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GLORY OF THE AMERICAS: CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

As the world celebrates the Quincentennial of the Discovery and Evangelization of the New World by Christopher Columbus, even Catholics may be confused by much of what they read and hear in the media about the life of this great explorer. Instead of telling the truth about Columbus, a plethora of books, magazine articles, TV shows and movies have spilled forth into the communication mainstream with the intention of making sure that nobody thinks Columbus was someone to be proud of. And it seems there's no end to the stories of pre-Columbian "discoveries" of America, all serving to minimize Columbus' unique role in world history.

But it must be stressed that Columbus was much more than a great navigator and explorer. He was a missionary whose top priority was to spread the Catholic Faith to pagan lands, and his discovery of the New World launched the greatest epoch of evangelization the world has ever seen. Not since the time of the Apostles had so many souls converted to the Catholic Faith, and Christian civilization advanced so magnificently. It is not an exaggeration, therefore, to call Columbus the "Apostle of the Americas." Without this great hero of the Catholic Faith, there would be no America, let alone no Catholicism in America (nor an American Seminary!). We owe everything to him, for he was a man raised by God for this solemn mission.

This issue of VERBUM, therefore, is dedicated to telling the truth about Christopher Columbus. For even though the process of his canonization—launched by Pope Pius IX—was stopped (like that of many great Catholics "out of step" with modern ideas), well-informed Catholics who have studied his cause believe Columbus is worthy of sainthood. Read the story of his remarkable life and you'll see why.

Columbus Is Ours!

Rarely in history has there been more "disinformation" about a man and his achievements than there is about Christopher Columbus. Seemingly from the moment he discovered the New World, his purpose for doing so was ruthlessly diverted by people who wanted to substitute *their own* agendas for his. What began as a Catholic missionary effort was soon co-opted by selfish, secular interests which set themselves in opposition to what Columbus wanted to accomplish. At one point he even found himself arrested in his new land by the very people who benefited from his discovery, who then hauled him back to Spain in chains. Columbus had to put up with humiliations and ingratitude like this all his life, which he endured patiently in imitation of his master, Our Lord Jesus Christ. But the lies and half-truths being told about him today are far worse than any of the trials he weathered during his life, and would no doubt test his well-known tolerance for his enemies.

Columbus the Missionary

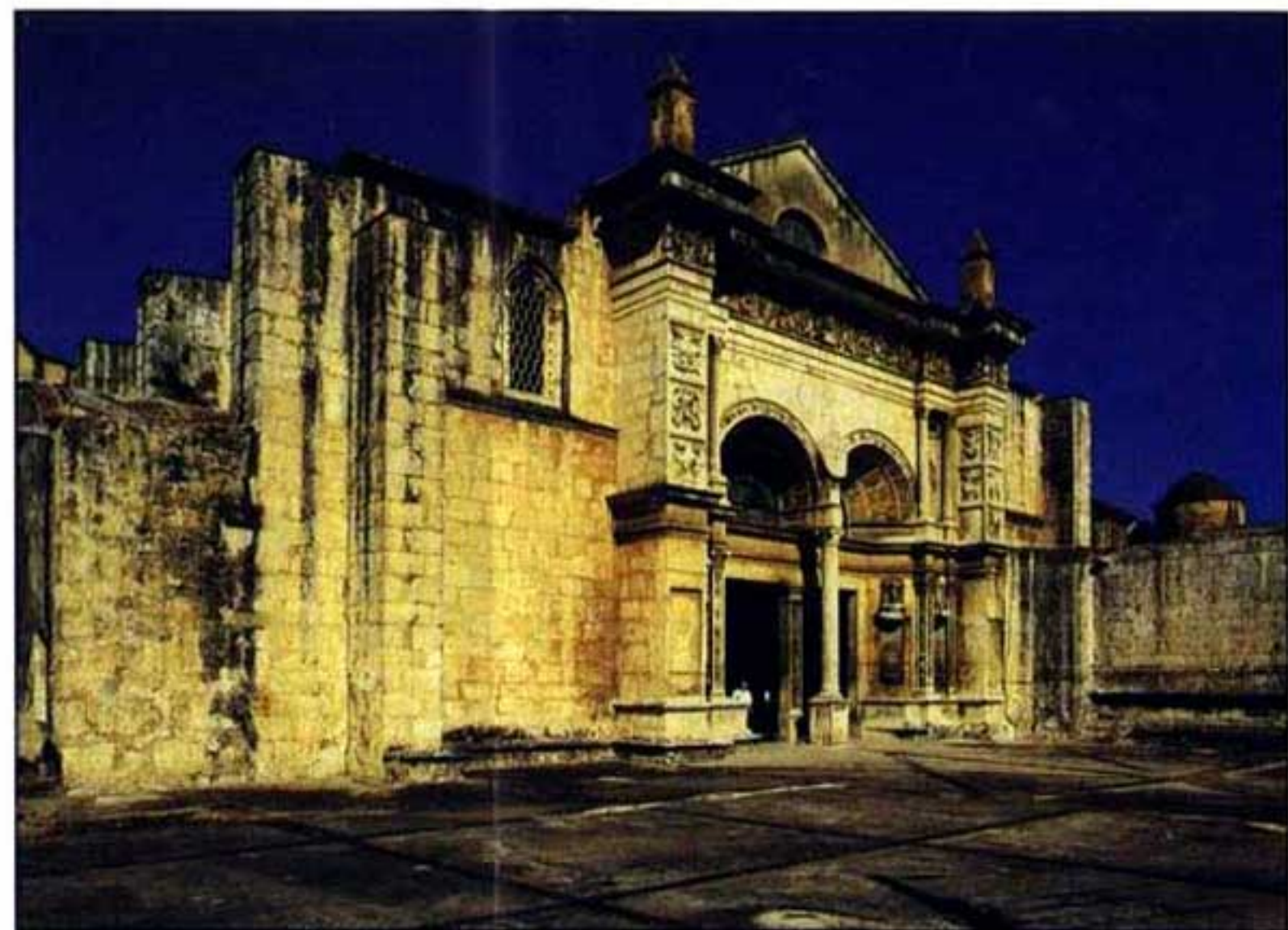
Distorting the history of Columbus is nothing new. It goes back at least a hundred years, originating with attempts to strip Columbus of his true religious motivations and ascribe to him purely secular ones. For instance, people have always been led to believe that Columbus was *primarily* seeking a new trade route, and that his motivation was money. But trade was actually very low on his priority list. His top priority—as clearly seen in all his writings and especially in the Ship's Log on the first voyage—was to bring the Holy Catholic Faith to the pagans in the East.

