
Document 1663B

Letter from Fr. Sanvitores to his father, dated [Taytay] 18 July 1663

Introductory note, by Fr. Ledesma

Passing through the Ladrone Islands.

The Servant of God had arrived in Mexico on 28 July 1660. Two years had elapsed and the vessel for the Philippines, his destination, was still to arrive. At last it presented itself in the port of Acapulco some weeks before the month of April 1662. It was a patache named **San Damian**. Notwithstanding its size, he obtained the Viceroy of New Spain's permission for its use for the voyage to the Philippines. He embarked then on April 5 of the same year of 1662 with 14 missionaries consisting of Jesuit priests and scholastics, of whom he was appointed the Superior. Spiritually-speaking, the voyage was a repetition of the one he had made from Alcalá to Veracruz.

The ordinary route to the Philippines at that time was by way of the Islands of the Ladrones, where the galleons used to stop for their provision of water and fresh food. After three months' sailing, around the end of June they sighted these islands, some 300 leagues distant from the Philippines. They were met by the islanders in their canoes laden with fruits to barter for pieces of iron and other trinkets.

The heart of the Father was moved to pity when he saw their spiritual neglect of almost a century and a half since the Christian galleons passed through them on their way to the Philippines. And he understood then the true meaning of those words which he mysteriously heard in his last sickness in Madrid: "*Evangelizare pauperibus misi te.*" [I sent you to preach the Gospel to the poor]. He understood that the poor to whom God had sent him were the ones whom he had before him. He felt then the ardent desire to dedicate his life to the evangelization of these Islands, and to ask his superiors to be sent eventually to them.

First assignment in the Philippines.

Continuing its voyage the ship **San Damian** arrived at the port of Lampon in the Philippines on 10 July 1662. The missionaries disembarked here, and made by land the

long and perilous journey to Manila, where, after singing the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for their safe arrival, and having made the spiritual exercises, they received their respective apostolic assignments in the Province of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines.

The Servant of God was assigned to the Mission of Taytay, which depended on the Residence of Antipolo. Here the House Minister was Fr. Miguel Solana, who had been Provincial of the Philippine Province. The Father had to learn the Tagalog language in this Rural Mission, which was distant from Manila by some seven leagues. His Master in the language was Br. Marcos de la Cruz. The Father gave himself to this study with his habitual zeal for the salvation of souls, and with such diligence that he could already speak it with fluency in three months.

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On 22 July 1663, he wrote to Fr. General from Taytay (see Doc. 1663D) describing the pain he had at seeing those islands deprived of all spiritual help and he recommended their evangelization with wise and well-founded reasons.

Four days earlier, he had signed another letter addressed to his father (see below), in which he asked him to make himself a procurator before the King. In order to reinforce this personal appeal of his father to the King, he enclosed with his letter another addressed to the same King (see Doc. 1663C) but which began with a copy of a letter or memorial which St. Francis Xavier had written to Fr. Simon Rodriguez, begging him to appeal to King John III of Portugal whose confessor he was. His father was expected to present this memorial of St. Francis Xavier to the King (of Spain) Philip IV, so that this sovereign may apply it to himself and be advised on his royal obligations towards the souls of his kingdom. This letter to the King was dated Manila, 18 July 1664. This means that the letter addressed to his father (dated Taytay 18 July 1663) could not have been actually sent until one year later.¹

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What all this means is that the founding of the Mariana Mission is due to the early action of the Servant of God in 1663-1664. He did act and write no little in Manila in 1665 for the Mariana foundation, notice of which could not reach Madrid until 1666. But the Royal Decree was signed on 24 June 1665 and reached Manila in the vessel **Concepción** on 24 June 1666 the year after its signing by the King.

One year later, on 7 August 1667 the Servant of God was on his way to the Marianas, although he had to make a brief stopover in Mexico. The King had died. But the Mission remained in the hands of Mariana de Austria, the Queen Regent, and of her confessor, Fr. Everard Nithard.

