

## The Holy Man of Santa Clara: Franciscan Missionary Father Magin Catalá

In 1796, Father Magin Catalá, O.F.M. arrived at Mission Santa Clara, nineteen years after the mission was first founded by Saint Junipero Serra in 1777. Father Catalá labored at the mission for thirty-six years until his death in 1830. He is much less well known than Saint Junipero Serra, but according to testimony by those who knew him, Fr. Catalá was a mystic, a miracle worker, an exorcist, and a prophet. During his lifetime, he won the devotion of the Native American converts who he served, who venerated him as a wonderfully saintly man.

The mission's territory included much of the peninsula on the west side of San Francisco bay. Father Catalá, along with another priest, Father José Viader, taught the faith, administered the sacraments, and guided all the work necessary to teach, feed, clothe, and house the growing population of Native Americans at the mission, who by 1795 numbered one thousand five hundred and forty-one. They also ministered to the Catholics in the pueblo of San José, which was located nearby.

It's hard to imagine how so few priests did so much, but the two of them taught the natives how to build and to farm and to tend tens of thousands of heads of cattle and sheep on the vast lands of the Mission, and to do a myriad of other tasks. Even though the good will of missionaries is disputed in this cynical age, their intention was always to hand the lands back to the Indians. The disciplined work ethic and skills the friars taught were meant to enable the natives to sustain themselves on the mission lands after they were on their own. Above all else, the faith the missionaries worked so hard to teach was intended to save their charges' immortal souls.

The book records the reports of several reliable witnesses (whose letters still can be viewed in the University of Santa Clara Library Archives). They told church officials who were investigating the holy man's cause for sainthood that they saw Fr. Catalá levitate when he prayed in front of a crucifix, and that the figure of Christ detached his hands from the cross and laid them on Fr. Catalá's shoulders. That very same life-sized crucifix still hangs over an altar in the restored Santa Clara Mission Chapel.



Not only did Fr. Catalá levitate like St. Joseph of Cupertino, he was also reportedly seen several times during his life in two places at once, bilocating like St. Padre Pio.

Fifty-four years after he died in 1830, Fr. Catalá's cause for canonization was taken up by Archbishop Alemany, the first bishop of San Francisco. Testimony about his life and virtue was submitted to Rome in 1909, but the cause for canonization of this worthy servant of God has stalled for the past 108 years.

### **Canonization Prayer**

O God, You sent Your holy servant, Father Magin Catalá, to preach Your gospel to Native Americans, and You inspired him to glorify Your holy name among them by the example of his eminent virtues. We humbly ask You to honor Father Catalá on earth with the testimony of miracles performed through his intercession. Grant us by his merits all manner of blessings. Fill our minds with the light of Your truth that, walking always in the way of Your commandments, we may come to eternal union with You. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

- Imprimatur + Patrick J. McGrath Bishop of San Jose

### **Some of Fr. Catalá's Remarkable Prophecies from the Book**

A free-for-download 1909 book, *The Holy Man of Santa Clara*, documents the miraculous events of Padre Catalá's life. You can download it at this link from: <https://archive.org/details/TheHolyManOfSantaClara>. Some of his prophecies from the book are included below.

“It appears that Almighty God in those days allowed His servant a distinct view of the future of California. There were still many witnesses alive in 1884 who under oath declared that the holy man had preached substantially as follows: People from almost all the nations of the earth will come to this coast. Another flag will come from the East and the people that follow it will speak an altogether different language, and they will have a different religion. These people will take possession of the country and the lands. On account of their sins the Californians will lose their lands and become poor, and many of their children's children will give up their own religion.”

“The Indians will be dispersed, and will not know what to do, and they will be like sheep running wild. Heretics will erect church buildings, but these will not be true temples of God. Sons will be against their fathers, and fathers against their sons, and brother will be against brother. The coming of so many people will create great scarcity, so that a measure of wheat will be bought for its weight in gold. ‘Una fanega de trigo se compraria a peso de oro.’ As a consequence, much distress will come upon the Indians and Californians. ‘I shall not see this,’ he exclaimed, ‘but there are those alive that will see it.’”