Secondarily, he wanted to find a new source of gold so that Spain could afford to fight the Moors and recover the Holy Land. As Fray Bartolomé Las Casas, Columbus' first biographer, wrote, "Columbus was especially devoted to the hope that God would make him worthy of helping Him in winning back the Holy Sepulchre. He begged Queen Isabella to make a vow that she should spend all the wealth gained by the Crown as a result of the discovery in winning back the land and holy house of Jerusalem, which the Queen did."

As any true missionary would, Columbus entrusted himself to Our Blessed Mother throughout his entire epic undertaking. He maintained that the idea for such an exploration was inspired by a vision from God, and he was sure that Our Lady had chosen him to fulfill her sacred mission of opening up a New World to the Church. Many unexplained interventions and apparent miracles experienced on the voyage give testimony to the explorer's claim.

Columbus the Saint

If this description of Columbus is unfamiliar to most Americans, it's not surprising that even most Catholics are unaware that Rome was seriously entertaining the possibility of canonizing him. Pope Pius IX, who started the process for Columbus' canonization, wrote, "Columbus was inflamed with zeal for the Catholic Faith, and resolved to discover a new world, *not for the purpose of adding new lands to the kingdom of Spain, but to place new peoples under the reign of Christ, in other words, the Church.*" In 1892, Pope



A LAND OF FIRSTS—Columbus settled on the island of Hispaniola (today's Dominican Republic), where the First Mass was celebrated in the New World. Pictured here is the first Cathedral in the Americas—Santa Maria La Menor, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Columbus' remains are kept here.

Leo XIII wrote a pontifical letter declaring that Columbus acted for the Church. "Columbus is *ours*," he said, and ordered "all possible honors" to the Discoverer. The faithful generally accepted Columbus' sanctity without question until vicious opposition was mounted by Masonic elements in France, Spain, and Italy, who came out with several books falsely portraying Columbus as a rationalist, free-thinking humanist. The Masons—adept as they are at spreading lies—succeeded in so denigrating Columbus in the public press that the Church could not act. Soon it was the *lies* that were canonized.

