

Fray Alonso de Benavides
And sightings of Maria de Jesus Agreda



Primary document presentation

What is the doc?

Fray Alonso de Benavides the custos of New Mexico sent to the the Friars of the Holy Custodia if the Conversion of Saint Paul in Madrid 1631

- ❑ Letter expanding on 1630 memoir after meeting Maria de Agreda
- ❑ Thanks to the people who put him there (kissing up)
- ❑ Explains his previous memoir
- ❑ Checking Maria de Jesus Agreda's story for truth
- ❑ Commending work well done

ties know, his reverence told me at once that when he was commissary for Spain, before he became general, more than eight years ago, he received information that Mother Maria de Jesús, abbess of her convent in the town of Agreda, on the border between Aragon and Castile, had had some visions and accounts of the province in New Mexico. With the report I gave him and the one that had been sent to us at this time by the archbishop of Mexico, Don Francisco Masco, our reverend father general was inspired by such tenderness and devotion that he wanted to set out for the said town of Agreda, because the same thing I related had been told by Mother Maria de Jesús herself in the said years before, when he went in person to visit her convent, for it is under the jurisdiction of the order and the province of Burgos.

Face to face, Mother Maria de Jesús herself told the same story to our reverend father general, and now it was confirmed by what I told him. Since his many occupations did not permit him to go, he ordered me to look into it personally. He gave me authority to constrain the blessed nun through obedience to reveal to me all that she knew about New Mexico. I left this capital to fulfill this commission, arriving at Agreda on the last day of April, 1631.

First of all, I must state that Mother Maria de Jesús, present abbess of the convent of Concepcion, can not be twenty-nine years of age yet. She has a beautiful face, very white, although rosy, with large black eyes. Her habit, and that of all the nuns in that convent—they number twenty-nine in all—is just the same as our habit. It is made of coarse gray sackcloth, woven next to the skin, without any other tunic, skirt, or under-skirt. Over this gray habit comes the one of white sackcloth, coarse, with a scalloped edge of the same material, and the cord of our father, Saint Francis. Over the scapulary there is a rosary. They wear no sandals or any other footwear except some boards tied to their feet, or some hemp sandals. Their cloak is of heavy blue sackcloth. They wear a black veil.

I will not stop to tell of the strictness of this venerable mother and of her convent, but only of that which concerns New Mexico. When I am worthy of seeing your patronage, of which I have great desire and hope, then I will tell about the



La V. Madre-Lor. Maria de Jesús de Agreda

Maria de Jesús de Agreda

“Among other virtues that God granted this blessed mother is the eagerness for salvation of souls. From childhood she felt great grief for those who are damned, and particularly for the heathen, who, because of the lack of light and preachers, do not know God, our Lord. His Majesty revealed to her all the savage nations in the world that do not know Him, and she was transported by the aid of the angels that she has as guardians. Her wings are Saint Michael and our father, Saint Francis. She has preached in person our holy Catholic faith in every nation, particularly in our New Mexico, where she was carried in the same manner. The first time that she went was in the year 1620, and she has continued these visits so often that there were days when she appeared three and four times in less than twenty-four hours. This has continued without interruption until 1631.”

“I do not know how to express to your paternities the impulses and great force of my spirit when this blessed Mother told me that she had been present with me at the baptism of the Pizos and that she recognized me as the one she had seen there. Likewise she had helped Father Fray Cristobal Quiros with some baptisms, giving a minute description of his person and face, even saying that although he was old he did not show any gray hair, but that he was long-faced and ruddy” Benavides Memorial of 1634 (140)

Who are they?

Fray Alonso Benavides 1578–1635

- ❑ Arrived in New Spain in 1598 and took vows with the Franciscans three years later in Mexico City
- ❑ Custos of the Franciscan missions in New Mexico from 1626 to 1629
- ❑ Benavides returned to Mexico City in March 1630 proceeded to Spain to present his 1630 memorial to King Philip IV
- ❑ Expanded report was presented to Pope Urban VIII in 1634 (my chosen letter)
- ❑ Upon his return to America he was made Archbishop of Goa

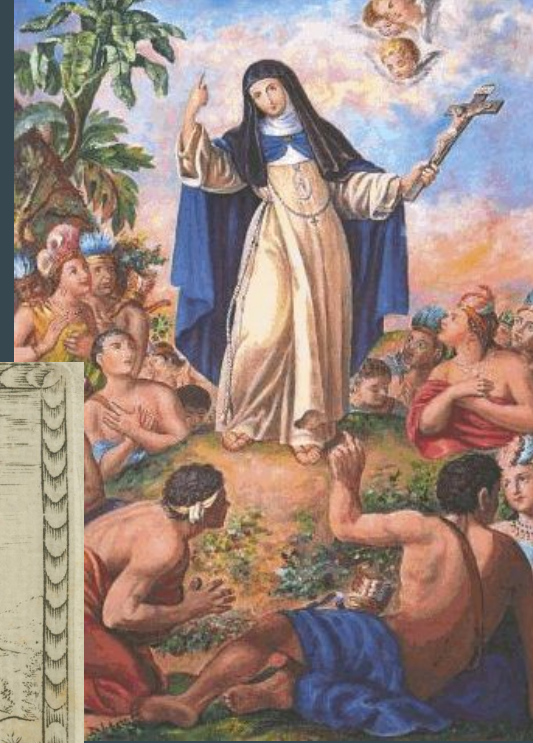


He went to Agreda to interview Mother María de Jesús de Agreda about her relationship with Indians of the American Southwest, who claimed to have been instructed in the Catholic faith by the mysterious "Lady in Blue." Madre María told him that through spiritual translocation she had visited among the Indians many times to take them the divine message.



Maria de Jesus de Agreda - Lady in Blue (1602–1665)

- ❑ Reported to have experienced a period of bi-locations beginning in 1620 - only 18!
- ❑ While in a trance in her convent in Ágreda, Spain, she was also mystically present in New Mexico and other places in the present day American southwest and Mexico
- ❑ Visited the Jumano Indians encouraging them to visit the Spanish missions
- ❑ By 1626, reports from New Mexico were relaying stories of Native Americans arriving at missions because a "Lady in Blue" had told them to go and speak to the missions
- ❑ Benavides met with Maria in Agreda for three weeks, to confirm she was the "Lady in Blue."
- ❑ Gave council to King Philip IV in over 500 letters



Interesting fact

After she died in 1665 she was placed in a coffin in the basement with the other nuns later to be found her body had not decayed.

Mother Maria de Jesus, can not be twenty-nine years of age yet. She has a beautiful face, very white, although rosy, with large black eyes. They wear no sandals or any other footwear except some boards tied to their feet, or some hemp sandals. Their cloak is of heavy blue sack- cloth. They wear a black veil.



Why the document?

- ❑ Benavides wrote a description of a friar's daily routine that could be applied anywhere in the Americas during the Spanish colonial period
- ❑ Embellished successes of New Mexico missions
 - ❑ Jesuits vs Franciscans feud
- ❑ Pueblo indian rejection of missions was left out
- ❑ While in Spain Benavides met with King Felipe IV, and with his report on the Blue Nun was able to secure additional funds for New Mexico
 - ❑ Sign of god's approval

Significance & conclusion

Missionaries satisfied the Spanish government's objectives to pacify the frontier, and the church's quest to save souls and spread Christianity.

Pueblo Indians were rejecting missions and causing issues but these stories were left out from Benevides reports to the king to sound better - predates the Pueblo revolts

Able to secure more funds for missions in New Mexico by forgoing negative reports

Approval of god with lady in blue stories

How much is really true??

Sources

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