcion, San Juan Capistrano and San Francisco de

la Espada, which the Apostolic College of Queretaro had on the banks of the River of San Antonio de Bexar up to this time. Except for those evangelical gains, which as the first fruits of apostolic endeavors our first missionaries won in the foundations mentioned, we do not know nor have other spiritual gains made in converting the Indians been known in all that Province. Those have been incorporated in the fold of the Church who have been baptized at the point of death and died; the Faith has been planted and preserved in the few who ~~have been~~ were able to be assembled together and to maintain the small number of Indians who have been instructed and who live in a christian and civilized society.

It is clear to us, Most Excellent Lord, from the undeniable documents that we have that these two Colleges of Guadalupe and Queretaro have exerted at all times in religious emulation every possible effort to assemble in pueblos the numerous nations which they met in 1716 in the conquest of Texas; and after the indefatigable zeal of the evangelical laborers endured for more than 14 years the difficulty of this undertaking, the College of the most holy Cross being interested in the greatest improvement for which apostolic endeavors always yearn, it abandoned that Province and transferred in 1731 to River San Antonio de Bexar the three dwellings which it had among the Navae-dachos, Aynays and Nahosenith Nations. When this College saw that with the withdrawal of some missionaries so many savage nations were abandoned, it made the greatest effort in its constancy

not to give them up by extending their field of effort even farther. It order~~ed~~^d the ministers to visit those nearest them, who though they felt the obstinacy of all those gentiles in not being willing to leave their fatherland nor assemble in a place where catechism could be taught them, still they tried harder to make docile those barbarians by gentle treatment and win them over by gifts so that they offered theⁿ little ones for baptism who were at the point of death; they spared no effort nor sweat nor endeavors that would be conducive to this end. As a reward for work well done they gained 1398 souls among children and adults who by 1748 had received the saving waters of baptism.

Our missionaries continued with unwavering tenacity harvesting day by day at the cost of such laborious effort this scarce but seasoned fruit of their evangelical preaching up to the year of 1772 when His Most Excellent Lord Baylio Don Frey Antonio Bucareli closed the presidio of los Adaes and the four missions which till then we maintained and the one of Orcoquiza, only because of a concern to pacify the Indians and to baptize at the point of death the children and adults who died, though without any hope of gathering them in a pueblo. To this College was entrusted the care of those four other missions which the College of Queretaro had and gave up on the River of San Antonio de Bexar. The reason why that Apostolic College gave up these missions arose from that same principle that moved the fervent workers to transfer in 1731 the missions along Rivers Nechas and Angelina, for

though it gained at the beginning of their migration the chance to assemble the Indians and have them live in formed settlements like those before and after this College founded the three missions of San Jose, Bahia and Espiritu Santo and Rosario because of the great opportunities which fertile lands offered and good fields, very different from the disadvantages found in Texas. But the nations near Bexar who were converted by the one or the other College, not for the missionaries outside of Texas did remain more land where their evangelical preaching could extend the zeal of those Rev. Fathers could only maintain the transferred missions for 40 years by changing the decision of the Indians who died when the gentile nations entered, who at this time withdrew from the Gulf of Mexico.

The Indians of those Provinces, most Excellent Lord, suffer the same hardships and losses, which by the hidden design of Divine Providence we venerate and see in the other conquests, conversions and pueblos of Indians even the gentiles, as noted by Doctor Solorzano and Acosta as soon as they walked those lands or changed them into a civilized society. It is a notable deterioration which many nations suffer today, who settled at the beginning the large province of Texas because of repeated plagues which arose and almost destroyed the pueblos. It is also clear that those who arrived first to finish what has been reduced; therefore it is not surprising that when the missionaries of Queretaro felt this decline among the christian Indians of the missions and seeing on the other hand that the transfer which they made to there from the paganism of the Colony was

difficult, they should give them up and predict the state in which they are today.

