
Document 1668M

Eyewitness account by Admiral Antonio Nieto of the arrival of the missionaries at Guam in 1668

Source: Extracts from the depositions taken at the Process of Manila (1677), in Archives of the Province of Paris, Chantilly, France; translated by Fr. Juan Ledesma, op. cit., pp. 244-5, 374-6.

Deposition of General Antonio Nieto, in 1677

He knew the Servant of God during all the time that he was in the Philippines and dealt with him.

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He said that the Servant of God sailed from the port of Acapulco for... these Philippine Islands and that in the course of the [1662] voyage he saw the Island of the Ladrões, which caused him great pity, because of the neglect they were in, without having any one to preach to them the Gospel.

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This witness also declared from what he had seen and experienced in the Servant of God while sailing with him from these Islands to the port of Acapulco, that it seems to him he had the gift of tongues, because he did not only come to the help of the Tagalog natives who were on board ship with him, but also when the Servant of God inquired about the prayers of other nationalities of different languages such as the Pampangos, Visayans and Cagayans, he noted how sometimes they erred in their prayer and the Servant of God corrected them without having studied their languages. The witness knows this for having seen it in the said Servant of God.

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This witness said that he accompanied... the Servant of God as far as the Ladrone Islands where they arrived on Saturday 16 June 1668. And that the natives of the said Islands refused to board the ship, for which reason the Servant of God was somewhat saddened. And summoning this witness, who was then sailing on that ship as boatswain [rather Admiral] he made known to him his sadness and said that he trusted in our Lord

that the natives would allow themselves to be treated with more confidence and that they would board the ship if the litanies of the Blessed Virgin were sung.

This seemed to him a very good idea and he gave orders that it be carried out. The Servant of God sang it, and upon reaching those words "Holy Mary Pray for us" the natives began to climb and enter the vessel without any fear. And it was decided that the Servant of God and the other Missionaries should remain in the said Islands.

He also declares that, when the time was proper, the ship cast anchor, but in a spot where it would be very difficult to unload the supplies and other new things that the Servant of God was bringing for that new Mission. At nightfall he put a most trustworthy person as guard to see to it that the anchor did not drag because of the danger from many reefs. He stood guard all night and the weather was calm without any wind whatsoever. On the following morning it was noticed that the ship was not in the same spot where it had cast anchor. Rather it was situated in front of the town of Agaña which had a bar most appropriate for the launch with which to enter in and, which they had brought for these Islands.

Likewise he declares that some of the lay persons thus disembarked. Since the natives were not doing anything towards bringing ashore the religious who were the companions of the Servant of God, as soon as they saw the Servant of God they jumped into the water in emulation to carry him in their arms from the ship, greeting him most effusively. This witness was present during all this event and he recounts it as he saw it. After this the Servant of God explained to them the reason for their coming to this land, which was to convert them to the holy Faith of Christ. The natives showed signs of pleasure and promised to be converted.

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