ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

A fire tore through Mission San Gabriel. Its museum now tells a more inclusive story



The Mission San Gabriel, as it underwent renovations in 2022. (Christina House / Los Angeles Times)

BY DEBORAH VANKIN | STAFF WRITER

JUNE 28, 2023 10:06 AM PT

Steven Hackel thought it was a prank at first when the call came, early in the morning: “What do you mean the church is on fire?” He raced from his Pasadena

home to the 249-year-old Mission San Gabriel, which was ensconced in flames devouring the historic structure.

Hackel was not a member of the still-active parish in San Gabriel, but as a UC Riverside history professor specializing in California's missions, he was intimately familiar with the small, on-site Mission San Gabriel Museum, which he'd been helping to steer, in various unpaid capacities, for almost a decade.

As 80 firefighters from seven cities battled the four-alarm fire, Hackel and about half a dozen others set out to rescue the museum's collection, which the fire hadn't yet reached. They carried out about 100 objects — Native baskets, 17th and 18th century paintings, rare books and photographs — from the museum building, which was intact but for smoke and water damage. They stored the items at a convent next door before later relocating them to proper art storage.



Firefighters at the San Gabriel Mission on July 11, 2020. The fire destroyed the roof of the church and much of its interior. (Andrew Campa / Los Angeles Times)

That terrifying experience was compounded by the timing: The fire, later determined to be arson-caused, happened on July 11, 2020.

“It was COVID,” Hackel says. “We’d spent three months avoiding all public contact with people and here we are. The museum was very, very tightly packed. So we were freaked out. Everybody was really scared.”

But they felt compelled, nonetheless, to push forward and try to save the collection.

The Mission San Gabriel Museum — a new version of which opens to the public on July 1, along with the mission itself and its renovated church — may be small and little-known. But it’s critically important, Hackel says. L.A.’s Southwest Museum of

the American Indian, which was inaugurated in 1907, may be slightly older; the Autry Museum of the American West may be larger, with collections totaling more than 600,000 objects and cultural materials. But the Mission San Gabriel Museum offers curated historical objects within a relevant setting, providing unique context. The mission was established in 1771, the fourth of California's 21 Spanish missions, and the on-site museum has been in continuous operation since 1908. (Originally located in Whittier Narrows, the Mission San Gabriel was moved to its current location in 1774.)

"This is a place of memory," Hackel says. "This is where the missionaries lived, and where Native people from distant regions — more than 7,000 of them — came and had their struggles. It's where the human drama played out — here, on this site. And the museum helps us understand this complicated Native American and Catholic story."



Grapes grow on a trellis in the mission courtyard near the newly refurbished museum. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

The Mission San Gabriel Museum has been shuttered for three years. But the fire proved an opportunity: With the galleries emptied out, Hackel says, the museum could rebuild from the ground up — both physically and conceptually. The museum reimagined itself in order to present a more historically accurate and inclusive picture of the Catholic mission and the Indigenous communities it colonized. This inevitably involved a reckoning with the past. Although the mission was built by Indigenous people, with about 5,600 Native Americans buried there, the Native experience had not previously been represented in the museum.

Its inaugural exhibition — "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles" — is an attempt to publicly recognize "a 250-year-long erasure of the mission's Native history and to displace a Eurocentric understanding of the legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization," the museum said in its opening announcement.



Inside the newly refurbished Mission San Gabriel Museum. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

The collection, too, has suffered challenges in the past. Objects hadn't been properly cared for over more than a century, Hackel says. Exhibitions were presented on crowded walls with little curatorial order. There was no proper storage — instead, valuable items were stacked in the museum attic and a nearby basement. Paintings faded from decades of exposure to sunlight. Vellum-bound books dried up and weathered. Textiles deteriorated.

The neglect was due, in part, to lack of resources — the museum has no dedicated staff. There's never been a professional director, permanent curator or conservator. There's no endowment or dedicated communications team. There was a volunteer advisory council that met sporadically as of 2010, but it dissolved shortly before the pandemic. "It's been run, lovingly, by volunteers," Hackel says.



CALIFORNIA

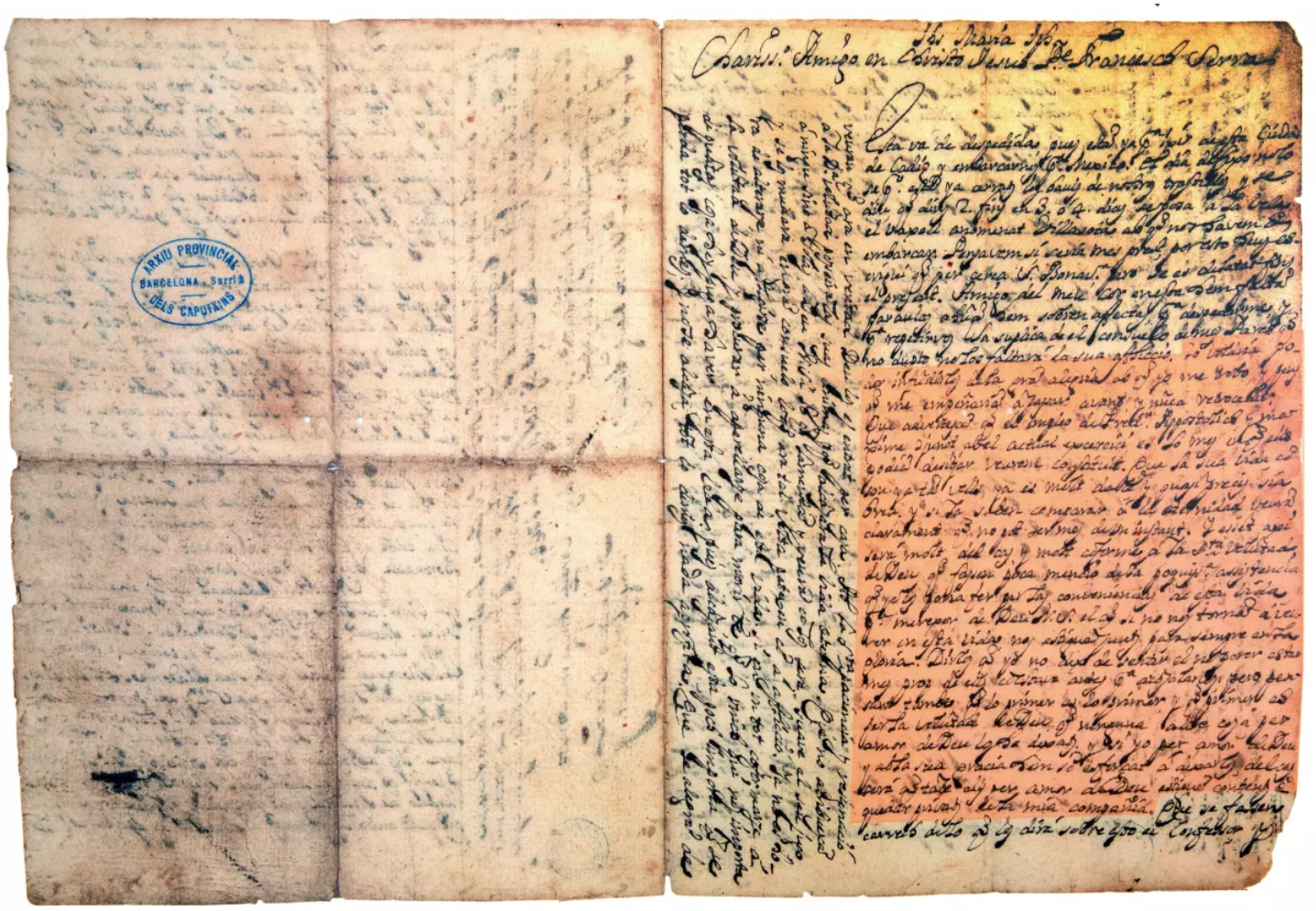
A little more than two years after a devastating fire, the San Gabriel Mission is nearly restored

Sept. 8, 2022

Just as problematic: There was no collection inventory or provenance documentation. It was a mystery as to where many of the museum objects had come from, as well as what, exactly, some of the items were in the first place. Confusion abounded. Paintings might have been done by a famous 18th century artist or by an unknown student. Some seemingly historic woven baskets that were on display in the museum turned out to be contemporary, probably manufactured within the last 20 years.

The collection also had been whittled down from the early 19th century, with objects stolen, lost or damaged and discarded, including silver and gold-plated ornaments, mission records and liturgical texts. The original paintings collection had dwindled by half, Hackel estimates, based on the mission's annual reports from the 1770s to the 1830s.

“That was always the concern, the loss of the heritage of the mission,” Hackel says. “The challenge with the collection was trying to figure out what was dated to pre-1830, the mission period, and what was given or purchased later. We didn’t want to spend money conserving something that wasn’t relevant to the history of the site.”



A reproduction of a letter written by Father Junípero Serra, in 1749, on display at the museum. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

The museum had actually begun a rudimentary inventory project in 2017, in an Excel spreadsheet. With money from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, it soon began consulting with conservators and book historians at San Marino’s Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens as well as art historians from Mexico, “to figure out what was what,” Hackel says. But those efforts slowed with the onset of COVID-19. They picked up after the fire “because with everything out of the museum, we could study it,” Hackel says.

Then, in 2021, with a $30,000 grant from the California Bishops Council, the museum increased its inventory efforts. In 2022, Hackel procured a $25,000 National Trust for Historic Preservation grant and the Mission San Gabriel Museum further mined its history. It also began to rebuild the museum space itself, with upgraded displays, lighting and new technology. It couldn't reconfigure walls, as the site is historic — the museum was once the padres' quarters — but walls were patched and painted and floors refurbished. An improved HVAC system, blackout shades, a new alarm system and security cameras were added, along with UV-protected display cases. The museum increased exhibition space by 20%.



Cleaned and conserved Native American basketry from the collection in new display cases. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Most important, the Mission San Gabriel Museum confronted its historically ethnocentric perspective.

Hackel served as lead curator for the museum's inaugural exhibition, post-fire. He worked with associate curator Yve Chavez, a member of the Gabrieleño Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians who's also an assistant art history professor at the University of Oklahoma. She, in turn, consulted with members of her tribe, including Chief Red Blood Anthony Morales, "to make sure Native voices were heard, that our perspective was represented," she says. "That each room of the museum touched on our ancestors' experience or our culture."