From the inventories of the four missions made up in 1772, 583 Indians of every age and sex are numbered; according to the latest information given us by the President of Texas for March of this year, only 203 persons live there now, including some gentiles and fugitives whom our missionaries brought in after the ~~surrender of the missions~~ handing in of the inventories. By the same token the other three missions continue, which this College founded on the River of San Antonio for the Mission of San Jose was founded in 1720 with 60 families containing 220 souls; today there are only 128. Still in 1785 104 more persons were added. Mission Espiritu Santo, founded in 1721, had 125 families with more than 400 souls. In 1778 there were only 118 and 118 more souls among the fugitives and infidels were added, who by August of the same year withdrew from the Nation of Tahuacana. Today there are only 75 persons, though this mission does not have a fixed number, for it increases and decreases at seasons with great variety than the others, according to the fickleness of the Indians. The Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary, founded on the same River of San Antonio in 1755 with more than 200 Indians of the coast of Bahia, began to be abandoned in 1773; after various flights which the Indians made to the islands from where the minister brought them back very many times. The mission was abandoned completely in 1781 so that up to the present time it has not been possible for the leaders of that Province nor for the minister to get them

to return and live together. Therefore, this mission was abandoned completely and the physical buildings are falling into ruins.

This is the status of those missions in the Province of Texas and we are not able to tell Your Excellency any other spiritual progress from the year 1716 to the present. In all the missions 418 Indians live and 6,879 souls have been baptized since their foundation. This number does not include those souls gained in the first two years of the conquest, for the missionaries fled from the missions and the record books were lost because of the wars started by the French; nor those who after closing Mission of los Adaes were baptized on Trinity River, and Nacogdoches, where the charity of the King our Lord maintains ~~two~~ up to this day two ministers from this Apostolic College so that ministering to the Presidio they can assemble the fugitive christians from those missions and assist at the point of death those poor pagans, where because they are so scattered and so far away only the remains of the old nations are found.

No less is the decline felt in the temporalities of those missions, because of the wars the nations of the north started in 1772, when this College took over those missions, it was seen necessary to abandon their ranches during the time the enemies held sway. Barbaric hostility brought unutterable ruin among the cattle, killong some, carrying away others, driving off the rest beyond their ^{own} fields and pastures. The cattle which were left took to the hills and could not be

collected nor branded nor counted annually even with all the help given by the soldiers, but there were very few heads of cattle; considering their number in regard to the prolific increase, they were mixed up among the missions, some with others, and with those belonging to the citizens of Bexar and mixed up likewise with the rights of the owners. On the occasion of the wars Providence intervened when Knight Croix, Comandante of the interior Provinces exempted for the province of Texas by declaring in his edict of January 11, 1778, that it pertains to the tribunal of the Mesta and the rights of the royal treasury all the cattle, horses and cows found unbranded and with no boundaries fixed in that Province and their missions for the purpose of selling them for the royal treasury for the upkeep of the soldiers. Many thousands of cattle were taken to more remote Provinces, those missions remaining for this reason and because of war threatened greatly harmed in their possessions. The missionaries of Queretaro left them with such great abundance and handed over the administration of them to the missionaries of this Apostolic College by orders from higher government.

Such known results as contrary to the spiritual and temporal progress of those missions have been irremediable and beyond ~~the~~ all our efforts, for we consider on the one hand the great harm done to the Indians dependent only on Divine Providence whose judgments we venerate; and on the other hand as regards the temporalities dependent on the decision of those leaders, whom we do not oppose. We recognize, Most Excellent Lord, the total ruin which threatens those missions because of what has been

said as also because no other gentile nation is in those regions whose entrance and conversion could make up for the harm done to the Indians, because the wandering nations who enter, leave and for a time live in the Province and missions of Bexar, as we have experienced and experimented with them. They give no hope of settling down nor living in a mission by means of evangelical preaching and this College only maintains them in so far as we hope that with the pacification of the nations of the North (this is always to be undertaken effectively) the apostolic ministry will have a very large field to work in and thus give our sovereign through educating and instructing the few Indians who remain evidence of our constancy, ~~by~~ loyalty and application to the evangelical institute which we profess.

As to the 16 missions which the regulars have given up in the Province of Nueva Vizcaya and from 1767 are in charge of this College we say: that though the increase of their members does not correspond to what could be expected from their number in the time of 20 years which runs from their surrender up to the present time but they are deteriorating and even are increasing in the number of their Indians. From the information which our President of these missions of Tarahumara gave us shortly after receiving them, 12,328 souls were living in those missions, and from the list sent us of the past year of 1786 in the month of March the number rose to 13,365, showing an increase of 535 Indians, which compared to the number received hardly corresponds to the spreading

of the Faith during 20 years to 400 persons, We can give no other reasons for such limited increase except those we have mentioned in regard to the harm suffered by the Indians in the Province of Texas.

