



Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
Pro Cathedral

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I am writing to the people of Old Mission parish and community to share my decision to move the statue of St. Junipero Serra. Following the recent destruction of such disparate historical figures as Ulysses S. Grant, Francis Scott Key, and Junipero Serra in Golden Gate Park this past weekend, and having received numerous credible reports of plans to forcefully remove the statue, it seemed most prudent to protect the image of our Mission's founder from possible damage.

As faithful Catholics we support the continuing need to achieve true racial justice throughout our nation and within our communities by vocal and peacefully active means. We cannot however support the destruction of the historic images of our founders whose lives have been both inspired and honorable.

Ideally, those with differing perspectives and opinions would engage in dialogue: listening to the pain and frustration of others while being willing to speak the same in such a way as to grow in understanding and respect.

Throughout history, in times of national and civil strife, church authorities, including Bishops and Pastors, have taken measures to protect and conserve sacred icons and relics, preserving them for future generations. My decision to move St. Junipero Serra, in consultation with Fathers Jim Nisbet and Russ Brown (former pastors of Old Mission), the Diocesan California Mission Office, and Bishop Garcia, is in keeping with this long-standing practice of protecting our heritage in uncertain times. I hope you will understand the need for this decision when no truly good choice is available. I pray that God will continue to guide us in grace, wisdom, and peaceful resolutions to differences.

In Christ Jesus,

Fr. Kelly Vandehey Pastor