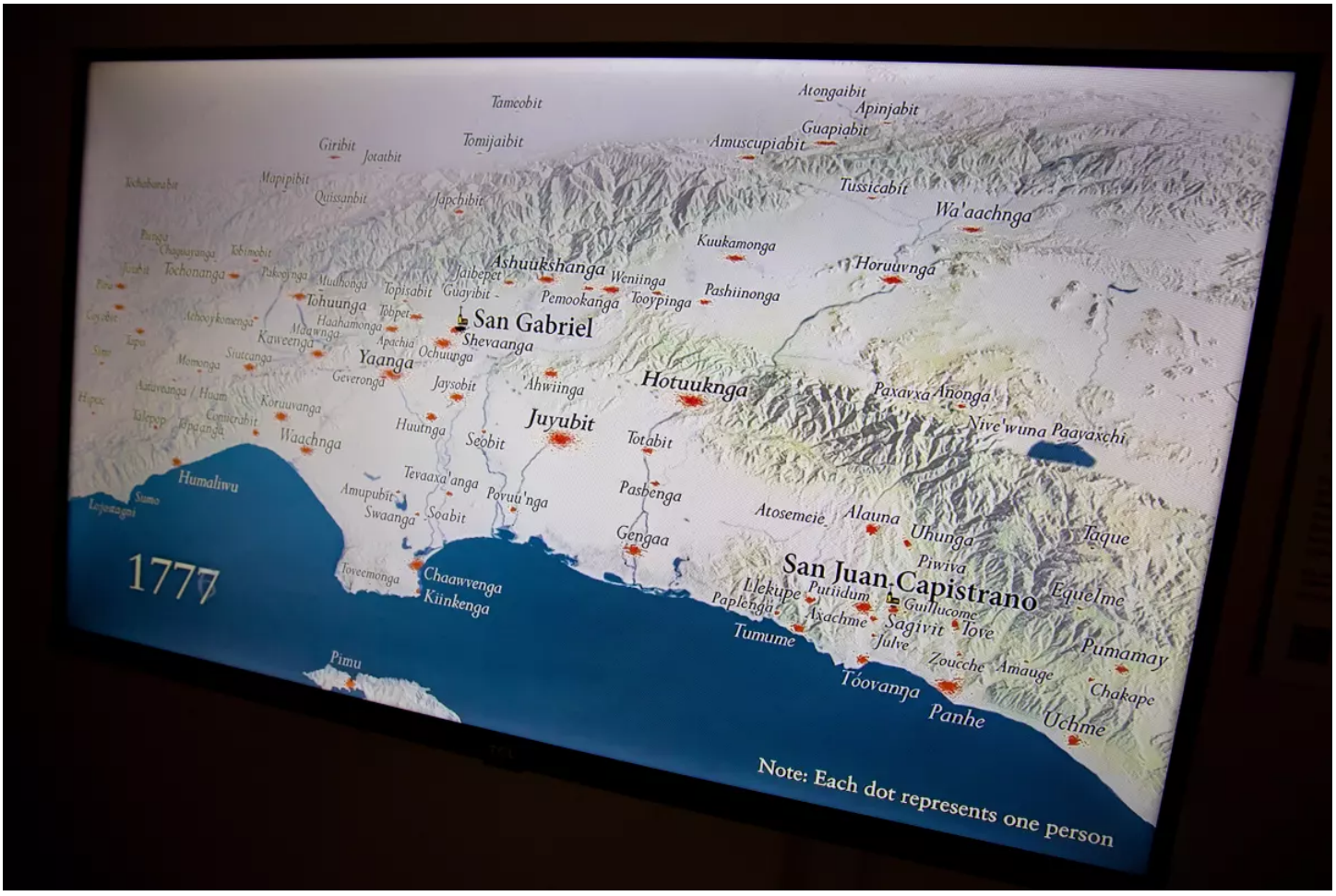
The archdiocese weighed in on nearly every aspect of the show as well. Non-Native experts provided information about California Indian basketry and Spanish colonial textiles. Hackel spoke to historians and curators and wrote new wall text and object labels. Items in the collection were cleaned and conserved. Thirty original artifacts are now on view along with 36 photographic reproductions of documents and art from other institutions. The show also includes digital infographics, a video and audio elements.



A detail of the commemorative wall of names. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Upon entering the first of seven galleries, visitors are greeted by a 16-foot-tall commemorative wall featuring the names of 7,054 Native Americans who were baptized at the mission between 1771 and 1848. The names came from the church's baptism registers. Individuals' village name, Native name and year of baptism are included, along with their birth and death year, if known.

There's also a digital map that pictures the progressive displacement of Native people to the mission, starting in 1771, and the gradual disappearance of their villages. "Eventually, by 1840, these villages were gone," Hackel says.



A digital map of Native Americans' migration to the mission. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

One gallery shows what life was like at the mission through paintings, legal documents and an 18th century agricultural yoke. It addresses conflicting historical narratives. Crowded conditions in the mission dorms, and the lack of understanding

of germ theory at the time, led to “incredible mortality,” Hackel says. A reproduction of a handwritten letter by controversial St. Junípero Serra presents a far rosier picture of mission life. “But we know disease was a terrible problem, and we have that written into the show right here,” Hackel says, pointing to the adjacent wall text.

Among the Spanish colonial paintings on view is one by Juan Correa depicting St. Ursula and another likely by José de Páez picturing a martyred saint. Another item is an elaborately beaded silk chasuble from the mid-18th century, worn by priests during Mass, that was woven in China and then sent to Mexico City to be further adorned with silver and gold thread, sequins and glass beads.



A detail of a silk embroidered chasuble on display at the museum. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Audio plays a key role in the exhibition. There are new recordings of mission-era documents, such as a transcript of the 1785 trial of a Gabrieleño woman, known as Toypurina, who co-led a Native revolt at the mission. It was recorded with help from

the Autry Museum's Native Voices program. The USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia, directed by Adam Knight Gilbert, recorded mission-era music. Andrew Morales, Chief Morales' son, voiced words from the earliest Gabrieleño vocabulary known in mission times, El Quilgui.

There's also a short film on view, by Maya Santos, that features Chief Morales talking about his family history, Catholicism and Native American practices. It's paired with a slideshow of photos of his community members.



CALIFORNIA

San Gabriel Mission fire provokes deep, conflicting reactions

July 13, 2020

The video and slideshow are critical to the show, Chavez says, because mission museums have historically neglected to represent contemporary Native American experiences.

"Now students and others who come to the mission see that Native people survived and are still practicing their culture," Chavez says. "The missions were devastating to our communities. But despite all those years of violence and cultural oppression, we survived. Our ancestors persisted and made it possible for us to be alive today."

Going forward, Hackel says, the museum hopes to secure funding to continue researching and to protect the collection as well as upgrade storage. It also hopes to acquire new works and, eventually, borrow objects to display. "And to seek the return of objects that, at one point, were in this collection," he says.

In the meantime, the exhibition is a unique collaboration among Native people, historians and the archdiocese.

“My hope,” Hackel says, “is that people will walk in and get a sense that ‘You know what? There were Native people living here. There were 7,000 who came to this mission, and that they matter.’ And that we’re sharing aspects of their story.”

“Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles”

Where: Mission San Gabriel Museum, 428 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel

When: 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Runs through Dec. 15.

Info: *parish.sangabrielmissionchurch.org*

Cost: $15



Deborah Vankin

Deborah Vankin is an arts and culture writer for the Los Angeles Times. In what’s never a desk job, she has live-blogged her journey across Los Angeles with the L.A. County Museum of Art’s “big rock,” scaled downtown mural scaffolding with street artist Shepard Fairey, navigated the 101 freeway tracking the 1984 Olympic mural restorations and ridden Doug Aitken’s art train through the Barstow desert. Her award-winning interviews and profiles unearth the trends, issues and personalities in L.A.’s arts scene. Her work as a writer and editor has also appeared in Variety, LA Weekly and the New York Times, among other places. Originally from Philadelphia, she’s the author of the graphic novel “Poseurs.”

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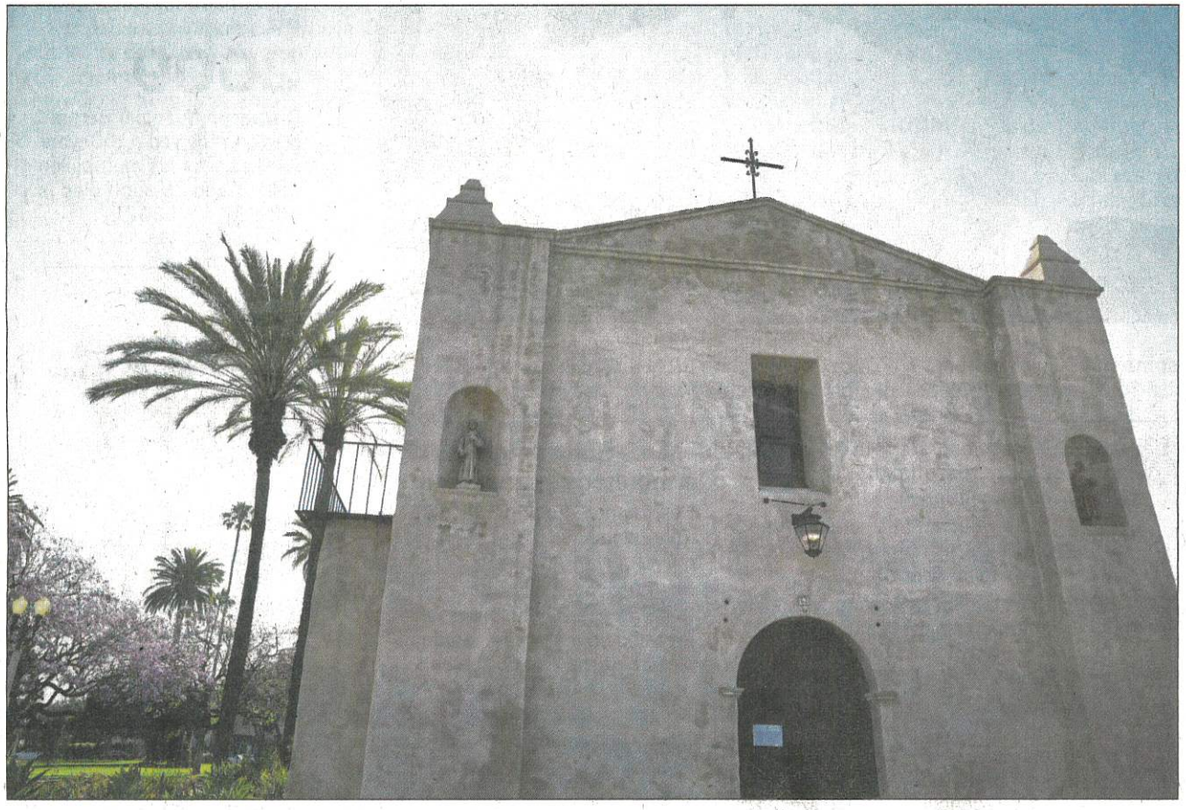
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LANDMARK

Mission San Gabriel readies for renewal



PHOTOS BY TREVOR STAMP

The Mission San Gabriel is set to reopen Saturday after a three-year closure because of the coronavirus pandemic and a fire that burned parts of the building. The blaze caused major damage to the roof and interior.