A while later on December 20 of the same year of 1667, the ex-governor of the Philippines, Don Sabiniano Manrique de Lara was expounding vigorously his opposition to the enterprise (see Doc. 1667G), but the Servant of God had already won the victory.

¹ Ed. note: The same delay may have affected all his letters dated Taytay 1663.

Fr. Sanvitores protests the abandonment of Ternate and Zamboanga, among other things

Source: AHN Diversos, Documentos de Indias, legajo 385. Since his arrival in the Philippines in 1662, Fr. Sanvitores had written several letters to his father. But as far as we know this is the first one to be preserved since then.

Original text in Spanish.

En otras cartas que escribo por otras vias doy parte a V[uestra] M[erced] de los sucesos del viage asta estas Islas Philipinas, y de la salud que Nuestro Señor se a servido darme constante siempre en tanta variedad de temples, y caminos de mar y tierra desde la enfermedad de Madrid el Abril de 1659, en que la bondad Divina nos dispuso para esta Mission. Esta Carta es para que V.M. me ayude a lograr esta salud en el fin para que Dios nos la dio, y nos truxo a estas partes ultimas de la Tierra.

El dia que V.M. me dedico de su parte con tan buena voluntad y amor de Dios a que le viniese a servir con mi vida y sangre, y ayudar a ir al cielo a estas pobres almas redimidos con la sangre de N.S. J.x., se obligò V.M., y creo que Nuestro Señor tambien se dio por obligado a concurrir con su buen affecto de V.M., y aiudarme en todo lo que conduxiesse a cumplir lo que N.S. queria de mi. Assi lo he experimentado desde el primer passo, pues a V.M. tomò N.S. por instrumento para que yo consiguiese el beneplacito de los Superiores inmediatos y que no se pusiesen dificultades al orden y Mission de N.P. General, y hasta aora apenas he dado passo en que no aya sentido lo mismo de que V.M. (Oper [=ó por] respecto suyo las personas de quienes a dependido nuestro viage hasta el Señor Virrey de la Nueva España Conde de Baños, que nos dispuso Navio particular para el socorro que tan a tiempo embio a estas Islas, como ya escrivi:) en todos los pasos, digo a concurrido V.M. u otras por su respecto, y assi espero a de ser en adelante, y que ya que vamos de Compañia en las obras que el Señor se sirviere hazer por este vil instrumento, el caudal que V.M. pone a de ser quiza el mayor aun para lo inmediato de la conversion de las almas. —

*En vano es el aver venido a estas Islas despues de tan largo viage, y dificultades, que se sirvio vencer N.S.; y despues de tanto gasto y limosna de su Magestad (Dios le guarde) si no conseguimos el fin a que venimos, que es la Conservacion, y aumento de la Christianidad en estas tierras. Y en vano sera intentar esto los Religiosos, si falta el amparo de su Magestad y de sus Ministros, **sin cuya ayuda y autoridad se pierde tiempo**, como dexo escrito S. Francisco Xavier, en essa carta que traslado en esse papel aparte como Memorial eficassimo para el remedio de los daños que padeçe esta Christianidad, en la occasion pressente en que aviendo Dios N.S. por su mesericordia, quitado ya la vida al Pumpuan Chino, que con una insolente Carta, ocasiono el desamparo de las fuerzas de Terrenate, y Samboangan, prosigue aun, y se aumenta cada dia el daño gravissimo que resulto de ay [=allí] a esta Christianidad, no solo en las almas desamparadas, que pertenecian inmediatamente a dichas fuerzas, sino en las de casi todas las Islas, que todas estan a peligro de perderse faltando el freno de la fuerza de Sanboan-*

gan, y el temor al nombre y valor Español, pues dizen ya aquellos Barbaros Moros, que no temen a los Españoles, pues los Españoles temen a unas mugeres con abanicos, (que assi entienden a [los] Chinos por cuyo temor se retiraron a Manila los soldados de aquellos presidios);