History clearly shows, however, that the Catholic Faith occupied the primary place in Columbus' life, and that he knew his destiny to find the New World came from

Heaven. He signed his name "Christo-Ferens," which means "Christ-bearer." For just as St. Christopher carried Christ over deep waters, Columbus was the first to carry Christ to the distant lands across the deep oceans. His signature also reveals an intense devotion to serving Our Lord. A cryptic pattern of Latin and Greek words, initials and dots, it translates in Latin to *Servus Sum Altissimi Salvatoris* ("Servant I am, of the Most High Savior"). Columbus was so steadfast in this expression of faith that he gave orders in his will for his descendants to adopt this signature and copy it exactly.

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Isabella The Catholic



FATHER RAMÓN ANGLÉS, an expert on Queen Isabella, is pictured here next to her portrait in his office at St. Mary's Academy and College.

A discussion of Christopher Columbus would be incomplete without examining the vital role in the Discovery played by Queen Isabella of Spain and her thoroughly Catholic manner of ruling. "Without Queen Isabella, the whole work of Christopher Columbus would have been impossible," explained Fr. Ramón Anglés, rector of Saint Mary's Academy and College in an interview with VERBUM. Father Anglés, a native of Spain, has a License in Letters from the University of Barcelona and has been doing historical research on Queen Isabella for 14 years. He stressed that, "While all other monarchs and courts of Europe laughed at the 'dreamer' or simply ignored him, Queen Isabella—contrary even to the opinions of her own advisors—listened, believed, and supported Columbus, so much so that she even pawned the crown jewels to help finance the voyage."

Why such support? Fr. Anglés responds: "Isabella's missionary spirit and tremendous zeal for the salvation of souls prompted her against all odds and evidence to support Columbus in a venture that would bring the light of the Gospel and Truth to the people of new lands. As these lands even today contain much more than half of the world's Catholic population, we can clearly recognize that Isabella was inspired by the Holy Ghost. It is not surprising that Pope Alexander VI bestowed upon Queen Isabella and her husband King Ferdinand the glorious title of *Los Reyes Católicos*—the Catholic

kings," explains Fr. Anglés.

Support of Christopher Columbus is but one of the many jewels which Queen Isabella earned for her crown in the defense, preservation, and increase of the Holy Catholic Faith. Her liberation of the Kingdom of Granada from the infidel Moors, expulsion of the Jews from Spain and ecclesiastical reform fostered a unity of Faith throughout Spain and its territories which provided a bulwark against the ugly Reformation of Luther. While other nations fell to the insidious Protestant plague, "the Spanish people did not even want the menace within their borders," says Fr. Anglés.

"These incredible achievements are due simply to Queen Isabella's unique determination and character." As the Venerable Palafox, S.J., said, "If St. Teresa of Avila had been a queen, she would have been Isabella, and if Isabella had been a nun, she would have been St. Teresa of Avila."