Building's restoration after fire casts a new light on Indigenous history

By Ethan Huang
ehuang@scng.com



After three years of closure and restoration, voices will once again echo in the halls of Mission San Gabriel starting Saturday.

Now, after the pandemic

TEMECULA VALLEY

Trustees weigh ban on explicit materials

School board's hit list may include graphic violence, inappropriate vulgarity and profanity in lessons

By Jeff Horseman
jhorseman@scng.com

"If there are minors in this audience," Joseph Komrosky said, "I highly suggest you leave."

The Temecula school board president then read excerpts containing profanity, graphic descriptions of sex acts and vulgar references to women from the award-winning novel "Push" at the board's Tuesday meeting.

When he was done, Komrosky said: "This is extremely evil. If you can't see it for what it is, I don't know what else to tell you. This needs to get out of our library."

Komrosky's comments came during a discussion of a proposed change to Temecula Valley Unified School District policy that would bar "pornography, erotica, graphic descriptions of violence (including sexual violence), inappropriate vulgarity or

TEMECULA » PAGE 7

INSIDE: School board hires firm to find new leader two weeks after Jodi McClay's firing. PAGE A7

MOORPARK

Amtrak train hits

stroyed it, the historic mission will finally be reopened.

On Tuesday, Roman Catholic leaders, including L.A. Archbishop José Gomez, the local Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and other invited dignitaries came to the historic site to christen a restored landmark while unveiling its re-imagined museum, designed to highlight local Indigenous voices and history.

"Thanks be to God!" proclaimed the Rev. Parker Sandoval, the vice chancellor of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, who was a leader in the restoration effort. "Today, three years later, the mission is fully restored and above all, the museum is now refreshed with a brand new exhibit."



People sit in the repaired interior of Mission San Gabriel during a blessing ceremony led by Archbishop of Los Angeles José H. Gomez on Tuesday.

On July 10, 2020, a fire that officials say was set by an arsonist broke out in the mission's choir loft, eventually spreading to damage the pulpit and altar. The blaze caused major damage to the roof and interior, to artifacts and in the attic of the 250-year-old mission, the fourth of 21 missions Spaniards built in Alta California.

For a Roman Catholic community that treasures the church, the restoration was a major moment in the history of a landmark that paved a path for the church in the region and in the United States.

But it was also a sobering moment, imbued with

MISSION » PAGE 7

truck, derails; 15 taken to hospitals

By The Associated Press

A northbound Amtrak train carrying 198 passengers struck a Ventura County water truck and derailed Wednesday in Moorpark, critically injuring the truck's driver, authorities said.

Three of the train's seven cars went off the tracks following the collision,Ventura County Fire Department Capt. Brian McGrath said. Fourteen people on the train were taken to hospitals with minor injuries, while the truck driver was taken to a trauma center with a head injury, McGrath said.

Parts of the demolished Ventura County Public Works truck were scattered around the derailed train cars. McGrath initially said the truck's driver was believed to have gotten out of the vehicle before the crash, but later

AMTRAK » PAGE 5

CALIFORNIA

Democratic Senate hopefuls quite a lot alike

Similarities among candidates abound, but 1 makes effort for broader political identity

By Kaitlyn Schallhorn
kschallhorn@scng.com

Adam Schiff, Barbara Lee and Katie Porter are Democratic representatives in Congress. They have similar voting records, boast their progressive bona fides and are running for California's U.S. Senate seat.

When it comes to their voting records, Porter and Schiff agree 98% of the time so far this Congress while Schiff and Lee and Porter and Lee agree 96%, according to a ProPublica analysis of their voting records. In the 2021-22 Congress, Porter and Schiff agreed 99% of the time while the other pairings lined up at 98%.

Certainly, even more similarities abound, including biographical — two are lawyers, two represent Southern California in the U.S. House, two are over the age of 60 and none is originally from California.

But there are stark differences, too, and with less than a year to go until the primary, how all three candidates are pitching themselves to voters, and highlighting those contrasts, is starting to emerge.

"There's not a great deal of difference between the candidates on the issues," said Dan Schnur, who

SENATE » PAGE 6



PHOTOS BY AP AND REGISTER STAFF

Reps. Adam Schiff of Burbank, Barbara Lee of Oakland, center, and Katie Porter of Irvine are running for U.S. Senate in California to replace outgoing Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

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Mission

FROM PAGE 1

a complex and often troubling past.

The arrival of Spanish missionaries had a huge impact on the future of California. But it would also displace the area's Native American inhabitants — a fact that the Los Angeles Archdiocese sought to acknowledge, even as the mission reopens on the day that celebrates the sainthood of Junipero Serra, the controversial Spanish priest who established the landmark.

The mission museum's new exhibit, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles," provides a look into the mission's long and complex history. The galleries include baptismal records, textiles, paintings and even audio recordings of 18th century music and letter readings.

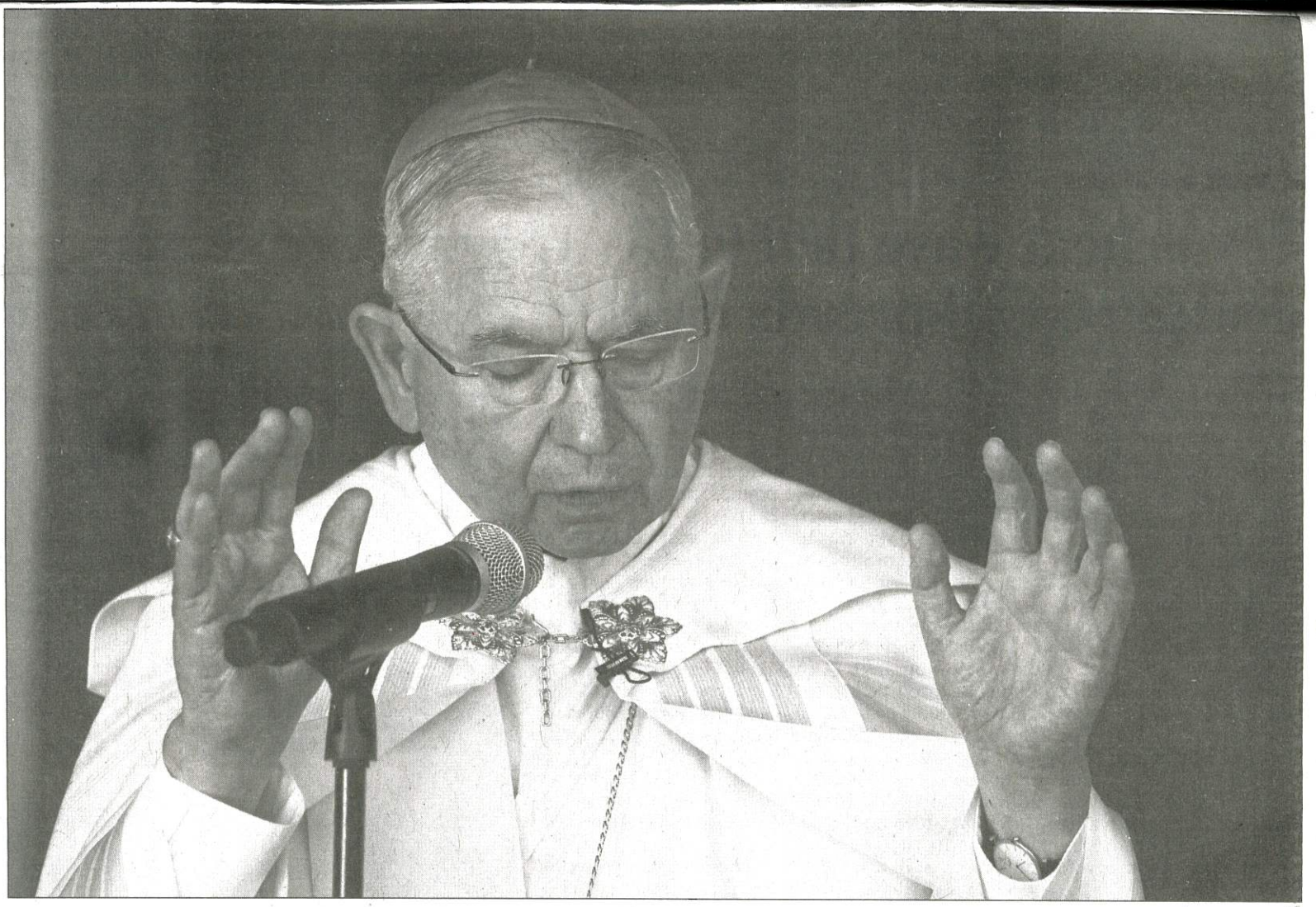
A large portion of the museum focuses on Native American culture and history in the Los Angeles area. This includes a new Wall of Names that lists more than 7,000 Native Americans who were baptized at the mission.

It is a part of their efforts to acknowledge the history of Native Americans previously excluded from such narratives. Built on Indigenous labor, Mission San Gabriel is now the burial site for 5,600 Native Americans, making it a place of religious observance and significance to local Native Americans.

