

When this was over we went thus in their
hem, and came to eat.
convicts who remain here, there stay also
leaving to shore in a skiff. They have not
ain here, because to-morrow, God willing,

from the promontory we see farthest
to the north, of which we caught sight from
ome twenty or twenty-five leagues of
it has great banks, some of them red,
at and covered with great forests. From
and very beautiful. As for the interior, it
r, as far as [the] eye could reach, we could
med extensive to us. Up to now we are
in it, or anything of metal or iron; nor
very good climate, as cold and temperate
in the present season we found it like that.

it that if one cares to profit by it,
nters. But the best profit which can be
ave this people, and this should be the
v there. And if there were nothing more
voyage to Calicut, that would suffice, to
I do that which Your Highness so much
with.

to Your Highness an account of what I
somewhat lengthy you will pardon me,
made me set it down thus in detail. And,

me as in any other thing
very faithfully served by me, I
order my son-in-law, Jorge do
I shall take as a very great

iz to-day, Friday, the first day

ord
ro Vaaz de Caminha
o Alvarez made.

in Mills, Taylor, Graham, eds., Colonial Latin
Am.
(~~SR~~ SR Books, 2002)

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Orders Given to "the Twelve"

(1523)

On the eve of their departure from Spain, the "apostolic twelve" Franciscan friars who accompanied their superior Martín de Valencia received the following *obediencia* (exhortation and instructions) in Latin from their minister general, Francisco de los Angeles. They carried a copy of this document, along with an *instrucción* in Spanish, when they arrived in Mexico in 1524. Although "the Twelve" had been preceded by a few other churchmen, including Mercedarian friar Bartolomé de Olmedo and Franciscan lay brother Pedro de Gante (see Selection 14), it is with them that the organized effort to evangelize the native peoples of Mexico began.

The metaphorical language and preoccupations of de los Angeles allow insight into the expectations and intentions of these missionary friars and the first generation or two of their brethren in New Spain. These Franciscans revived a belief that had developed among early members of their order in the thirteenth century, a belief that they were a divinely inspired force working for the benefit and salvation of souls in the last days of the world. Thus, de los Angeles insists upon the urgency of his call to action, to deeds over words. "Hurry down now to the active life," he writes, and do not be afraid to shock the

world with a zeal that some will see as madness. It is the eleventh hour in the struggle for salvation, he warns. There is an invitation to relentless hardships in this life "without promise of reward" and to death in the line of holy duty—in the *obediencia* such a death is called "the palm of martyrdom"; in the *instrucción*, there is an assurance that "even if you do not convert the infidel . . . you have done your duty and God will do His." De los Angeles presents the Devil as a palpable, menacing force in the world, and the Franciscans are to regard themselves as soldiers waging a spiritual war against him. New Spain, the battleground, is simultaneously the vineyard to which God has summoned the friars to labor among new plants as Judgment Day approaches. Native peoples are depicted as unbelievers powerlessly awaiting a redemption of which they are completely ignorant, "held fast [as they are] in the blindness of idolatry under the yoke of the satanic thrall." They are a far cry from the Aztec lords and holy men with whom "the Twelve" converse in Bernardino de Sahagún's 1564 depiction (Selection 3).

These ardent conceptions of themselves and of the evangelization of Indians spring in part from the special situation of the

Franciscans (or, as they called themselves, the Order of the Friars Minor, or Minorites) in the Iberian Peninsula in the years after the conquest of Muslim Granada and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Virtually from the order's beginnings in the early thirteenth century, there had existed an internal tension over whether to adhere strictly to an original rule of austerity, simplicity, and renunciation of property (as "Observants," in later parlance) or to lead more material lives as a way to exert greater influence in the world (as "Conventuals"). Branches of both tendencies emerged in Iberia in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. After numerous failed attempts to reunite the many branches and heal the fundamental division between Observants and Conventuals, two bulls were issued by Pope Leo X in 1517. First, he made formal the separation of the Franciscan Order into two independent bodies; and second, he brought about a temporary union of the Observant groups—many of them quite new, having emerged only in the late fifteenth century. (The separation between the Conventual and Observant Franciscans hardened, although many Conventuals joined the more numerous and influential Observants at this time. The Observants' own union did not last, and they soon divided into four groups: Barefoot, or Discalced; Recollects; Reformed; and Capuchins.)