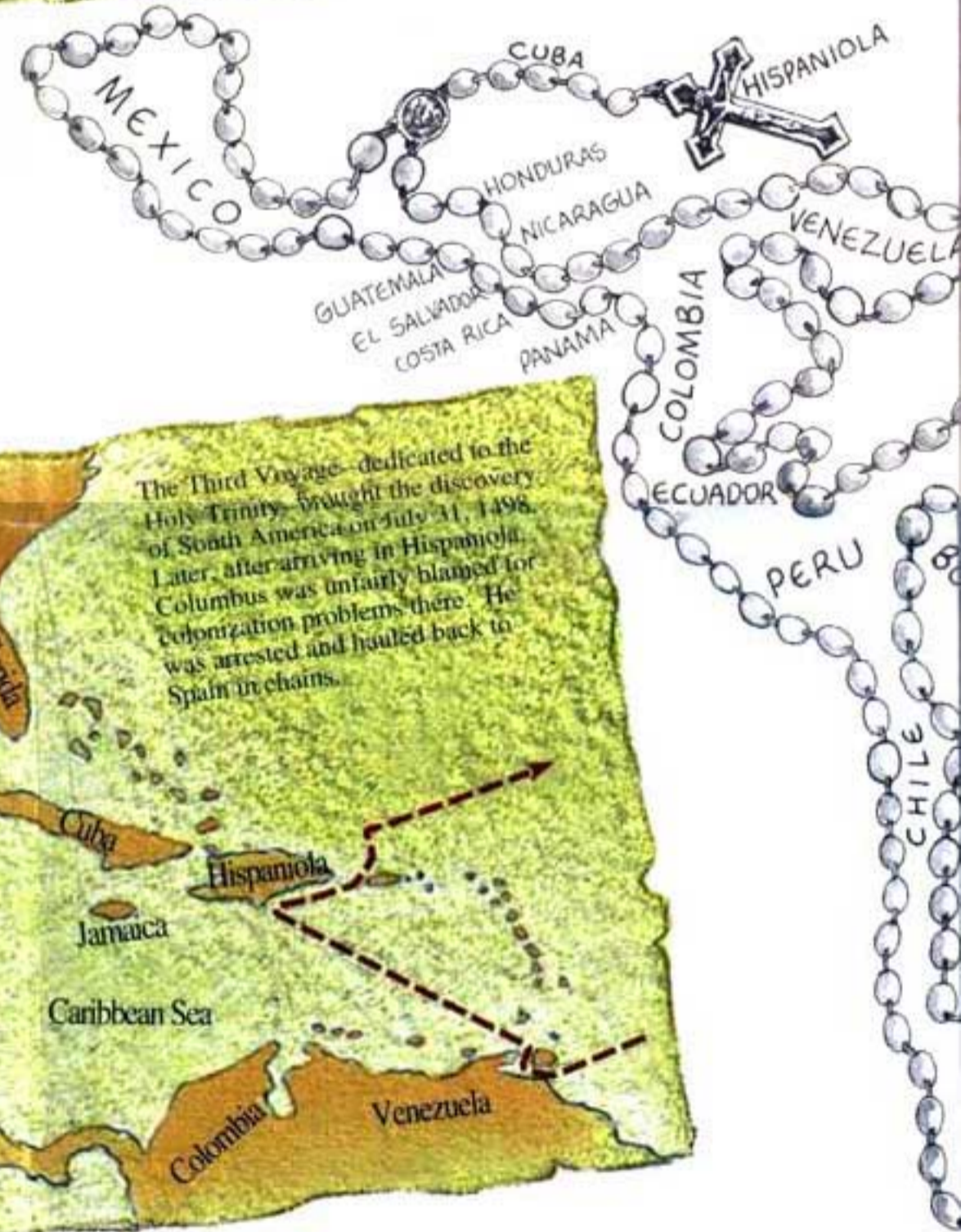
As her love and devotion to the Catholic Faith were always the impetus behind Queen Isabella's actions both in her public life as queen and in her private life as wife and mother, she can truly be admired as a model for all Catholics. Supporting this point, Fr. Anglés said, "The Queen is a model for all government leaders as she perfectly applied to her country the law of the Gospel, which permeated the entire juridical corpus and the organization of the whole State. Far from politics and Catholic doctrine opposing one another, Queen Isabella showed how they can work perfectly together, as she built Spain into the great world power of the 15th and 16th Centuries."

Yet, even among the ever-pressing affairs of state, she never neglected either her family duties—"Queen Isabella is the prototype of what a woman should be: exquisite femininity, a faithful wife, and a caring mother"—or her Catholic duties: "the Queen said the Divine Office each day and heard at least two Masses daily as well as having a great devotion to Our Lady, evidenced by her naming of many New World cities after the Queen of Heaven."

Fr. Anglés is convinced of her sanctity and carefully watches her proposed canonization process in Rome: "Queen Isabella is a saint! This woman surpasses all other queens that were not saints by the virtues of her sanctity, and the saints who were not queens by the heroic deeds of her government."

So as we honor the Great Discoverer, Christopher Columbus, let us not forget the woman who made this great Catholic discovery possible: ISABELLA OF SPAIN, THE CATHOLIC QUEEN.

THE VOYAGES OF



THE ROSARY OF NATIONS—The stupendous point of Columbus' four voyages exploring the Caribbean was ultimately the discovery of all of what is today Latin America, and the founding of a Rosary of Catholic nations, saving for eternity millions of souls.

The Truth About Columbus' "Mistress"

In almost everything you'll read, see, or hear about Columbus these days, you'll be told that Columbus had a mistress. This alleged mistress was Beatriz Enriquez de Arana, who bore Columbus his second (and allegedly illegitimate) son, Fernando.

But the story is completely false, as the record clearly shows. It is based almost entirely on the fact that no marriage record between Columbus and Beatriz has yet been found, and on the wording of Columbus' will, which refers to Beatriz merely as "mother of Don Fernando, my son," and enjoins on Diego, his elder son by his deceased first wife, to see that Beatriz "may be able to live becomingly as to one to whom I owe so much. And let this be for the unburdening of my conscience, as this weighs heavily on my heart. It is not meet to give the reason here."