"For me, everything here on these mission grounds is sacred, it's important, because it reflects our culture, it reflects the teachings of our ancestors to us younger generations and for us to continue showing other generations coming after us so it could never become extinct," said Chief Anthony Morales of the Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

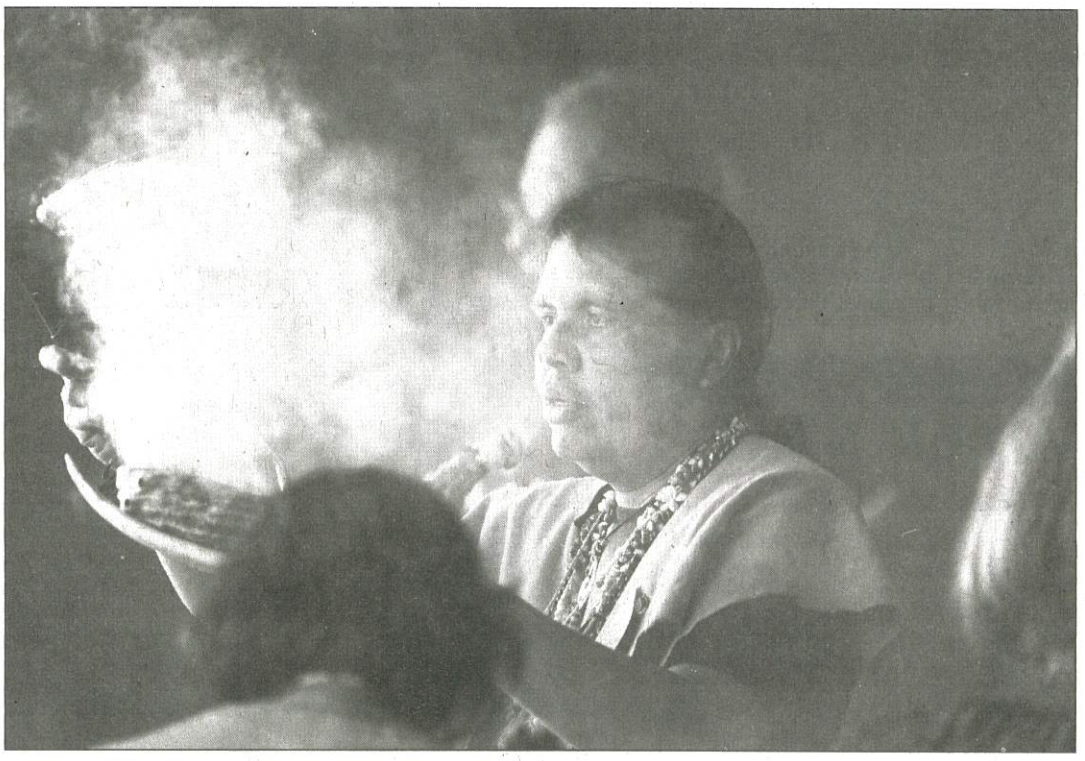
In the past, the mission and its museum had a focus on the history of the Franciscans and their ushering in of Catholicism into the L.A. area.

The new exhibit seeks to bridge the gap between past and present, providing a window into the lives of those affected by the mission, specifically the Indigenous people who were living in the region since long before colonization.



PHOTOS BY TREVOR STAMP

Archbishop José H. Gomez blesses the Mission San Gabriel on Tuesday in a ceremony with Roman Catholic Church leaders and local Native Americans.



Members of the Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians participate in a blessing ceremony at the mission Tuesday. The mission museum's new exhibit focuses on Indigenous history.

"It diversifies the story being told in the mission," said exhibit curator Steven Hackel, the history professor at UC Riverside who secured several grants, including $25,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and $30,000 from the California Bishops Council to help cover costs for his team's work on the museum. "It helps us understand that the Native community is still here and it teaches a whole new way of understanding the history of this mission."

Hackel worked alongside a team of collaborators, including associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma.

Morales lamented the history of his ancestors but also acknowledged just how important it is to show that history at this site.

"It wasn't a good history between us and the founding of the mission system and the padres," Morales said. "We were forced to learn, we were forced to build the missions ... . But if we forget that portion of the history, then we're erasing our ancestors."

Today, at Mission San Gabriel, the church and local Native groups cooperate in the preservation and education of their intertwined past.

"They worship here," said Sandoval. "This is their home. This is the place where their ancestors are buried. It's important to them, and therefore it's important for the church because half the Natives in Los Angeles are Catholic. They are our people, this is their land and we are very happy to celebrate their culture and their history here."

After a service in the main chapel on Tuesday, visitors were led out to the courtyard in front of the museum's entrance. There, members of the local Native American community sang songs of welcome and made music for their ancestors. The smell of incense filled the courtyard as they recited prayers and blessings for the restored mission.

Afterward, Archbishop José Gomez gave his blessing, sprinkling holy water throughout the museum before allowing visitors to enter the refurbished exhibition.

And Morales continued his reflection.

"People think we no longer exist. They think we're extinct. But we're not," Morales said.

NEWS • News

3 years after fire nearly destroyed it, Mission San Gabriel is ready to reopen

Mission San Gabriel and its “reimagined museum” are set to reopen on July 1. Previously overlooked Native American history in the San Gabriel area will take a spotlight in the museum’s new addition.



The Mission San Gabriel Arcangel in San Gabriel on Thursday, Sept. 8th, 2022. The



By **RYAN CARTER** | rcarter@scng.com | Daily News
PUBLISHED: June 24, 2023 at 2:54 p.m. | UPDATED: June 26, 2023 at 1:17 p.m.

Three years after Mission San Gabriel was nearly destroyed by fire, the more than 250-year-old church is set to reopen on July 1, capping a multimillion-dollar drive to restore the landmark after months of delays and introduce a long-in-the-works effort to "re-imagine" the narrative of its impact on Indigenous people.

"It is a very exciting moment … a very exciting time. It is finally coming to completion," said Rev. Parker Sandoval, vice chancellor and senior director of ministerial services for the Los Angeles Archdiocese, who was part of the planning process of reopening the historic chapel and the accompanying museum at the site.

It was July 10, 2020, when a fire that began in the adobe and wood building's choir loft consumed the roof of the mission — Mission San Gabriel Arcángel — and seriously damaged its interior.

Scores of firefighting teams — more than 85 firefighters and 12 engine companies from through the west San Gabriel Valley — doused the blaze. But by then there was major damage not just to the roof but to the interior, including its pulpit and altar.

Fallen debris from the roof and ceiling, and firefighters' heavy equipment, caused severe cracks in the floor tiles.

A few items were saved, including its bell and some historical relics, which were in storage because of some previous renovations at the time.

The home to L.A.'s first generation of Roman Catholics was now a shell of itself. Its roof was destroyed, its relics and religious artifacts threatened or gone.

And a stunned church community, and the city of San Gabriel where the landmark resides, faced a long journey of restoration ahead.

In December, the man accused of setting the fire, John David Corey, was ordered to stand trial. The case is pending.



The roof of Mission San Gabriel Arcángel on Sunday, July 12, 2020, following a fire that damaged the Mission's church. The Mass was held in the Mission's Chapel of the Annunciation. on Sunday, July 12. (Photo by Dean Musgrove, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

'We are going to rebuild'

Mission San Gabriel itself is a relatively small church that sits on what over the decades has become a larger campus, complete with another, more modern church and a school. The campus is often called the Mission, but technically, the Mission is the old church. And that's what was burned.

Two days after the fire started, the chapel's charred and partially collapsed roof in the backdrop, Archbishop Jose Gomez told a crowd of faithful on a Sunday morning that "we are going to rebuild."

"It's time for committing ourselves to a new beginning," he said.



The inside of the church after a fire tore through the church at Mission San Gabriel destroying the inside of the 245-year-old building in San Gabriel on Saturday, July 11, 2020. (Photo by Keith Birmingham, Pasadena Star-News/ SCNG)

Sandoval said on Friday that after extensive work, and a series of delays — repairing, and in effect, replacing the roof being the largest undertaking — the main part of the restoration is complete. In an effort that required teams of specialists, from laborers to historians, windows were replaced, stucco was restored, there was major work on the pulpit, the altar ceiling, three major chandeliers, the choir loft and its Wurlitzer. In a final phase the altar was restored.

“It was an amazing feat to see unfold,” Sandoval said, acknowledging “bureaucratic obstacles” but also thanking restoration teams and donors from all over the country whose money supplemented the insurance that paid for the work.

During the three years of work, the community got glimpses of the restoration, and indeed, many thought the opening would be sooner.

In September, church leaders offered a glimpse, ahead of a Mass that celebrated the end of its jubilee. The Mission opened its doors to the public during a one-day event on Sept. 8. A Mass two days later celebrated the founding of the mission. But it closed again for additional art restoration work, which required a dust-free environment. At the time it was projected to reopen in early December. But delays

While California's missions are still beloved by many people of faith, the blaze at Mission San Gabriel and its restoration came as the legacy of missions throughout California spur significant debate.

The San Gabriel Mission, founded in 1771, was the fourth of what would become 21 Spanish missions in modern-day California, all established with a goal of converting Native Americans to Christianity, in the process expanding the Spanish empire.

Serra, who founded the first nine missions including the San Gabriel Mission, has come deeper scrutiny in recent years, as part of a broader reckoning with racial injustice across the country.

Back in 2020, Gomez wrote that he has "come to understand how the image of Father Serra and the missions evokes painful memories for some people."



Alecia Ballin prays outside the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel Sunday, July 12, 2020, after a fire destroyed much of the 249-year-old mission early Saturday. (Photo by David Rosenfeld/SCNG)

But, he would add, "The real St. Junípero fought a colonial system where natives were regarded as 'barbarians' and 'savages,' whose only value was to serve the appetites of the white man.

That has not stopped many critics reflecting on Serra's legacy to see him as an invader of indigenous lands. Church officials say they are trying to acknowledge the historical impact of the Mission on Indigenous people.

During the Mission's jubilee Mass in September, in the church's courtyard before the Mass, Chief Anthony Morales of the Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians led a special blessing.

Gomez said the blessing represented a unity in remembering a "first-generation of Catholics in Los Angeles, including of the Gabrielino Tongva, the first peoples of this land."

Church officials and some scholars say the reopening of a "re-imagined" Mission museum attempts to face what they said is a "complex history" while seeking to add a more comprehensive layer to the narratives on the Mission's impact in the region. Those narratives up to now have often been much in part a Eurocentric story that revolved around legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization.

"We used to have a story focused on the missionaries of this area," said Steven Hackel, a UC Riverside history professor who secured several grants, including $25,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and $30,000 from the California Bishops Council to help cover costs for his team's work on the museum. "Now we brought as much as we could of Native people, mainly the Gabrieleño community, who along with other Indigenous groups had lived in these lands for more than 10,000 years prior to the colonization period."