Y lo peor es que lo dizen mejor con las obras, pues sin temor ni verguenza andan robando por estos Mares [y] Islas, quemando las Iglesias, y robando y ultrajando los ornamentos sagrados, persiguiendo a los [po]bres Indios christianos, y a los Saçerdotes, que los adminis[tran], que uno de los de la Compañia que [pa-] [fol. 1v] -saron conmi-go en este ultimo socorro, esta ya padeciendo durissimo cautiverio presso de los Moros [---] a la doctrina que la obediencia le avia señalado. Al fin no ay Padre seguro, no Indios que puedan ser [---] porque andan haviendo por los montes desde que se quito esta fuerza y freno de Sanboangan por lo [---] de una Junta apresurada en la ocasion de las amenazas del Impio Pumpuan; y por unos votos que no [---] noticia de la Importancia de aquella fuerza, ni prevenian los daños, que se avian de originar. No [se trata] de culpar a nadie, y puede ser que nadie tuviesse culpa, quando se tomo semejante resolución en aquel[las cir-]cunstançias; lo que se puede asegurar es que si se supieran entonzes las insolencias que an dicho y hech[avan los] infames Moros, no hubiera español de noble y Catholico pecho, que no diera su vida primero, que dar [l---] que ocasionase tales insolencias contra el nombre Christiano y Español y tal menoscabo del servicio divino y [---] N.S. a quien no puede menos de causar grave sentimiento, que siendo el unico motivo de santos ga-[---] y solicitud en la conquista y conservacion destas Islas, la conservacion y aumento de la Christiandad des[tos] naturales (que por lo que toca a los Españoles con mejor Christiandad vivieran dentro de España no zelan[do] aqui la defensa y aumento de Nuestra S. Fee) no solo no se trate de aumentar esta Christiandad con nuevas conversiones y conquistas, sino que se pierdan las ya asentadas, y fortalecidas con tanta costa, desamparando tantas almas, dexando a casi cierto peligro de Apostatar tantos Christianos, y entregando a los dientes del Lo[bo] tantos Corderillos de N.S. J.x. niños innocentes acabados de bautizar, como no an de clamar al cielo e ymplorar el Patrocinio que su Magestad les ha ofrecido, y el que merece la fidelidad, con que le an servido estos [po]bres vasallos Indios, y pagado su tributo, y aun crecidole sobre la tassa ordinaria para ayuda de los gastos de [la] fuerza, aunque estos y muchos mas tiene su Magestad por muy bien empleados a trueque de que se logre el inf[inito] precio de la sangre de N.S. Jesu Chro. en aquellas almas.

Piden pues los validos destas ovejas y corderillos de Christiandad N.S. el remedio de la piedad[de su] Magestad en la restitution de la defensa y amparo que tenian con la fuerza de Samboangan de donde depende la conservacion de casi toda la Christiandad destas Islas, y que para adelante se sirva de mandar poner el remedio que mas conven-ga para que se logre el zelo y piedad de su Magestad y se satisfaga a la obligacion que tomó sobre su Real conciencia en la conquista destas Islas, y la que el Vicario de Christo N.S. le impuso en este Real Patronato, que viene a ser no menor obligacion que la de los Obispos y Pastores, pues ni Obispos, ni Parochos ni Religiosos se mueven aqui a nada sino segun la disposicion del Real patronato, y segun essa asisten o desamparen

las ovejas quando les parece a los Governadores destas Islas, como a sucedido aora en Terrenate, y Samboangan. A cuia cuenta pues a de ir el no cumplirse el oficio de buen Pastor de no huir ni desamparar las ovejas hasta dar la vida por ellas?