Following their interpretations of the priorities of Saint Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), Observant Franciscans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries maintained that the example of a holy and moral spiritual life offered the most powerful incentive in the conversion of others. Generally speaking, this fundamental point distinguished the Franciscans from the Dominican Order (the Order of the Friars Preacher), which was founded by Saint Francis's contemporary, Saint Dominic (d. 1221), and which developed over the same period as the Order of the Friars Minor. The Dominicans favored programs of doctrinal preaching and philosophical arguments with religious opponents as the most effective means of conversion. Once they had attained spiritual maturity and obedience,

Franciscans, too, were called on to preach as missionaries in the world. Early Franciscans were known for simple sermons delivered among the poor and lepers, and for their regular withdrawals to secluded places. They preached also among infidels (principally Muslims), but were instructed to avoid entering into complex disputes such as the formal exchanges held with Aztec holy men by their successors. Deeds over words, again; as Saint Francis himself emphasized in his founding rules of the order, *Regula prima*, "All brothers . . . preach by their works."

One of the strictest of the Observant groups in early sixteenth-century Spain would supply many of the early Franciscans in Mexico, including members of "the Twelve." Their interpretation of the original rule stressed that, in the course of the simple preaching of the Word among non-Christians, missionaries should exhibit God's love and thus urge unbelievers toward baptism and becoming Christian. Known as the Minorites of the Blessed Juan de Puebla and the Minorites of the Holy Gospel, they practiced extreme poverty, a rigorous regimen of flagellation, and silent spiritual retreats. These Minorites had also undertaken a short-lived preaching mission among Moriscos (new converts to Christianity from Islam) in the mountains of southern Spain in an effort to promote a simple, austere Christianity among these new and potential converts to the faith. They emerged from the ruling of Leo X with their own Province of San Gabriel, founded in 1518.

The first provincial of San Gabriel was Martín de Valencia, already legendary within the Observant ranks for his humility and practices of penance. He is said to have attracted many fervent religious to the new province. According to Motolinía (Toribio de Benavente), one of these religious, it was during a personal inspection of the province by Minister General Francisco de los Angeles in 1523 that Valencia learned of a plan to send him and twelve companions to begin the evangelization of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. The orders composed by de los Angeles must have emerged from this meeting.

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Valencia and his companions were famous in their own time and long afterward. Colonial paintings glorify the moment of their reception in Mexico by Hernán Cortés, with the conqueror typically represented in symbolic self-abasement before their holy purpose and Indian observers absorbing the

edifying scene. "The Twelve," as mentioned above, are also the Christian interlocutors in the *coloquios* from which Selection 3 is drawn. And they appear as the bearers of "the church" in Diego Valadés's 1579 depiction of the ideal churchyard-as-schoolroom in Selection 22.

Fray Francisco de los Angeles, minister general and servant of the whole Order of the Friars Minor, to the venerable and his very dear fathers in Christ: Fr. Martín de Valencia, confessor and learned preacher, and to the other twelve friars of the Order of Minors, who under his obedience are to be sent to the places of the infidels who dwell in the lands of Yucatán; that is to say: Fr. Francisco de Soto, Fr. Martín de la Coruña, Fr. José de la Coruña, Fr. Juan Xuárez, Fr. Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, and Fr. Toribio Benavente, preachers and confessors; Fr. García de Cisneros and Fr. Luis de Fuensalida, preachers; Fr. Juan de Ribas and Fr. Francisco Ximénez, priests; and to the Brothers Fr. Andrés de Córdoba and Fr. Bernardino de la Torre, devoted lay religious; and to all the others who there shall be received or in the future should be sent, sempiternal health and peace in the Lord.

Among the continuous cares and affairs which daily present themselves to me and occupy my mind, this one presses, worries, and afflicts me first of all, as to how with all the cunning of my bowels and continual sighs of my heart, I might labor with the apostolic man and father of ours, Saint Francis, toward liberating and snatching away from the maw of the dragon the souls redeemed with the most precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, deceived by satanic wiles, dwelling in the shadow of death, held in the vain cult of idols—and bring them to fight under the banner of the Cross and to place their neck into the yoke of Christ, through you, my dearest brothers, with the favor of the Most High; because otherwise I shall not be able to escape the zeal of Saint Francis athirst for the welfare of souls, pounding day and night with unceasing knocking at the door of my heart. And that which I yearned for with the passing of many days, namely, of being made one of your number, and did not deserve to obtain from the superiors (thus, Father, because such was your pleasure), I confidently hope to attain in your persons through His favor.