Indeed, as UC Riverside noted in announcing the professor's role, the Mission, built by native labor, is the site of 5,600 Native American burials. But scholars noted that Native voice, knowledge and history until now have not been weaved into the Mission museum's curatorial practices or gallery displays.

Hackel worked alongside a team of collaborators, including associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma.

"I think what's been unusual here — and both challenging and exciting — has been our work to create a narrative of the mission's history that honors and reflects diverse interpretations of the history of the mission and its many legacies," said Hackel in a statement.

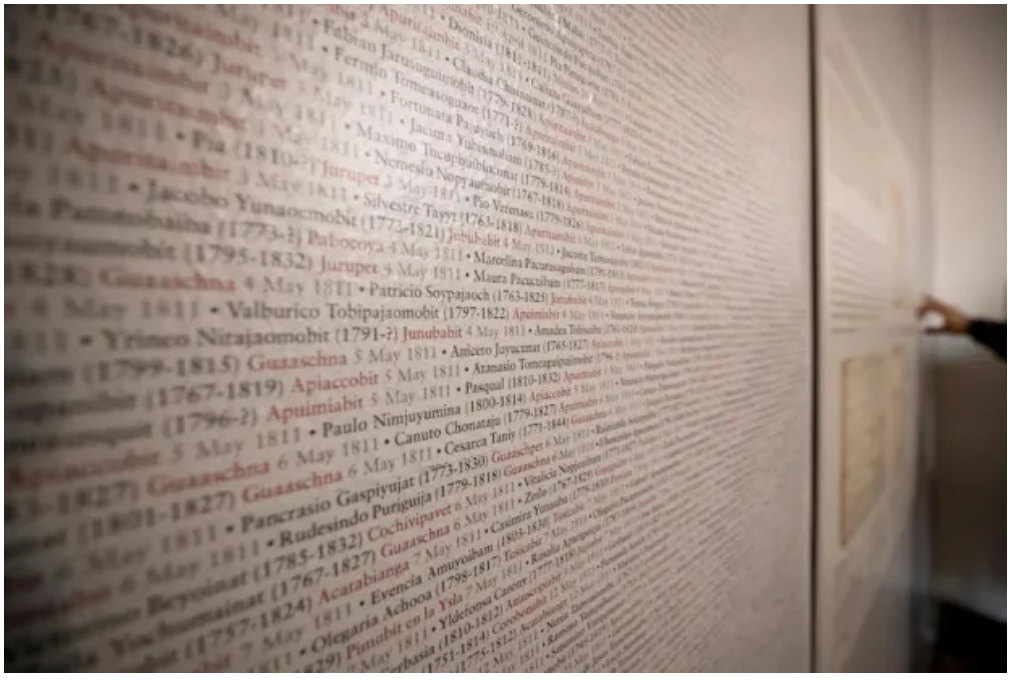


RLA Conservation worker, Sonia Jerez Frap, paints some architecture inside of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel in San Gabriel on Thursday, Sept. 8th, 2022. The location sustained major damage from a July 2020 fire.(Photo by Michael Ares, Contributing Photographer)

The museum, which opens July 1, includes a Wall of Names, a comprehensive list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Misión San Gabriel Arcángel.

An exhibit, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles," is the culmination of a multi-year effort to engage Native consultants on a history of the Mission in what would become Los Angeles through baptismal records, textiles, baskets, paintings, and audio recordings. Among the museum's 30 artifacts is a space dedicated to the contemporary Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

"We are not a federally recognized tribe, so the mission is an important space for our history and community," said Chavez in a statement from UC Riverside, echoing a broader attempt in California to inform people on Native American History. "We are still part of a living community, with many of our members still active Mission San Gabriel parishioners. Through this exhibition we also want to give non-native audiences a look at how many people were here and hope they walk across the breezeway from the main museum to the building where community photos are on view to see we are still here, living in our



The Wall of Names is a memorial in honor of the Native American community. The wall is a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Mission San Gabriel, between 1771 and 1848. It also includes the person's tribal affiliation. (Photo courtesy of UC Riverside)

'His heart beat for the Mission'

Sandoval was mindful of one person who won't be at the special ceremony for dignitaries and Indigenous representatives in the coming week.– physically anyway.



The late Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles David O'Connell was honored during a special bilingual prayer service led by Archbishop José H. Gomez at the Religious Education Congress 2023 (RECongress 2023) at the Arena of the Anaheim Convention Center on Sunday, Feb. 26. Photo: Screenshot from livecast

Bishop David O'Connell, whose fatal shooting in March stunned the Southern California Roman Catholic community, was the top administrator for the Archdiocese's San Gabriel Valley region and was engaged with the project to restore the Mission. One of the first people on scene when the fire broke, he would later raise funds for the project and advocated for the more comprehensive accounting of the Mission's impact on Indigenous people.

"His heart beat for the Mission," Sandoval said, reflecting on an image he still remembers of O'Connell praying at the scene of the fire, clutching his Rosary, "eyes raised to Heaven."

Sandoval added: "Our hearts will be a little sad because he will physically not be with us."

Things to Know:

- The Mission's reopening date is pegged to the beatification of Junipero Serra by Pope St. John Paul II in 1988. In the United States, the Church celebrates that date on July 1.
- Mission San Gabriel was founded by Spanish Franciscans in 1771 as a small outpost in what is now Whittier. It moved to its present-day location in 1775, and is the fourth of the 21 Catholic California missions.
- Records indicate that an estimated 90,000 Native people came to California's 21 missions at some point. At the time the Spanish arrived in California in 1769, the Gabrieleño population stood at 5,000.
- Mission Museum visitors will experience 36 reproductions, two videos, five infographics, 30 original artifacts, and 12 audio components. The audio features a contemporary reading of the interrogation and testimony of Toypurina, a Native woman arrested and jailed during an attempted 1785 Native rebellion at the mission. It was voiced by actors from the Autry's Native Voices theatre group.

Source: UC Riverside

Staff writer Ethan Huang contributed to this article.

After devastating arson, Los Angeles' famed Mission San Gabriel reopens for worship



Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles blesses the newly renovated Mission San Gabriel at a June 27, 2023, ceremony./ Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel



By **Kevin J. Jones**

Denver, Colo., Jul 3, 2023 / 15:40 pm

Mission San Gabriel has reopened to the public for the first time since the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and a devastating arson fire in July 2020.

At a June 27 ceremony attended by area Catholics and others, Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles blessed the renovated mission more than 250 years after its founding by the Spanish priest St. Junipero Serra. He emphasized the “gift of faith” that Serra and other Franciscans brought, which many indigenous Americans accepted and made their own.

“Mission San Gabriel will always be the true spiritual heart of Los Angeles,” Gomez said in a July 3 **essay for the archdiocesan news site Angelus News**. “The mission marks the birthplace of the Christian faith here and, 10 years after the mission was established, the city itself was founded by men and women who came from the mission.”



Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles at a June 27, 2023, ceremony attended by area Catholics and others blessed the renovated mission more than 250 years after its founding by the Spanish priest St. Junipero Serra. Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

“The mission is a sign of the Christian beginnings, not only of our city, but of our nation,” he said.

The archbishop noted that St. Junipero Serra’s feast day falls on July 1, just before the United States celebrates Independence Day. He sees this as a providential reminder from God “that the missionaries were here first” and “that the people of this country were called Christians long before they were called Americans.”

The mission, founded by St. Junipero Serra in 1771, suffered a devastating fire during the early morning hours of July 11, 2020. The fire destroyed the roof and interior of the mission church, which is today **the home of a Catholic parish**.

The alleged arsonist, John David Corey, was charged with the crime in May 2021. He was known at the mission and had a history of conflicts with mission staff, law enforcement sources told the Los Angeles Times. Corey had already been arrested and sentenced to three years in prison for an unrelated incident when investigators named him as a person of interest in the Mission San Gabriel case. In December 2022 Corey, then 59 years old, pled not guilty to the charges and is awaiting trial.

The mission was the fourth founded by **St. Junípero Serra,** a Franciscan priest who founded a series of missions across California. Serra helped to convert thousands of native Californians to Christianity and taught them new agricultural technologies. San Gabriel would go on to be one of the most successful and productive of all the 21 California missions.

Catholics and others gather for a special ceremony led by Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles for June 27, 2023, reopening of Mission San Gabriel after devastating arson. Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

Gomez described the mission as “built by and for the Tongva natives, the first peoples of this land.” He said he blessed the mission church’s “exquisitely renewed altarpiece” and its renovated museum and garden space on June 27. The ceremony drew about 100 people, including descendants of those who lived at the original mission.

Among the new features of the museum is a white wall inscribed with the names of the 7,054 Native Americans baptized at the mission from 1771 to 1848. Gomez called the wall “a striking visual testimony to the truth that every soul is precious in the eyes of our loving God.”

Tribal chief Anthony Morales, himself a parishioner of San Gabriel Church, led members of the Gabrieleño Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in singing traditional welcome songs, **Angelus News reported**. They remembered the natives buried on the mission grounds.

Members of the Gabrieleño Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians sang traditional welcome songs at a reopening ceremony of Mission San Gabriel, June 27, 2023. Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

Adela Garcia, a Gabrieleño tribe member, grew up coming to the mission with her family. She told Angelus News that seeing the restored mission “brings me happiness” after seeing it nearly destroyed.

“There is going to be a lot of healing here,” she said.

The archbishop of Los Angeles reflected on their songs in his essay.

“The ceremony was built around their prayers, rituals, and sacred music, all in their native tongue,” Gomez said. He cited a “moving” line from one song: “O my ancestors, listen to my heart / O my ancestors, here is my heart.”

“These words remind us that our faith is never a solitary journey,” Gomez said. “We owe the gift of faith to our ancestors, to those who have gone before us, that great cloud of witnesses down through the ages who professed the Catholic faith and proclaimed it.”

“The missionaries came to this country with that noble intention, to share what they believed was the greatest gift they could ever give, the gift of knowing Jesus Christ and his love and salvation,” the archbishop added.

“As I walked the mission campus, I felt the strong sense that I was on holy ground, walking among the souls of the 5,000 Natives who are buried here, proud sons and daughters of this land’s ancient peoples who had met Jesus Christ and decided to make him the way and the truth for their lives.”

Gomez noted that the mission’s baptistry still has the original baptismal font used by St. Junipero Serra and other Franciscans. The museum also has the confessional believed to have been used by Serra as well as masterpiece paintings from the Spanish colonial era.