*Fuera desto porque el zelo de su Magestad no se estrecha a conservar sola la Christianidad ya plantada, sino a dilatar lo mas que pudiere el imperio de N.S. J.x., y a esto an anhelado todos sus Progenitores, espeçialmente desde que Dios, y su Vicario el Sumo Pontifice fiaron a su ardiente zelo estas conquistas, convendria repressentar a su Magestad, que faltan aun muchas tierras destas partes, que perteceçen a su Real Patronato, y no se trata de traerlas al conocimiento de N.S. J.x. como la gran Isla de **Burney** (de donde se dize vinieron los indios destas Islas Tagalos[,] Bisayas &c. y las que llaman de los **Ladrones**, que nos causaron grande lastima, quando los vimos trecientas leguas antes de llegar a estas Islas, que salen ellos a rescarta [sic = rescatar] [h]ierro con sus cocos y refresco que traen a nuestras Naos, y parece gente apacible y docil, y de buena disposicion &c. Y pasamos todos los años de yda y buelta destas Islas a la Nueva España, con que los socorros, y la comunicacion seran mas faciles, y estando aquella libre de los enemigos Moros, y libres los naturales aun desta infame secta de Mahoma, (que es harta confusion nuestra, y harto daño; se nos hubiese adelantado en las mas de las Islas deste Archipelago) se pudiera con gran facilidad conseguir esta empressa, que segun el numero copioso de almas, que dizen ay, puede ser de tanto servicio a N. Señor como qualquiera otra aun de las de Europa de mas policia, pues Dios no es acceptador de personas, ni policias, y la experienzia nos muestra [que] estos Indios sencillos bien doctrinados viven con mas Christianidad, que los muy entendidos Europeos, que no [pa]rece les falta abilidad a estos de los Ladrones segun las embarcaciones [que] vimos y algunos ge- [fol. 2] -neros de curiosidad de texidos de sus palmas, y los ardidés que usan en sus tratillos quando vienen a nuestras Naos, por lo qual les llamaron los Ladrones aunque siempre estan de paz &^a*

Y podia ser que el zelo desta conquista fuese el total remedio, que solo puede venir del cielo para que se aseguro esta carrera de las perdidas, y arribadas de Naos que tantas vezes suceden por malos temporales cerca destas Islas de los Ladrones que parecen voces de Dios, y de los Angeles que guardan aquellas almas quexosos del descuido, que ay de su conversion, y que devieran ser oidos, mejor que los de los que alegan en contra de la reduccion destas Islas de los Ladrones, el que no ay oro en aquella tierra, ni otros generos de precio temporal: razon bien axena de lo que el Rey N.S. tiene por servicio mayor suyo: No se cierto como ay quien se atreve a imaginar, que en su real y Catholico pecho, pese mas el precio del oro que el de la sangre de N.S. J.x. que se pierde en estas pobres almas, a cuenta parece de la Corona de España pues a ninguna otra a encomendado Dios la dilatacion de la S. fee, en todas estas tierras, sino la del Rey N.S. y verdaderamente que con ninguna demostracion mejor, que la de tan desinteresada empressa se podria deshacer la calumnia de los Hereges, y enemigos de la Corona de España que para deslustrar la Justificazion destas conquistas, dizen que lo que busca España en ellas no es dilatar la fee de Christo sino sacar oro, y otros intereces temporales. Calumnia que la sacan de lo que ellos hacen, que nunca an venido a las Indias

por zelo de Religion ni tratan de [e]so como ellos confiesan, (aunque de camino hacen el daño que pueden a la fee de Christo por mas que se precian de Christianos tambien los Hereges). Destos daños y hostilidades estuvieran mas seguras las tierras que tubieren menos intereces temporales, y assi son mas apetecibles al zelo Catholico de su Magestad quanto mas a proposito para conservarse en ellas la fee Catholica con mas permanencia, que la que an vido en muchas tierras de la India Oriental por averlas apetecido, y ocupado ya los enemigos de Nuestra S. fee por las utilidades que hallan para sus mercaderias y tratos.