For, indeed, the bounty of the Eternal Father chose the same seraphic standard-bearer of Christ to exalt the glory of His Name and procure the salvation of souls, and to forestall the ruin which threatened the Church (and should she fall, save her and raise her to her primitive state), from among many persons endowed and placed in His Holy Church with divine aids and favors—together with his sons, namely, outstanding men who, contemplating and considering the life and merits of the most blessed Saint Paul, glory solely in the Cross of the Lord by spurning worldly delights and consolations for the delights and riches of Paradise.

For the same man of God, not oblivious of his vocation and calling, and ever raising his desire toward the love of heavenly things, sought through the Church Militant both the faithful and the infidels. And even until now do they herald and make manifest unceasingly throughout the whole world the power of the Divine

Name; in spreading the honor and service of the Christian religion, they labor with great vigilance. And what else can be said? For certainly, in chasing away heresies and in destroying other pestiferous and deadly plagues, they willingly offered themselves to contempt. Desiring to shed their own blood, burning with the fire of Christ's love, and thirsting for the palm of martyrdom, the said father with some of his sons went over various parts of the world.

But now that the dawn is far spent and passing away, which is the eleventh hour of which the Gospel speaks, you are called by the head of the family to go forth into his vineyard; not hired for a price like the others, but rather like true sons of such a father, not seeking your own interests, but those of Jesus Christ without promise of pay or reward; may you run like sons following your father to the vineyard—he who desiring to be the last among men did so attain it, and wished that you his true sons should be the last among the rest, treading and trampling upon the glory of the world, despised for littleness and idiocy, possessing the sublimest poverty, and in such a way that the world should regard you with mockery and contempt, and the very picture of contempt and derision, and should consider your life as madness, and your end without honor. For, thus become madmen to the world, you might convert the world by the foolishness of your preaching. Neither should you be disturbed because you are not hired, but rather sent forth without promise of reward; because the man of God, enlightened by an interior inspiration of the Father of Light, foresaw then, not with a clouded eye but with the firm certainty of the sublime, that from the last he would make you the first.

To you, therefore, O sons, with the last end of the world at hand, I your father cry out and bestir your minds that you defend the King's army already falling and presently fleeing from the foe, and, taking up the victorious contest of the heavenly Victor, you preach by word and work unto the enemy. And if up to now, with Zacchaeus up in the figberry tree sucking the sap of the Cross, you sought to see who Jesus might be, hurry down now to the active life. And if you should have cheated anyone from among the souls of men by solely contemplating the mysteries of the Cross, pay back your neighbor fourfold with the active life together with the contemplative, the shedding of your very blood for the Name of Christ and for their salvation—which He regards and weighs fourfold compared with contemplation alone—and then you will see who Jesus is; when, distrusting yourselves while accomplishing this, you shall receive Him with joy into your hearts. He will see to it that while you are small in stature, you will triumph over the enemy. Run therefore thus with such speed as to gain the victory. It follows hence that you, whom the zeal for souls has eaten up according to the sublimity of your profession, and who desire to run in the fragrance of the ointments of those who followed the footsteps of Christ and shed their blood for His love—for this reason you begged me with great importunity, according to the spirit of our Rule, to send you to infidel parts, so that fighting there for Christ in their conversion, you might save the souls of your neighbor and your own, prepared to go to prison and to death for His sake and for their salvation.

Wherefore, having knowledge of your good life and proof of your goodness, and having learned and known from your deeds that you are worthy of the banner of the King of Glory, which you want to raise up in faraway places, and hold up

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that you are worthy of the banner
in faraway places, and hold up

and sustain, flourish and defend even unto death—therefore, confiding in the
divine bounty, I send you to convert with words and example the people who do
not know Jesus Christ Our Lord, who are held fast in the blindness of idolatry
under the yoke of the satanic thrall, who live and dwell in the Indies which are
commonly called Yucatán or New Spain or Tierra Firme. With the authority of my
office, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, I charge and
command you with the merit of holy obedience, so that you may go forth and bear
fruit and your fruit may endure.

And to you, venerable father, Friar Martín de Valencia, and to your successors
in office, I subject the twelve friars named, and whichever others who in time to
come should join themselves to your fold, as to their true pastor and superior; and
you I constitute as their true superior, and likewise your successors in office
according to the instruction that I intend to give you concerning the mode of your
life and conversation; and you I call and constitute for their custos [director of a
subprovincial unit of Franciscans], and I wish and order that you be so addressed;
and I place and subject you to myself alone and my obedience, and that of my
successors in office (according to the instructions that I intend to give you), and
also to that of the Commissary of Spain in those things concerning which you
alone or your successors, with the majority of the friars, should have recourse by
your letters, until you or your successors learn otherwise from the mandates of our
general chapter.