Before the fire, much of the artwork in the church had been removed as part of an ongoing restoration. A historic painting of **Our Lady of Sorrows,** depicting the Virgin Mary in a somber, dark landscape, was the only piece of artwork remaining in the church that survived the fire.

The **museum** has also been renovated to emphasize Native American perspectives.

Steven Hackel, a history professor at the University of California-Riverside, served as a curator on the renovation with Yve Chavez, a member of the Gabrieleño Tongva. The visual, audio, and interactive exhibits aim “to suggest the varieties of Catholic experience at the mission and the persistence of Native belief and practice within an expanding Spanish and Mexican realm,” Hackel said in remarks at the outdoor ceremony, according to Angelus News.

Museum visitors with smartphones can listen to historical audio recordings, including a rare recording of the Our Father in the Gabrieleño language.

Despite St. Junipero Serra’s record defending indigenous peoples, images of the saint have become focal points for protests and demonstrations across California by those who regard him as a symbol of colonization and Spanish abuses of the indigenous people, including their enslavement.

In 2020, in the wake of protests spurred by the murder of Minneapolis man George Floyd, numerous statues of the saint were torn down or vandalized by protestors.

Some California institutions, such as the University of San Diego, have put their statues of Serra in storage to protect them. Mission San Gabriel had put its images of Serra, including a bronze statue, into storage for this reason not long before the fire.

LA CATHOLICS

At Mission San Gabriel reopening, the old is made new



Mission San Gabriel pastor Father John Molyneux speaks at the start of the June 27 blessing ceremony for the historic church's restored interior. (John Rueda)

Grand reopenings don't always happen all at once.

In the case of Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, which was nearly destroyed in a July 2020 arson fire, its reintroduction to the public has happened gradually, carefully, in stages.

First, there was the closing of the mission's 250th anniversary Jubilee Year in September 2022, when the restored adobe church opened its doors for a single Mass celebrated by Archbishop José H. Gomez — only to close them again so that artisans could complete delicate restoration work on the church's interior.

This past Easter, celebration of Sunday Mass resumed, even while scaffolding covered the church's restored altarpiece, the crown jewel of the historic church.

Finally, on June 27, the scaffolding came down and the renovated church was ready for its first official closeup. More than 100 people — a mix of parishioners, members of the Gabrieliño-Tongva tribe, benefactors, and staff involved in the restoration project — were on hand to witness Archbishop Gomez bless the church's new interior, as well as a transformed mission museum.





Andrew Morales (right) and his father, Chief Anthony Morales of the Gabrieleño San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, sing at the unveiling of the new mission museum. (John Rueda)

“It’s beautiful,” said parishioner Mary Acuña Garcia, 71. “It looks like a brand new church.”

Acuña’s ties to the mission run deep. Having lived in the city of San Gabriel all her life, she was baptized in its church and got married there, just as her parents did. She has served in all kinds of ministries at the parish over the years. She and other parishioners at the Tuesday afternoon event were impressed by how the restoration seemed to bring the best out of the old and the new.

“It amazes me how everything can be refurbished and brought back to the original thing that was done,” Acuña said.

The most visible example was the church’s restored altarpiece (also commonly known as the “reredos” or “retablo”) featuring statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Sts. Gabriel the Archangel, Joachim, Dominic, Anthony of Padua, and Francis of Assisi. Even before it narrowly escaped destruction in the 2020 fire, the altarpiece needed restoration work. Long hours of investigation by artisans and historians into what the original 19th century “reredos” looked like served as the basis for the color scheme used in the renovation.

“There wasn’t enough historical data to know exactly how the ‘retablo’ was done,” said project manager Jill Short of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles’ construction department. “So we took the historical data we had and tried as best we could to stay faithful to the original.”

Short oversaw a team of artisans and historians that included Enzo Selvaggi, the Orange County-based creative director of Heritage Liturgical, a sacred art and architecture firm. She credits him with helping pull off the delicate balancing act.

“You want to embrace the tradition, but you also have to be cognizant that we’re in the 2020s,” said Short. “It needs to have elements that speak to us today.”

After Archbishop Gomez blessed the altarpiece, the ceremony moved outside, where tribal chief Anthony Morales led members of the Gabrieleño San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in singing traditional welcome songs, while remembering the approximately 6,000 Gabrieleño-Tongva natives buried on mission grounds.

Then it was time to see the mission’s museum, a “reimagined” version of its pre-fire predecessor featuring interactive displays, artwork from the mission era, readings from the letters of St. Junípero Serra, and maps detailing the tribal history of the Los Angeles Basin and its transformation following the arrival of the first Spanish missionaries and settlers.





Archbishop José H. Gomez blesses the new mission museum, which features a collection of 30 mission era artifacts. (John Rueda)

Steven Hackel, a historian at UC Riverside and a well-known expert on the mission period in Southern California, worked as curator of the museum alongside Gabrieleño Tongva tribal member, Yve Chavez.

In remarks at the outdoor ceremony, Hackel said the museum sought to "put a new emphasis on Native experiences in the mission through 1900," combining "visuals and sounds and interactives to suggest the varieties of Catholic experience at the mission and the persistence of Native belief and practice within an expanding Spanish and Mexican realm."

Several pieces in the collection are accompanied by scannable QR codes that direct viewers with smartphones to historical audio recordings, including a rare one of the Our Father recited in the Gabrieleño language.

One of the most striking features is a wall displaying the names of more than 7,000 natives whose names were recorded in baptismal records through 1848, along with the years of their birth and death, when possible.

At least a few of them are ancestors of Adela Garcia, a Gabrieleño tribe member who grew up coming to the mission with her family. She said seeing the restored mission "brings me happiness" after seeing it nearly destroyed three years ago.

"There is going to be a lot of healing here," said Garcia.

For pastor Father John Molyneux, CMF, the mission's official reopening on July 1 — the feast day of St. Junípero, who founded San Gabriel — was the culmination of a long journey marked by unexpected delays and seemingly miraculous surprises. Longer, at least, than he had envisioned while picking up the rubble three summers ago.

"I didn't realize that this process was going to take three years," confessed the Claretian priest.

Still, Molyneux said he and parish staff have seen God's hand at work through all the challenges.

"I always talk about crisis and opportunity," said Molyneux. "And I think that's why for me this turned out to be the greatest opportunity."

Pablo Kay
Pablo Kay is the Editor-in-Chief of Angelus.

NEWS • News

Catholic leaders vow to rebuild after fire tears through San Gabriel Mission

Archbishop Jose Gomez said the fire was like a death and rebuilding a resurrection.



Alecia Ballin prays outside the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel Sunday, July 12, after a fire destroyed much of the 249-year-old mission early Saturday. (Photo by David Rosenfeld/SCNG)

PUBLISHED: July 12, 2020 at 3:52 p.m. | UPDATED: July 12, 2020 at 4:47 p.m.



Archbishop José H. Gomez celebrated Mass at the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel on Sunday, July 12 at 11 a.m., following a fire that damaged the Mission's church. The Mass was held in the Mission's Chapel of the Annunciation. on Sunday, July12. (Photo by Dean Musgrove, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

With the roof of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel still charred and partially collapsed after a fire desecrated the 249-year-old sanctuary early Saturday — Archbishop Jose Gomez told a crowd of faithful Sunday morning, July 12, that the fire represented an opportunity for a new start.

"We are going to rebuild," Gomez told reporters shortly after delivering mass to a crowd of 100 people at an adjacent chapel on the mission grounds. "We are together and we are starting a new time at the San Gabriel Mission. It's a time for committing ourselves to a new beginning."

“We are going to come out of this stronger,” Gomez said. “It was a death and we look forward to the resurrection.”

The cause of the fire, which ripped through the historic mission about 4:30 a.m. Saturday morning, was still under investigation. Officials with the city of San Gabriel and the San Gabriel Fire Department said there was no immediate sign of arson.

Fire Captain Antonio Negrete said on Sunday the department had no new information and fire investigators were spending the day sifting through evidence gathered at the scene on Saturday.

“It’s still very early in the investigation,” Negrete said.

The fire came at a time when statues of Junipero Serra, who led the missionaries who founded the San Gabriel Mission along with nearly two dozen other California missions, have been targeted by activists who view early missionary work as complicit with Native American atrocities of that era.

Gomez, however, dismissed considerations that Serra’s own personal history was somehow tainted.

“I think people need to know a little better who Junipero Serra was,” Gomez said. “He was a good and faithful man who served Native Americans who were here. That was the reality of who he is. I know his life and I know his history. I know who he was and I really admire him because he was a good man.”

The mission had been undergoing a renovation in preparation for the 250th anniversary coming up soon, so many of the artifacts were already removed from the chapel before the fire. It also had not had any services since the coronavirus pandemic limited mass gatherings in March, though it did host an Easter Day service that was broadcast.

Pastor John Molyneux, who lives on-site, said he was awakened in the early morning hours Saturday July 11 by the mission’s alarm company.

“We have no idea what caused the fire,” he said.



A small crew of workers tend to the church at Mission San Gabriel after an early morning fire on the previous day gutted the 215-year-old building, on Sunday, July 12, 2020. (Photo by Trevor Stamp, Contributing Photographer)

Concern, however, that the mission could have been intentionally set ablaze was high on people's minds as they came together in the parking lot. Some took pictures, consoled each other and prayed. A group of several dozen recited the rosary prayer for close to an hour before Sunday mass began.

"The mission was like an anchor for us," said Jorge Alcazar, an Arcadia resident who came with his wife and daughter Sunday morning to see what the mission looked like after the fire. All three of their children were baptized at the mission, so it held fond memories, he said.

"I hope it was an accident and not arson," Alcazar said.

Tristen Seagondollar, who helped organize the group reciting the rosary, said the prayer was a sign of resilience.

"This church gave me a feeling of reverence," Seagondollar said. "Think of all the loving memories here, the funerals, weddings and baptisms. It really does serve as a place of peace and welcoming."

Sister Georgette Coulumbe, who lived at the mission for 15 years until December, said she was saddened to see the mission roof and interior destroyed.

Justin Senneff, 26, who grew up in San Gabriel said he was feeling a mix of emotions Sunday.

“Most importantly, the mission is the very foundations of the place I call home,” Senneff said. “It’s a symbol for the continuing Catholic faith as it has been for 250 years.”

MISSION SAN GABRIEL

Full Mission San Gabriel Arcángel campus reopens for first time since 2020

The reopening coincides with the Feast Day of the mission's founder, Father Junípero Serra.