Scandal-minded people immediately pick up on this

deliberately vague wording as "proof" that Columbus wasn't married to Beatriz and felt guilty for leaving her penniless. Such is not the case.

First of all, the lack of a marriage record proves nothing, because prior to the Council of Trent, marriage records were not strictly required. Secondly, an illicit affair could hardly have been tolerated by Beatriz' family, the proud Aranas, with whom Columbus always remained on the best of terms. One of their family members marched under Columbus' banner, and another was appointed governor of Haiti. Furthermore, in the city of Cordova where Columbus and Beatriz lived, Queen Isabella kept the citizens' morals under strict surveillance. Never would the Queen have named young Fernando as page to her own son Prince Juan as she did, had there been the slightest possibility of his illegitimacy.

The greatest proof against this libelous charge, however, is that it was never heard of until 72 years after Columbus' death, when his male line became extinct. He had specified in his will that no illegitimate heir be recognized, his succession passing rather to the female line. But along came a certain Cristobal, bastard son of the rogue Luis Columbus, who sought to establish his claim by alleging Fernando's illegitimacy. Being unable to produce one document or reliable witness, he lost the case.

To this day there is no evidence that any of Columbus' contemporaries—even his most hostile enemies—ever raised the question. On the contrary, the royal historian Antonio Herrera describes Columbus' two marriages: "He married Felipa Muniz de Perestrello [whom he met in Lisbon at daily Mass—Ed.] and by her had Diego Colon. After the death of his first wife, he married

OUR COLUMBUS

The Priest Behind Columbus



THE TURNING POINT—Columbus shows his plan of Discovery to Fray Juan Perez, who then helped convince Queen Isabella to support Columbus' expedition.

The glory bestowed upon Christopher Columbus after his triumphant discovery of the New World did not come easy. It had been preceded by nearly two decades of consistent obstacles, failure and disappointment. At one point, upon leaving the court of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand after their counsellors failed to endorse his proposed voyage, Columbus left Spain and nearly vowed never to return. God had other plans, however, and so Columbus found himself in the city of Palos, in neighboring Portugal. Travelling with his young son, Diego, the dejected navigator stopped at the gate of the ancient Franciscan convent of Santa Maria de la Rábida to simply beg for a little bread and water for the child. Columbus unexpectedly found strength for his own soul in the convent's prior, Fray Juan Perez de la Marchena, who became the navigator's close friend and—like so many other priests in the history of Christendom—a main guide and support of a zealous layman seeking the glory of God on this earth.

The former confessor to Queen Isabella, Fray Juan was a priest of exemplary sanctity and wisdom, and he quickly perceived in Columbus a genuinely devout soul. Upon learning of the navigator's plan of exploration, he realized that it was a truly feasible way of opening a vast new world to the preaching of the Gospel. Distrusting his own judgment alone, the prior summoned a small council of learned associates to consider Columbus' project. After unanimously agreeing to its practicability, Fray Juan—on the strength of his former confidence with the Queen—wrote to Isabella and requested an audience. The request was granted, and the friar's zeal so moved Isabella that she summoned Columbus again to her presence. This time—having secured the defeat of the Moors at Granada—both sovereigns were more disposed to consider the explorer's plan, to which they finally assented.

Before the fleet embarked, Fray Juan attended to the solemn confessions and communion of the crew. Later, when bidding Columbus farewell, the priest revealed

the depth of their friendship, weeping as they embraced.

In six years Fray Juan himself accompanied Columbus on his third voyage, at the end of which the friar founded a modest convent in Hipsaniola, the first Franciscan foundation in the New World. Later, Columbus would build a large convent and church for his old friend and the latter's brethren in the new episcopal city of Santo Domingo.

"A faithful friend is a strong defense, and he that hath found him hath found a treasure" (Ecclus. 6,14). God alone knows what would have become of the Americas had their Discoverer not sought relief at Fray Juan's convent. There he found both the "strong defense" that rekindled his earlier hopes and the "treasure" that surely surpassed, as every spiritual gift does, all the silver and gold that any "New World" could offer.