No a faltado por cierto este Catholico zelo en el Real pecho de su Magestad pues ay Cedula antigua (segun he oido) para que se trato de la conversion de las Indias de los Ladrones, aunque esta tan olvidada que av[r]ia de venir muy de nuevo para que se disponga con eficazia la Mission de Ministros Evangelicos, que planten nuestra santa fee en dichas Islas, y que quando van, y buelven las naos de Philipinas a la Nueva España se disponga lo necesario para que tenga efecto aquella conversion. Y es bien de creer que si su Magestad supiera que en tantos años del descubrimiento destas Islas no se a dado cumplimiento a su Catolico zelo y Real Cedula hubiera puesto ya el eficaz remedio. Pero como estos pobres no tienen procurador no debe de aver quien avise desto, que esto mismo viene a obligar almas minimo particular a que se haga procurador de estos miserables, de cosa que estan del servicio de Dios y del Rey N.S. como lo sera tambien la conversion de las dem[as] tierras que faltan por reducir en este Archipiélago, con el modo que fuere mas conveniente para cada una com[o] embaxadas u otros medios politicas para los que guardan policia, y fuera gran medio el que su Magestad ma[n]dase se le diese aviso todos los años de que tierras son las que faltan de reducirse a la fe de N.S.[J.x.] y que medios se ponen para su reduccion, y que perseverancia ay en los medios, aunque no surtan efecto [una] vez, quasi esto huviera de hazer desistir y alzar la mano de la conversion de los Infieles, qual estuviera España que resistio a los principios no poco. Los corazones de los hombres se mudan, y mas entrando la diestra del Altissimo como entra para la vocacion de los gentes a su Santa Fe, por medio del zelo de nuestros Ca[tho]licos Reyes, y aun los mismos hombres no perseveran unos en otros tiempos, y no se porque se a de des(a)viar de la luz del Evangelio a unos, porque otros aunque sean de la misma nacion no la admitieron, [por] que no se les proponia suficientemente.

Al fin lo bueno que tienen estas materias es que ningun medio ni diligencia es ociosa [ni] sobrada, y assi me he alentado yo a no omitir esta tan remota de mi parte, quiera N.S. se haga en [V.M.] proxima y eficaz haciendose no ya solo conasego de su Magestad en lo temporal de su hazienda, sino [procura]-dor en lo mas precioso de sus haberes que son estas almas que N.S. Jesu Christo compro con su [sangre] y las fio al amparo y proteccion de Catolicos Reyes. Hablando a esos Señores del Co[nsejo] de las Indias, por cuyo consejo corre la administracion y cobro desta hacienda tan preciosa de las [---] que provea su Magestad el mas conveniente y eficaz remedio en materia tan grave. Y ya saben [---] que es menester que desde alla venga con muchisima eficacia, para que en la distancia de aca llegue [al]guna y no se desvanesca en demandas y respuestas de

tanta dilacion y mas en materia que aunque d[es]precio y subidos quilates, son quilates de oro de fee, que no se ve ni se toca con las manos, y assi [cos]tara mucho el reducirlo de alguna manera a oro que se vea y se toque en la execu[ci]on de la o[rden?] y juramento Real que aconseja S. Francisco Xavier en su carta; [Note in margin, in the handwriting of Fr. Sanvitores himself: Las palabras del Santo son las que an de dar vida a mis muertas ra[ç]ones, y assi suplico a V.M. no dexe de mostrar la carta inclusa] inclusa a esas Señores. Y sobre todo [---] a N.S. de la eficacia con su gracia Santissima para que se tome y execute el consejo de su mayor [gloria] y bien destas pobres almas.

Su Magestad guarde a V.M. con muchos aumentos de su amor en Compañia de mis hermanos y sobrinos a quienes me encomiendo, y pido me encomienden a N.S. &a. Ta[ytay] y Julio 18 de 1663.

[Postscript added by Sanvitores himself:] *Porque no cueste tanto leer mi mala letra va esta de mano de uno destos inocentes Indios. S. Francisco Xavier la guiava.*

Su mas humilde hijo de V.M. dos veces

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+ Diego Luis S. Vitores +

Translation.

In other letters that I am sending by other routes, I informed Your Grace about my voyage to these Philippine Islands and the health our Lord has deigned to give me always, in spite of a variety of climates, ever since that sickness I had in Madrid in April of 1659, in which the divine kindness predisposed us for this Mission. The purpose of this letter is to ask Your Grace to help me obtain this health for the purpose that God intended, by taking us to the ends of the World.