By **City News Service** • Published July 2, 2023 • Updated on July 2, 2023 at 1:12 pm



NBC Universal, Inc.

The San Gabriel mission has finally reopened three years after having been damaged in a fire. As seen on air on July 2, 2023.

The Mission San Gabriel Arcángel campus will fully reopen to the public on Saturday for the first time in three years due to the pandemic and an arson fire in July 2020.

The reopening coincides with the Feast Day of the mission's founder, Father Junípero Serra.

“We look forward to opening wide the doors of Mission San Gabriel once again,” said the Rev. Parker Sandoval, vice chancellor for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. “As the place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first proclaimed in this land, the mission is the spiritual home of all Catholics in Los Angeles.”

The Mission Church includes the restored altarpiece that dates back to the 1790s when it arrived from Mexico City and was damaged in the earthquake of 1812 and arson of 2020. The Mission Museum features a newly curated exhibit, “Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles.”

The museum's galleries include baptismal records, textiles, baskets, paintings and audio recordings along with the Wall of Names, a memorial in honor of the Native American community, space dedicated to the contemporary Gabrieleño community; and recordings of 18th century music composed for the California missions and performed by USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia and readings from the letters of Father Junípero Serra.

The exhibit features a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were baptized at the mission between 1771 and 1848.

The museum includes a 1775 confessional booth; a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble woven in China and designed in Mexico by liturgical authorities -- likely worn by Father Junípero Serra during one of his visits to the mission; religious paintings created by leading artists of 17th and 18th century Mexico, and a set of Stations of the Cross from the 19th century.

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Iconic mission church linked to St. Junipero Serra set to reopen

By John Lavenburg (https://twitter.com/JohnLavenburg)
Jun 29, 2023 | National Correspondent



In this Saturday, July 11, 2020, file photo, the interior of the San Gabriel Mission is seen in the aftermath of an early morning fire in San Gabriel, Calif. A fire that gutted much of the historic Catholic church in Southern California. (Credit: Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP.)

Listen

NEW YORK – For the first time in about three years, amid both repairs from a 2020 arson attack and the COVID-19 pandemic, an iconic mission church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is set to reopen fully to the public later this week.

On July 1, the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel campus will completely reopen, with a restored, centuries old, altarpiece that was damaged in the arson, and a newly curated exhibit called “Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles.”

The last event held there was a special Mass last fall to commemorate its 250th anniversary.

“We look forward to opening wide the doors of Mission San Gabriel once again. As the place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first proclaimed in this land, the Mission is the spiritual home of all Catholics in Los Angeles,” Father Parker Sandoval, Vice Chancellor for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, said in a statement.

“As the place from which settlers came to establish the City of Los Angeles, the Mission is also a treasure for all Angelenos,” he continued. “The Mission church has never looked more beautiful in 252 years, and the museum has never been as comprehensive in presenting the perspectives of all peoples with a role in the unfolding story of the Mission.”

Mission San Gabriel was the fourth in a string of Catholic missions established across California by Junipero Serra during the era of Spanish colonization. Serra – an 18th-century Franciscan priest – was canonized by Pope Francis in 2015.

Though considered a founding father of Catholicism on the West Coast, and especially in California, Serra’s legacy has also drawn fire from critics who argue that he lent spiritual cover to the abuses of European colonialism. That criticism has been rejected by Serra’s defenders, who insist that the missionary actually did everything he could to protect the people under his care.

Its July 1 reopening date is Serra’s feast day.

The reopening brings to close a tumultuous three years. The arson on July 11, 2020, took place while the church mission was already undergoing renovations to mark its 250th anniversary. The blaze gutted most of the church, affecting the length of the roof and pews, as well as the altar and multiple historic paintings. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the restoration process.

Included in that process was the execution of the new exhibit for the mission’s museum. The new exhibit features a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were baptized at the mission between 1771 and 1848, all of which were documented in detail by the Franciscans.

Associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma, said that because the tribe isn't federally recognized the mission is an important place to preserve their history.

"We are still part of a living community, with many of our members still active Mission San Gabriel parishioners," Chavez said in a statement. "Through this exhibition we also want to give non-native audiences a look at how many people were here and hope they walk across the breezeway from the main museum to the building where community photos are on view to see we are still here, practicing and celebrating our culture."

The mission museum's galleries include 30 original artifacts, and a memorial in honor of the Native American community. Among the mission's historical artifacts are a 1775 confessional booth, a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble like worn by Serra on one of his visits to the mission, historic religious paintings, and a 19th century set of Stations of the Cross.

The new exhibit in particular was planned by Steven Hackel, a University of California, Riverside, history professor, in consultation with Chavez and others from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and the Gabrieleño community.

Hackel said the goal of the exhibit is to "to create a narrative of the mission's history that honors and reflects diverse interpretations of the history of the mission and its many legacies."

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel reopens with new exhibit

By Christina Gonzalez | **Published** June 30, 2023 | FOX 11

Mission San Gabriel ArcÃ¡ngel reopens with n

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel reopens with new exhibit

It's almost three years to the day that the San Gabriel Mission was badly damaged by an arsonist. Since then, it has undergone a massive renovation project, which includes a new museum exhibit.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Calif. - It's almost three years to the day that the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel was badly damaged by an arsonist. Since then, it has undergone a massive renovation project, which includes a new museum exhibit.

It shows a much more realistic history of the mission and the Native Americans who built it. To do this, they brought in members of the Gabrieleno Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians – not only as advisors but as co-curators.

The church, dating back to 1771 has undergone impressive renovation – a major contrast to the heartbreaking images of the aftermath of the July 2020 arson fire.

"We are resurrection people," said Father John Molyneux, the church's pastor. "We're going to come back stronger and we're going to come back better."

The church took into account the significant and controversial reality of the Native Americans who carried the heavy rocks they used to build those massive walls.

"We need to not only tell their story, but also of the blessed story," Father Molyneux said.

Thousands of Native Americans are buried in the mission where they served as Spanish missionaries and were converted too often against their will. The first of the new museum galleries opened with the names of more than 7,000 who were baptized here.

You can click here for more information on the church.

Mission San Gabriel Museum to tell untold history of Indigenous people

IPM News 8 months ago



New at Mission San Gabriel Museum is a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Misión San Gabriel Arcángel, more commonly known as Mission San Gabriel, in the city of San Gabriel, between 1771 and 1848.

Granting visitors first-time access and insight into the life and history of thousands of Indigenous people, this Wall of Names is a memorial and the heart of the newly reimagined Mission San Gabriel Museum, which opens to the public on June 30 after a three-year closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a 2020 fire that consumed the mission's roof, interior, and imperiled the mission's entire historical collection.

The museum's new exhibition, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles," also coincides with the mission's reopening. This is the culmination of a multi-year effort to engage Native consultants and a range of experts in the research, interpretation, conservation, and presentation of the history of Mission San Gabriel.

The mission, built by Native labor, is the site of 5,600 Native American burials, and is a place of profound Native memory and religious observance. However, Native voice, knowledge, and history until now have never been incorporated into the mission museum's curatorial practices or gallery displays. This exhibition, therefore, seeks to acknowledge a 250-year-long erasure of the mission's Native history and to displace a Eurocentric understanding of the legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization.

The integration of Indigenous and Catholic church histories is a first for the mission, thanks to exhibition lead curator, Steven Hackel, a University of California, Riverside history professor who worked alongside a team of collaborators, including associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma.

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Tags: history museum, Mission San Gabriel Museum, museum exhibits, museums

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WORLD

Restored California mission church is fully reopened

Almost three years after being nearly destroyed by a devastating arson, Mission San Gabriel Arcángel will reopen to the public

Pablo Kay, OSV News

Updated: July 07, 2023 05:29 AM GMT



The Mission San Gabriel Arcangel in San Gabriel on Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022. The location sustained major damage from a July 2020 fire. (Photo: Michael Ares, sgvtribune)

Grand reopenings don't always happen all at once.

In the case of Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, which was nearly destroyed in a July 2020 arson fire, its reintroduction to the public has happened gradually, carefully, in stages.

First, there was the closing of the mission's 250th anniversary Jubilee Year in September 2022, when the restored adobe church opened its doors for a single Mass celebrated by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles -- only to close them again so that artisans could complete delicate restoration work on the church's interior.

This past Easter, celebration of Sunday Mass resumed, even while scaffolding covered the church's restored altarpiece, the crown jewel of the historic church.

Finally, on June 27, the scaffolding came down and the renovated church was ready for its first official closeup. More than 100 people -- a mix of parishioners, members of the Gabrieliño-Tongva tribe, benefactors, and staff involved in the restoration project -- were on hand to witness Archbishop Gomez bless the church's new interior, as well as a transformed mission museum.

It's beautiful, said parishioner Mary Acuña Garcia, 71. It looks like a brand new church.

Acuña's ties to the mission run deep. Having lived in the city of San Gabriel all her life, she was baptized in its church and got married there, just as her parents did. She has served in all kinds of ministries at the parish over the years. She and other parishioners at the afternoon reopening event were impressed by how the restoration seemed to bring the best out of the old and the new.

It amazes me how everything can be refurbished and brought back to the original thing that was done, Acuña told Angelus, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The most visible example was the church's restored altarpiece (also commonly known as the reredos or retablo) featuring statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Sts. Gabriel the

Archangel, Joachim, Dominic, Anthony of Padua and Francis of Assisi. Even before it narrowly escaped destruction in the 2020 fire, the altarpiece needed restoration work. Long hours of investigation by artisans and historians into what the original 19th century reredos looked like served as the basis for the color scheme used in the renovation.

There wasn't enough historical data to know exactly how the 'retablo' was done, said project manager Jill Short of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' construction department. So we took the historical data we had and tried as best we could to stay faithful to the original.

Short oversaw a team of artisans and historians that included Enzo Selvaggi, the Orange County-based creative director of Heritage Liturgical, a sacred art and architecture firm. She credits him with helping pull off the delicate balancing act.

You want to embrace the tradition, but you also have to be cognizant that we're in the 2020s, said Short. It needs to have elements that speak to us today.

After Archbishop Gomez blessed the altarpiece, the ceremony moved outside, where tribal chief Anthony Morales led members of the Gabrieleño San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in singing traditional welcome songs, while remembering the approximately 6,000 Gabrieleño-Tongva natives buried on mission grounds.