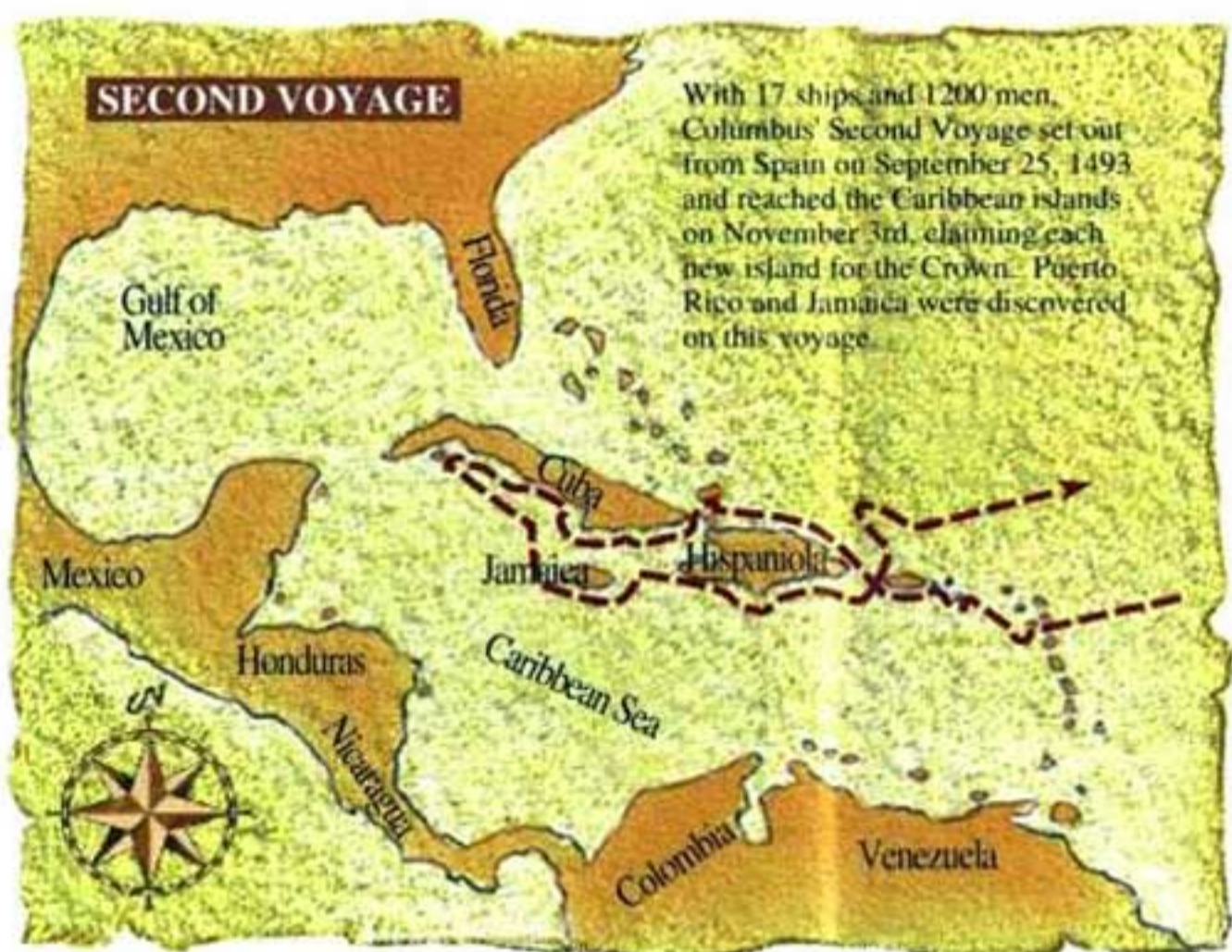
The Purpose of the Mission

As found in Columbus' Log on the first voyage, he sailed "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ" and stated officially the purpose of his monumental voyage:

"...based on the information that I had given Your Highnesses about the land of India and about a Prince who is called the Great Khan, which in our language means "King of Kings," Your Highnesses decided

to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the regions of India, to see the Princes there and the people and the lands, and to learn of their disposition, and of everything, and the measures which could be taken for their conversion to our Holy Faith." (Friday, 3 August 1492).

Truly he was a man raised by God to accomplish this mission.



a second called Beatriz Enriquez of the city of Cordoba by whom he had Fernando, a virtuous gentleman highly lettered." As further proof, there exists a letter Columbus wrote to the Court (in his own handwriting) in which he laments that because of his explorations he "left wife and children."

As for the vague wording of the will and the mysterious "unburdening of conscience," the reason "it was not meet to give" was *political*, not personal. To pay for the expenses of Columbus' first journey, Beatriz had to spend nearly all her small fortune, because the Crown had paid only part. Columbus had expected her to be reimbursed during his long absences, but King Ferdinand never saw to it. Unable to provide for her at his death, the penniless Columbus was too prudent to risk the royal ire by citing King Ferdinand's bad faith as the true reason, but which all concerned knew well.

