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TUCSON REGION

Mass in Tucson to commemorate the death of Kino

By Carmen Duarte
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A special noon memorial Mass is set Saturday at St. Augustine Cathedral to commemorate the death of Padre Eusebio Francisco Kino.

Kino, a 17th-century Jesuit priest, founded 21 missions in the Pimeria Alta, in what is now Northern Sonora and Southern Arizona.

The missions include those at San Xavier, Tumacácori and Guevavi.

In 2006, documents that support Kino's beatification were presented to the Congregation of Rites in Rome. The final step after beatification is canonization, or elevation to sainthood.

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"It is hoped by 2011, on the occasion of his 300th anniversary of death, Rome has reviewed his life and writings, and the miracles attributed to him will demonstrate that he is worthy to be called a saint," said the Rev. Vicente López, executive director of the Patronato de Kino de Tucson.

The patronato is a non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the cultural and spiritual heritage left by Kino, the padre without borders who traveled on horseback, said López.

"A procession of different groups representing the broader Tucson community will take part in the Mass," said Raúl Ramirez, a member of the Padre Kino Heritage Committee.

The committee has the support of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tucson, which also is supporting Kino's sainthood.

"Offerings will include a saddle and blanket because Padre Kino was a humble man who used the saddle as his pillow and a blanket as his cover. This represents his death bed," Ramirez said.

Other offerings will include wheat and grapes, said Ramirez, explaining that Kino made significant agricultural contributions to this area.

Prior to the Mass, Diana Hadley of the Office of Ethnohistorical Research at Arizona State Museum and Fred McAninch, a former curator for the Arizona Historical Society, will give talks on Kino's legacy in the church hall.

On Sunday in Magdalena de Kino, Sonora, a civic commemoration also will take place, in which members of the Patronato de Kino de Tucson will take part.

In May 1966, Kino's skeleton was discovered in what had been the Chapel of San Francisco Xavier, said López. City Hall was built on top of it and was moved to another site.

The area was excavated, and La Plaza Monumental was built. It contains a crypt where Kino's remains are visible. About 50 yards away is María Magdalena Church.

Dramatist Raúl Ortiz will read poems by Tucson novelist and author Jane Candia Coleman. Her book, "The White Dove", a collection of 44 poems written from the perspective of Kino, is being translated into Spanish by Rodrigo Quiroz.

"Kino's message was peace, and we are hoping that there be peace along our U.S.-Mexico border," Coleman said.

A mural by artist Miguel Ángel Grijalva depicting the heavens and Kino in their midst with the galaxy in his chest was recently unveiled at the Palacio de Gobierno.

"The mural is in the main stairwell of City Hall and is done in the tradition of Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros," said López.

The viewer "is captivated by Kino's spirit. After nearly 300 years, Kino still lives today in the hearts and minds and spirits of the people in Sonora and Arizona," said López.

López is a former diocesan vicar for the Office of Hispanic Affairs who also served as associate director for the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs in Washington, D.C. He returned to Tucson and is working with José Ulises Macías Salcedo, archbishop of Hermosillo, on Kino's case for sainthood.

MAGDALENA DE KINO

What: Civic Commemoration of Padre Kino's Death in Magdalena de Kino, Sonora, about 50 miles south of Nogales.

When: 10 a.m. to noon Sunday.

Where: Kino's crypt near María Magdalena Church in the town square.

To learn more

Go to www.padreokino.org or www.patronatodekino.org

REMEMBRANCE

What: Lectures on Padre Eusebio Francisco Kino and a Special Memorial Mass honoring the 298th anniversary of his death March 15, 1711.

When: Saturday. The lectures start at 10:30 a.m. followed by Mass at noon.

Where: St. Augustine Cathedral, 192 S. Stone Ave., and the lectures will be in the parish hall.

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