On the day that Your Grace consented on your part, with such good will and love of God, to let me come and serve Him with my life and blood, and help these poor souls redeemed by the blood of our Lord J. C. to get to Heaven, Your Grace obliged yourself to help me in whatever way be conducive towards the fulfilment of what our Lord wanted from me. Such has been my experience from the very first day, for our Lord made use of Your Grace as an instrument for obtaining the goodwill of my immediate superiors, so that they would not make difficulties in obeying the order and mission of our Fr. General. And up to the present I have hardly taken any steps in which I did not feel the same for Your Grace (or other persons who, for your sake were responsible for this voyage, including the Viceroy of New Spain, Count of Baños, who provided us the special ship with which to send the very timely help for these islands, as I have already written) in all the steps, I repeat, Your Grace, or others on your behalf, have given your cooperation. I hope that such will be the case in the future, and that, now that together we will undertake good works, the Lord may deign to use this vile instrument, and the contribution of Your Grace ought to be perhaps the best yet for what concerns the conversion of souls in the near future.

It would be in vain to have come to these Islands after such a long voyage, and difficulties that our Lord was pleased to [let us] overcome; and afterwards, with so much

expense and alms of His Majesty (may God keep him), if we do not accomplish the purpose for which we came, which is the preservation and progress of the Christian religion in these lands. And in vain would the Religious attempt this now, without the support of His Majesty and of his ministers; **without their help and authority time is being lost**, as St. Francis Xavier wrote, in that letter which has been copied in that separate paper, by way of a very efficient Memorial for the remedy of the damages which this Christian community suffers, at the present time in which God our Lord, through His mercy, has already taken away the life of Pumpuan, the Chinese [pirate] who, with an insolent letter, caused the abandonment of the forces of Ternate and Zamboanga. The very serious damage that this Christian community suffered as a result of this still persists, and increases every day, not only for the neglected souls in the districts under the said forts, but in those of almost all the islands. All are in danger of being lost through the removal of the curb that the fort of Zamboanga and of the fear that the Spanish name and valor represented. Those Moro barbarians already say that they no longer fear the Spaniards, since the Spaniards fear some women with fans (for that is how they consider the Chinese, because in their fear of them the soldiers of those garrisons retreated to Manila).

And what is worse, they back their words with deeds, for without fear or shame they roam all over these seas and islands stealing the sacred ornaments, persecuting the poor Christian natives and the priests who minister to them, to the extent that one of the Society who arrived with me in this last trip, is already suffering a most cruel captivity, as prisoner of the Moros. [He had gone] to the station that obedience had assigned him. In conclusion, there is no Father who is safe, no Indians who can be [free] because they wander through the bush since the garrison was removed from the fort and curb of Zamboanga, by a decision of a General Council, pressed for time on the occasion of the threats made by the impious Pumpuan, and by a few votes that did not take note of the importance of that fortress, nor foresaw the damages that would result. It is not for me to blame anyone, as it may not be the fault of any one person, specially when this type of decision is taken under duress. What can be declared is that, if the insolent words that the infamous Moros were saying and inventing had been known then, there would not have been any Spaniard of noble and Catholic blood who would not have given his life first, rather than give them an opportunity to insult the Christian and Spanish name, to such a detriment to the divine service and God our Lord, who has to be sadly affected, as it is the only motive of holy gains(?) and application in the conquest and preservation of these Islands, the preservation and increase of the Christian community of these natives (by the way, the Spanish might live in a more Christian way inside Spain, if they were not required to watch over the defence and increase of our holy Faith here). It is not just a question of increasing this Christian community with new conversions and conquests, but not to lose those already formed, and fortified at such great costs, abandoning so many souls, leaving so many Christians in an almost certain danger of apostatizing, and delivering into the mouth of the Wolf so many little Lambs of our Lord J. C., innocent children recently baptized, who are sure to clamor

to heaven and beg for the protection that His Majesty had promised. This protection is owed them because of the faithfulness with which these poor Indian vassals have served him, and paid their tribute, even at an extraordinary rate to finance the fortress, although such expenses are considered by His Majesty to be money well spent in exchange for the success gained by the infinite price of the blood of our Lord J. C. in those souls.