To this small increase of individuals is added the spiritual progress of the Indians of these missions as each day they are more deeply rooted in Faith, instructed in the mysteries, with a greater knowledge of God and of his most holy Law, as they manifest this in the docility and submission to the ministers of our Mother the Church and of the King our Lord, though they live in their own pueblos and are scattered in the rancherias and settlements they have along the caverns, fissures and ravines of the mountains, where each settlement has their own crops and pastures for cattle; on feast days the men and women betake themselves to the mission center, attend the Mass of their minister with devotion, modesty and exterior decorum; they listen attentively to the explanation of christian doctrine, given to them on this day in their own language so that all may understand, though the attendance at the main center alternates among all the pueblos and families, some attending on feast day and others stay at the pueblo and assist on the following feast in order not to abandon their homes, crops and cattle. In every one of the pueblos, though the minister is absent, care is taken that instruction in religion is given every day in the morning and evening and that the children are there for saying the prayers in their native tongue and in the residence of the missionary they are taught

to pray and to speak in the Castilian language to carry out the orders of our Sovereign, though in this the work of the ministers gains very little, for though some Indians understand and speak our language, they only use it with Father at his insistence and when forced to reply to him. They celebrate in each pueblo the feast day of their holy Patron and many Indians manifest their Faith exteriorly by their piety and devotion.

This was obtained that all christian adults complied with the precept of annual confession, and some, whom the ministers judged fit, with the obligation of receiving Communion, but all received It at the point of death, if they were able to receive the Sacraments. As those lands are, for the most part, very rugged and dense and full of gorges and impassable outside the regular paths, there is amply opportunity for amny families to remain hidden and also some gentile groups with whom the missionaries cannot communicate, because as soon as they see the missionaries from above or below their ranches and pig sties, they run away and hide within the ravines. From this group of pagans through the solicitude of the ministers, there are added to the church some infidels who today live as christians in pueblos of a mission beyond those who are in contact with convert Indians and usually of their own free will ask for baptism; but these conversions are few and far between, since the minsiter does not have time to speak to these gentiles in person but only through his agents.

It is not easy to civilize Indians as these to a better organized and christian society, who do not live in strictly formed pueblos but in scattered ranches which belong to one of the pueblos as each mission has them. Even among them there is little communication, except among a few families who are accustomed to communicate with each other, but when this frequent communication is wanting then their rustic style is maintained and their indolent, licentious and less civilized customs. But even so they show great submission to their ministers with a docility and prompt obedience to the leaders of their respective jurisdiction; they go when called, accept commands, listen to their decrees and observe commands according to each one's capability; they are recognized as subjects of our Catholic Monarch, respect his royal name and supreme authority and we believe that most of them are disposed to accept and obey each and every decisions that come from their Sovereign.

This is the progress made in the spiritual, christian and civilized life as evidenced in these missions and among their Indians, judging from the frequent reports which we asked the President to make, and also the ministers, and judging also from the inspection visits made by the College. In regard to the temporalities which the regulars have destroyed as higher authority ordered them to be taken from the missions at the time of surrender, the missionaries of this College have not received them until four years later, when by a contrary higher order the same goods taken were ordered to be handed over; this was done only in regards to the furnishings of the church and home

and a few cows, which do not belong to these lands and temperature, suffer most severe damage. Still the missions are being restored in their goods, whose produce the missionary turns to building, repairs and adorning the churches, in maintaining the Indians who look after the goods, in rationing the rest when they cooperate by personal work in building or restoring the churches, the house of the minister or the community house which they call the hospice where travellers are housed so that they are not harmed in the houses of the Indians, and that they always work in whatever service in the missions for the community, and whatever is left over of the produce the missionary rewards the main Indians and officials of the pueblos, helps the infirm, treats and wins the affection of the children and looks after the needs of all.

Most Excellent Lord, this is the most recent and prompt information which we can now give Your Excellency of the missions in the care of this College in those Provinces mentioned above. We have recently asked those Presidents for another report of their missions so that we can with greater exactness and more effectively in the future comply with the higher orders of Your Excellency in conformity with the honorable decisions of our Sovereign and meanwhile we add to this true and simple account the report of the missions of Tarahumara, drawn up this last year of 1786 in March, in which is noted a slight change among the ministers, since some have died and others have taken their places. The report of the missions of Texas

drawn up in 1783 with a list of individuals living in 1785 and 1787, as the President and the ministers sent them to us, whom we asked frequently for this information and regarding their management and status of the missions our concern will watch without ceasing.

May our Lord bless the important life of Your Excellency for many years. College of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Zacatecas, October 12, 1787.