In 1672 the charge of Fernando's illegitimacy was again revived, with Cristobal's old lawsuit as the sole documentation. In 1792, the question arose once again

in another lawsuit by Don Mariano Colon y Larriatequy, who was making claims against the incumbent of the Columbus estate. The jurist Don Perez de Castro who decided this case called the charge "false, calumnious, and without support," putting a legal end to the matter.

But it didn't die. From there the battle was carried to the literary field, with numerous authors exhuming the same old disproven "evidence" about no marriage record, the will, and Cristobal's lawsuit. One Protestant scholar in particular, Alexander von Humboldt, made an issue of the "scandal," and because of his reputation, the majority of other scholars accepted the notion without question. This process of "re-telling the lie"—albeit unsuspectingly—continues today, especially by the scandal-minded press.

Other misrepresentations of Columbus, developed over the years, persist even to this day. Chief among them are that he never really knew what he had discovered—this in direct contradiction to passages in Columbus' own journals and letters to the effect that he had

found a whole new world never known before, and that in fact another ocean lay on the other side of Panama! The Jews have even tried to claim Columbus as one of their own, denying that he was a Catholic, and saying that he actually wanted to recover Jerusalem for the Jews.

The myths and misconceptions will probably never go away, primarily because the modern world *hates* heroes and does everything it can to drag them down to mediocrity. But Catholics must be told the truth about Columbus and block out the defamation of his character that is so widespread today. Let it be known that he was a man of deep devotion to God and the Church, that he labored ardently for the salvation of souls, and possessed the highest personal integrity. And if certain forces hadn't stood in the way, he would most likely have been canonized a saint long ago. Every Catholic in the Americas owes the Faith to Columbus. It is therefore our obligation to him to make the Americas Catholic once again.

After the Discovery he would write, "This great and vast undertaking is due to no merit of mine. It is due to the Holy Catholic Faith, and to the piety and religion of our monarchs. For the Lord has granted men what human intelligence could neither conceive nor attain." (Definitely not the language of a rationalist/humanist!) To the monarchs, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, he conveyed his joy that his missionary goal of saving pagan souls could now be achieved: "Let processions be ordered, let solemn festivals be celebrated, let the churches be filled with boughs and flowers. Let Christ rejoice upon earth as He does in Heaven, to witness the coming salvation of so many people, heretofore given over to perdition. Let us rejoice for the exaltation of our Faith, as well as for the augmentation of our temporal prosperity, in which not only Spain but all Christendom shall participate!"

Columbus set sail for the New World on a Friday, "In Nomine Domini Jesu Christi," with the figure of Christ on the Cross flying from the mast of his flagship, the *Santa Maria*. Throughout the voyage the "Salve Regina" was sung every evening, and Columbus himself recited the Divine Office regularly. When land was sighted at 2:00 A.M. on Friday, October 12, 1492, Columbus immediately ordered the "Te Deum" to be sung. At daybreak the Cross was planted and the island named San Salvador. In fact, on

each new island that he set foot, Columbus would erect a large wooden Cross and offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for blessing his mission with success. The crosses, he said, were "principally in token of Jesus Christ our Savior and in honor of Christianity." The names given to these lands paid tribute either to Our Lord and Our Lady or to the Spanish monarchs.

Apostle of the Americas

Columbus had an intense desire to convert the natives he found in the Americas, and to protect them from any anti-Catholic, secular influences. He warned his sovereigns, "I say that Your Highnesses must allow no stranger to set foot in this land and trade here who is not a Catholic Christian, and no Spaniard to come if he is not truly a Christian, inasmuch as the planning and execution of this undertaking has no other purpose but the increase and glory of the Christian religion." When speaking of converting the natives, he wrote that, "the instant our missionaries are able to speak their language, they will become Christians. I hope in Our Lord that Your Highnesses will decide promptly to send some, so as to join so numerous a people to the Church." Plus, Columbus desired the natives to be treated with the greatest respect, "because they are the best people in the world, and especially because I have great hope in Our Lord that Your Highnesses will make them Christians."



COLUMBUS RETURNS TO SPAIN—Shown here at his greatest moment of triumph before King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Columbus displays the evidence that he had indeed discovered a New World.