Further than this, I charge and command you the twelve through the merit of
holy obedience, and the rest who in the future should join your company, and
every single person, both you and them—that you will have to obey the said friar
Martín de Valencia as your true and indubitable prelate and custos, and his
successors in office, in all these things in which you are obliged to obey the
minister general and the rest of your prelates according to the tenor of the Rule.
And because I am obligated to bring subjects and superior, according to the burden
of the office imposed upon me (and which I unworthily fill), and since in the
course of time many matters and problems could arise concerning the custody
entrusted to you, which might pertain to my office and for the providing and
remedying of which my presence should of necessity be required, it follows from
this that to you the said friar Martín de Valencia (in whose fervent zeal, religious
observance, and laudable maturity, learning, essential discretion, and general
ability, I fully confide in the Lord), and to whomsoever of your successors in the
office by the tenor of the letters present, I most fully commit all my powers
regarding all your subjects, who are as of now and in time should be, and regarding
all and whichever friaries, if there are some now of our Order, and those which in
the future should exist in New Spain, or the land of Yucatán—giving to you and to
them all fullest authority and faculties in one and the other forum, in the external
judicial one as well as the internal one of conscience, together with the ordinary
one which belongs to me through my office, and even also the apostolic indults
and privileges granted to me, with the power of subdelegating; that is to say,
publicly and privately to visit, admonish, correct, punish, establish, disestablish,
ordain, prohibit and dispose, bind and absolve and dispense from whatsoever
penalties, irregularities, and defects, and against whatsoever statutes of the Order,

and regarding whatsoever precepts and mandates with which I myself am empowered with regard to either forum; and also by ecclesiastical censures and other canonical penalties to constrain, obstruct, and compel, to interpret and to resolve doubts. Likewise all those things and whichever one of them that in whatsoever manner concern or pertain to my office of minister general, especially in having them performed and carried out as though I myself personally, both by my ordinary power and by my apostolic commission, would perform and accomplish them; and even though the problems were such that, for being so difficult, they needed special and particular declarations. All of these things, and each one of them, I desire to be regarded as sufficiently expressed by the tenor of these presents, excepting two cases which I reserve to myself.

The first: about admitting women, virgins, widowed, or married, into the Order and obedience of Saint Clare, whether from the first or from the second category, or to the Third Order, which [Second and Third Orders] our most blessed father Saint Francis is known to have founded [besides the Friars Minor, the First Order of men]. The second case is: to absolve from the bond of excommunication those who, because of their contumacious disobedience, I should happen to excommunicate by word or in writing. Beyond that, you can depute these my powers and authority, either in whole or in part, either to one or to many, as often as you deem it fitting or consider it proper to entrust these to them, and once entrusted to recall them at your will.

And because you will for a long time endure such great hardships and continuous vigils and cares in carrying out and executing such a great commission and trust, do not let them weaken or exhaust your spirit, but rather find it relaxed and every day more renewed and more completely and fully availing itself of merit. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, and with greater emphasis under obedience, I enjoin you to exercise faithfully and diligently the aforesaid office of pastoral commission and trust, and to carry it out according to the grace which God has given you, and which He will henceforth give and amplify.

Go, therefore, my much beloved sons, with the blessing of your father, to carry out what I have commanded you; and armed with the shield of faith and with the breastplate of justice, with the blade of the spirit of salvation, with the helmet and lance of perseverance, struggle with the ancient serpent which seeks and hastens to lord himself over, and gain the victory over, the souls redeemed with the most precious Blood of Christ. And win them for that Christ in such a manner that among all Catholics an increase of faith, hope, and love may result; and to the perfidious infidels a road may be opened for them and pointed out; and the madness of heretical evil may fall apart and come to nothing; and the foolishness of the gentiles may be made manifest to them, and the light of the Catholic faith may shine forth in their hearts. And you shall receive the eternal kingdom.

Fare ye well, remain with Christ Jesus, and pray for me.

Given in the friary of Santa María de los Angeles on October 30th of the year 1523. Under my signature and with the major seal of my office. Fr. Francisco Angelorum, minister general and servant.