The bleats, therefore, of these sheep and little lambs of Christ our Lord plead from the piety of His Majesty for the remedy, which is to restore the defence and protection they had with the fortress of Zamboanga, upon which depends the preservation of almost the whole Christian community of these Islands, and in future for the zeal and piety of His Majesty to be pleased to order the best remedy to satisfy the obligation that his royal conscience undertook by the conquest of these Islands, and that the Vicar of Christ our Lord has placed upon him by this royal patronage, which turns out to be an obligation no smaller than that for Bishops and Pastors, since neither Bishops, nor Curates or Religious can do anything here, unless it be in accordance with the royal patronage, and it is in accordance with it that they take care of or abandon the lambs as the Governors of these Islands see fit, for example, in the case of Ternate, and Zamboanga. What has happened then to the obligation of the Good Shepherd, of not fleeing or abandoning his sheep, even at the cost of his life for them?

Over and above this, since the zeal of His Majesty is not restricted to the preservation of the already-established Christian community but also to spread as much as possible the reign of our Lord J. C., and this has been the desire of many kings, specially since God and His Vicar the Pope have entrusted these conquests to their ardent zeal, it would be convenient to represent to His Majesty that there still remains much territory in these parts which belongs to his Royal Patronage, and nothing is done to bring to them the knowledge of our Lord J. C., such as the big Island of **Borneo** (from which, they say, the Tagalog, Visayan, etc. Indians of these Islands come from). Another example are the Islands called **Ladrones**. These gave us great pity when we saw them some 300 leagues before our arrival at these Islands. They come out to our galleons to trade their coconuts and refreshments for iron. They seem to be peaceful and docile people, and of good disposition, etc. Vessels come and go every year from these Islands to New Spain, so that the succors and communication would be easier. The route being free from the inimical Moros, the natives there even being free of this infamous sect of Mahomet (which caused much confusion, and real harm in our expansion in the Islands of this archipelago), this enterprise could succeed with great facility. Given the large number of souls that they say exist there, it can be of great service to our Lord like any other enterprise even in more civilized Europe, for God is not moved by jealousy regarding persons and civic conditions. Our experience shows that these simple natives, when well instructed, live better Christian lives than the more educated Europeans. To these inhabitants of the Ladrones no ability seems to be wanting, if one considers the canoes that we saw and other kinds of woven handicraft woven from palm leaves, and

the clever means they use in dealing with us when they come to our ships, for which reason they were called Ladrones [i.e. Thieves], although they are always peaceful, etc.

It could be that the total remedy should be the zeal in carrying out this conquest, which remedy can only come from Heaven, in order to avoid for this run the losses and the returns in distress of the galleons that so many times have occurred on account of bad weather near these Islands of the Ladrones. Their voices remind one that God and the Angels watch over those souls that complain of the lack of care, regarding their conversion, and that they should be heard, louder than the voices raised against the reduction of these Islands of the Ladrones, given that there is no gold in that country, nor other things of material value—a reasoning that is so foreign to what the King our Lord regards as befitting his service. I am not sure that there is any one who dares to imagine that in the royal and Catholic heart of His Majesty the price of gold weighs more than the blood of our Lord J. C., which is wasted in these poor souls, dependents, it seems, of the Crown of Spain, since God has not entrusted the propagation of the holy Faith in all of these countries to anyone else but the King our Lord. And indeed there can be no proof better than this most unselfish enterprise to dispell a calumny of the heretics and enemies of the Spanish Crown, who in order to refute the justification of this conquest say that what Spain is after in them is not the spread of the faith of Jesus Christ, but the search for gold and other temporal advantages. They got this calumny out of their own practice, since they have never come to the Indies out of religious zeal, and they admit that they themselves do nothing of the sort (although along the way they do as much damage as they can to the Faith of Christ when these Heretics also claim to be Christians). Such damages and hostilities would have affected less the countries with fewer material worth, the very quality that would have made them more attractive to the Catholic zeal of His Majesty, as well as make them more apt for the Catholic Faith to be preserved in them on a more permanent basis than the many countries of the East Indies that the enemies of our holy Faith coveted and have already invaded, to find a market there for their merchandise and commerce.