With the rampant disinformation being pushed in the press today, people are being given the impression that Columbus sought to enslave the natives. Nothing could be further from the truth. He had such great affection for them that he seriously entertained the thought of declaring war on the Caribs—the neighboring tribe that frequently invaded the various islands and cannibalized the peace-loving natives. Were it not for illness and lack of matériel, Columbus would have laid waste to the Caribs and their savage ways. He couldn't bear to see mistreated those "bought with the very Blood of Christ." It was only after Columbus was long gone that cases of cruelty and slavery were seen, but left-leaning special-interest groups are today noisily clamoring that Columbus is at fault for the supposed "destruction" of the native American way of life. Had he never come here, they assert, the glorious natives would have continued to live in all their natural splendor, undisturbed by those meddling, imperialistic Europeans. The truth is, the natives would have continued to live in the darkness and tyranny of paganism (see story below). Thanks to Columbus, they were given the Holy Catholic Faith—their only hope of true, eternal happiness.

Thank You, Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus died in Spain on May 20, 1506. Father Don Gaspar Gorricio, one of Columbus' closest friends and advisors throughout his life, attended Columbus at the time of his death and administered the last rites of the Church to him. Columbus' last words were, "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum." ("Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.") Today his remains rest in the Cathedral of Santa Maria La Menor in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. It is the first Cathedral built in the New World and is still in use today. Soon Columbus' remains will be transferred to the huge "Columbus Lighthouse" monument being built in Santo Domingo, which will open on October 12, 1992. This massive lighthouse (which houses a museum dedicated to Columbus) boasts the ability to shine a Cross in the sky that can be seen as far away as Puerto Rico—truly a fitting tribute to the man who brought the first Cross to the New World and, through the light of the Catholic Faith, conquered the darkness of paganism and enabled millions of souls to go to Heaven.



REBUILDING THE FAITH—In the countryside village of Yamasa (near Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic), a parish of 500 Traditionalist Catholics are building a church for the celebration of the true Mass, continuing the legacy of Columbus.

The Light Shineth in the Darkness

Death, Darkness, Despair. Such are the conditions of soul, family, and nation without Our Lord Jesus Christ. For many ages, great numbers of people in the Americas dwelled in an increasingly deep darkness not yet penetrated by Christ's redeeming light; shrouded, as it were, in misery and unbelief. At times and in certain places, the darkness became so black that the atrocities committed were unspeakable. The Prince of Darkness effectively ruled and controlled the hearts and souls of these unfortunate masses, engendering human sacrifice and cannibalism as a way of life.

The Aztec Empire in Mexico, although vociferously defended by modern thinkers as perhaps the most advanced and cultured ancient civilization, actually provides the greatest example of the degree to which satanic influence can permeate a society when devoid of the "Lux Mundi." Consider:

"Every Aztec city and large town had a central square, from which a high pyramidal temple rose, and four gates opening upon four roads approaching the town in

straight lines extending at least five miles, each ending at one side of the temple pyramid. On each side of the temple pyramid was a steep stairway to its top. Month



after month, year after year, in temple after temple, the sacrificial victims came down the roads to the steps, climbed up the steps to the platform at the top, and they were bent backwards over large convex slabs of polished stone by a hook around the neck wielded by a priest with head and arms stained black, never-cut black hair all caked and matted with dried blood, and

once-white garments soaked and stained with innumerable gouts of crimson. An immense knife with a blade of midnight black volcanic glass rose and fell, cutting

the victim open. His heart was torn out while still beating and held up for all to see, while his ravaged body was kicked over the edge of the temple platform where it bounced and slithered in obscene contortions down the steps to the bottom a hundred feet below. Later, the limbs of the body were eaten.

"Many primitive peoples have practiced

occasional human sacrifice and some have approached cannibalism. None has ever done so on a scale remotely approaching that of the Aztecs. No one will know how many they sacrificed; but the law of the empire required a thousand sacrifices to the Aztec tribal god Huitzilopochtli in every town with a temple, every year; and there were 371 subject towns in the Aztec empire. There were many other sacrifices as well. The total number was at least 50,000 a year, probably much more. The early Mexican historian Ixtlilxochitl estimated that one out of every five children in Mexico was sacrificed." (*Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Conquest of Darkness* by Warren H. Carroll, pg. 8.)

Into this darkness Columbus landed and, by planting the cross, opened for Christ's missionaries a new, albeit difficult, field of evangelization. The seeds they planted consistently grew, such that wherever Catholic explorers and conquistadors went in the New World, missionaries closely followed, transforming places of darkness into magnificent dwellings for the Lord of Light.