Certainly this catholic zeal has not been wanting in the royal breast of His Majesty, for there is an old decree (according to what I heard) dealing with the conversion of the Ladrone Islands,¹ although it has been so forgotten that a new one would be required in order to establish efficiently the Mission of the Gospel Ministers, who would plant our holy Faith in the said Islands, and, when the galleons go back and forth between the Philippines and New Spain, the necessary measures for that conversion could be arranged. And we may well believe that, if His Majesty had known that in so many years after the discovery of these Islands his Royal Decree was not fulfilled, he would have already applied effective remedy. But since these poor peoples have no Procurator, there can be no-one to call attention to this. This very fact should move the least individual to make himself a Procurator of these miserable souls, something that would be in the service of God and the King our Lord, like the conversion of the remaining countries

1 Ed. note: See Doc. 1602B.

that have not yet been reduced in this Archipelago. It would be well if a way could be found to send some embassies or other political means to keep them more civilized; this would be a great reason for His Majesty to order that he be informed every year about which lands have not yet been reduced to the faith of our Lord, and what measures are taken for their reduction, and what perseverance are there in [applying] such measures, even though success may not come the first time, as if one failure should be reason enough to desist from converting the infidels; what would indeed have happened if Spain had not resisted so well at the beginning? The hearts of men can change, the more so when the right hand of the Almighty moves them, the same way that the vocation of the people to his holy Faith, through the zeal of our Catholic Kings, and even if the same men did not persevere in other times, I do not see why the light of the Gospel should bypass some, when others of the same race do not admit it, because it was not proposed to them sufficiently.

At any rate this much good we find in these matters: that no means nor diligent effort is wasted nor superfluous. Hence I have been encouraged not to spare this most remote effort on my part. May it please the Lord that through Your Grace it may become closer and more efficient, if you should become not only a counselor of His Majesty in his temporal affairs, but also a procurator in what is more important of his possessions which are these souls that our Lord J. C. bought with his blood and entrusted them to the protection of the Catholic Kings. While speaking to those gentlemen of the Council of the Indies, who are in charge of the administration and collection of these precious funds, let His Majesty make the most convenient provisions and efficient remedy in such a serious matter. They would already know that the remedy should come from there with the greatest effectiveness, and time not wasted along the way in petitions and replies, the more so since we are dealing here, not just with gold ingots, but also with ingots of the gold which is the faith that cannot be seen or touched with the hands. However, the reduction will indeed cost much in gold that can be seen and touched, regarding the implementation of the order and royal vow that St. Francis Xavier recommended in his letter [Note in margin: The words of the Saint should give life to my dead reasoning. And so I beg Your Grace not to neglect to show the enclosed letter]¹ to those Gentlemen. And above all may our Lord provide the effectiveness with his holy grace so that the advice is taken and executed for the greater glory and good of these poor souls.

May His Majesty keep Your Grace and increase greatly his love in the company of my brothers and nephews to whom I commend myself and whom I beg to pray for me to our Lord, etc.

From Taytay, 18 July 1663.

1 Ed. note: The copyist had forgotten to copy these words which Sanvitores added in his own handwriting.

[Postscript added in Fr. Sanvitores' own handwriting:] Lest my bad handwriting be hard to read, this letter is copied by the hand of one of these innocent natives. St. Francis Xavier was guiding it.

Twice the most humble son of Your Grace,

+

+ Diego Luis de San Vitores +