Then it was time to see the mission's museum, a reimagined version of its pre-fire predecessor featuring interactive displays, artwork from the mission era, readings from the letters of St. Junípero Serra, and maps detailing the tribal history of the Los Angeles Basin and its transformation following the arrival of the first Spanish missionaries and settlers.

Steven Hackel, a historian at UC Riverside and a well-known expert on the mission period in Southern California, worked as curator of the museum alongside Gabrieleño Tongva tribal member Yve Chavez.

In remarks at the outdoor ceremony, Hackel said the museum sought to put a new emphasis on Native experiences in the mission through 1900, combining visuals and sounds and interactives to suggest the varieties of Catholic experience at the mission and the persistence of Native belief and practice within an expanding Spanish and Mexican realm.

Several pieces in the collection are accompanied by scannable QR codes that direct viewers with smartphones to historical audio recordings, including a rare one of the Our Father recited in the Gabrieleño language.

One of the most striking features is a wall displaying the names of more than 7,000 natives whose names were recorded in baptismal records through 1848, along with the years of their birth and death, when possible.

At least a few of them are ancestors of Adela Garcia, a Gabrieleño tribe member who grew up coming to the mission with her family. She said seeing the restored mission brings me happiness after seeing it nearly destroyed three years ago.

There is going to be a lot of healing here, said Garcia.

For the pastor, Father John Molyneux, the mission's official reopening July 1 -- the feast day of St. Junípero, who founded San Gabriel -- was the culmination of a long journey marked by unexpected delays and seemingly miraculous surprises. Longer, at least, than he had envisioned while picking up the rubble three summers ago.

I didn't realize that this process was going to take three years, confessed the Claretian priest. Still, he said that he and parish staff have seen God's hand at work through all the challenges.

I always talk about crisis and opportunity, said Father Molyneux. And I think that's why for me this turned out to be the greatest opportunity.



catholic

Restored California mission church is fully reopened

A+ A-

Almost three years after being nearly destroyed by a devastating arson, Mission San Gabriel Arcángel will reopen to the public

Grand reopenings don't always happen all at once.

In the case of Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, which was nearly destroyed in a July 2020 arson fire, its reintroduction to the public has happened gradually, carefully, in stages.

First, there was the closing of the mission's 250th anniversary Jubilee Year in September 2022, when the restored adobe church opened its doors for a single Mass celebrated by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles -- only to close them again so that artisans could complete delicate restoration work on the church's interior.

This past Easter, celebration of Sunday Mass resumed, even while scaffolding covered the church's restored altarpiece, the crown jewel of the historic church.

Finally, on June 27, the scaffolding came down and the renovated church was ready for its first official closeup. More than 100 people -- a mix of parishioners, members of the Gabrieliño-Tongva tribe, benefactors, and staff involved in the restoration

project -- were on hand to witness Archbishop Gomez bless the church's new interior, as well as a transformed mission museum.

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Los Angeles WAVE NEWSPAPERS

San Gabriel Mission reopens after three years

East Los Angeles July 6, 2023

Wave Wire Services

SAN GABRIEL — The Mission San Gabriel Arcángel campus has reopened to the public for the first time in three years following the pandemic and an arson fire in July 2020.

The July 1 reopening coincided with the Feast Day of the mission's founder, Father Junípero Serra.

"We look forward to opening wide the doors of Mission San Gabriel once again," said the Rev. Parker Sandoval, vice chancellor for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. "As the place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first proclaimed in this land, the mission is the spiritual home of all Catholics in Los Angeles."

The Mission Church includes the restored altarpiece that dates back to the 1790s when it arrived from Mexico City and was damaged in the earthquake of 1812 and arson of 2020. The Mission Museum features a newly curated exhibit, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles."

The museum's galleries include baptismal records, textiles, baskets, paintings and audio recordings along with the Wall of Names, a memorial in honor of the Native American community, space dedicated to the contemporary Gabrieleño community; and recordings of 18th century music composed for the California missions and performed by USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia and readings from the letters of Father Junípero Serra.

The exhibit features a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were baptized at the mission between 1771 and 1848.

The museum includes a 1775 confessional booth; a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble woven in China and designed in Mexico by liturgical authorities — likely worn by Father Junípero Serra during one of his visits to the mission; religious paintings created by leading artists of 17th and 18th century Mexico, and a set of Stations of the Cross from the 19th century.

The July 11, 2020, fire destroyed the mission's roof and substantially damaged the church. Portions of the roof fell on firefighters, who had to evacuate and initiate a defensive fire attack, according to Capt. Antonio Negrete of the San Gabriel Fire Department.

Crews managed to stop the blaze before it reached the altar, museum and the adjacent rectory.

More than 85 firefighters from 12 engine companies and five truck companies battled the blaze, which took more than two hours to knock down.

Damage, including projected loss of revenue, has been estimated at more than $9 million.

John David Corey, 59, has been ordered to stand trial on two counts of arson of a structure and one count each of arson during a state of emergency and second-degree commercial burglary. A trial date is still pending.

The San Gabriel Mission is open to visitors from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2-8 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

University of California, Riverside announces New, untold history of Indigenous people is now part of revamped Mission San Gabriel Museum exhibition

EDUCATION



Museum exhibition | pexels.com

By Coachella Valley Times Report

Jun 23, 2023

The gray, black, and red letters printed on wallpaper gush like a waterfall flowing down a 16-foot white brick wall. They are a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Misión San Gabriel Arcángel, more commonly known as Mission San Gabriel, in the city of San Gabriel, between 1771 and 1848.

The unveiling of this Wall of Names grants visitors first-time access and insight into the life and history of thousands of Indigenous people. It's a memorial and the heart of the newly reimagined Mission San Gabriel Museum, which opens to the public on June 30 after a three-year closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a 2020 fire that consumed the mission's roof, interior, and imperiled the mission's entire historical collection.

The museum's new exhibition, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles," also coincides with the mission's reopening. This is the culmination of a multi-year effort to engage Native consultants and a range of experts in the research, interpretation, conservation, and presentation of the history of Mission San Gabriel.

The mission, built by Native labor, is the site of 5,600 Native American burials, and is a place of profound Native memory and religious observance. However, Native voice, knowledge, and history until now have never been incorporated into the mission museum's curatorial practices or

mission's Native history and to displace a Eurocentric understanding of the legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization.

The integration of Indigenous and Catholic church histories is a first for the mission, thanks to exhibition lead curator, Steven Hackel, a University of California, Riverside history professor who worked alongside a team of collaborators, including associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma.

"We used to have a story focused on the missionaries of this area. Now we brought as much as we could of Native people, mainly the Gabrieleño community, who along with other Indigenous groups had lived in these lands for more than 10,000 years prior to the colonization period," said Hackel, who secured several grants, including $25,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and $30,000 from the California Bishops Council to help cover costs. "I think what's been unusual here — and both challenging and exciting — has been our work to create a narrative of the mission's history that honors and reflects diverse interpretations of the history of the mission and its many legacies. The reopening of the museum is the culmination of a productive dialogue between the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Gabrieleño community, historians, curators, and a group of experts who helped us evaluate the mission's collection and present it in a responsible and respectful manner."

Mission San Gabriel, founded by Spanish Franciscans in 1771 as a small outpost in what is now Whittier and moved to its present-day location in 1775, is the fourth of the 21 Catholic California missions and a primary force behind the foundation of what is now the city of Los Angeles.

For Hackel, historical facts are crucial components of telling a more comprehensive history. Part of his motivation on the project has been to make more widely known the importance of Native and Spanish colonial history in San Gabriel Valley, and the need for people to realize that American colonial history is not something that happened 3,000 miles away on the East Coast and culminated in the American Revolution but rather was "an everyday occurrence here for Native people beginning more than 250 years ago," Hackel said.

Franciscans documented every baptism, marriage, and burial they performed at Mission San Gabriel, records that descendants now can consult to learn about their ancestors. Over many years, researchers incorporated these records and those of other California missions into a searchable database, the Early California Population Project (ECPP). Records indicate that an estimated 90,000 Native people came to California's 21 missions at some point. At the time the Spanish arrived in California in 1769, the Gabrieleño population stood at 5,000.

Mission San Gabriel was also the spiritual home to the thousands of settlers who came to Southern California. It was where thousands celebrated their most important family milestones — the births, marriages, and burials of loved ones — and where they regularly came to attend Mass.

The 1,100 square foot museum includes seven galleries and a 100 square-foot building across the museum breezeway that focuses on the contemporary Gabrieleño community.

"This space features a video slideshow intended to drive home the point that the Gabrieleno are still here and always have been," Hackel said.

Museum visitors will experience 36 reproductions, two videos, five infographics, 30 original artifacts, and 12 audio components. The audio features a contemporary reading of the interrogation and testimony of Toypurina, a Native woman arrested and jailed during an attempted 1785 Native rebellion at the mission. It was voiced by actors from the Autry's Native Voices theatre group.

The audio also includes 18th century music composed for the California missions and performed by USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia, directed by Adam Knight Gilbert, as well as readings from the letters of the recently canonized California missionary St. Junípero Serra. At another part of the museum guests can scan a QR code to listen to Andrew Morales, a member of Gabrieleno/Tongva

vocabulary of one of the Native languages spoken at Mission San Gabriel. Visitors can also hear a recording of a Chumash man singing a 19th century song in Gabrieleño language.

“What we are trying to do here is present a more inclusive and multivocal history, foregrounding the Native experience at the mission because until now it was merely a backdrop for the missionary’s lives here,” Hackel said. “While the former mission museum did have a narrative it was largely a story of Franciscan piety and sacrifice in service of the conversion of Native peoples to Catholicism. We know the full story is more complicated and at times deeply unsettling when it comes to acknowledging the forced labor, corporal punishment, population decline, and other hardships Indigenous people suffered at Mission San Gabriel.”

Among the museum’s historical treasures on display are a 1775 confessional booth; a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble woven in China and designed in Mexico by liturgical authorities — likely worn by St. Junípero Serra during one of his visits to the mission; religious paintings created by leading artists of 17th and 18th century Mexico, and a unique set of Stations of the Cross from the 19th century.

Chavez, the exhibition’s associate curator, said that prior to 2020, her community and other Indigenous peoples had very little representation in the museum. For the past year she and Hackel have worked together, along with Diocesan officials, to offer museum visitors a story that better integrates all histories.

One of the highlights for Chavez is knowing that members of the Native community participated in this historic project, she said.

“We are not a federally recognized tribe, so the mission is an important space for our history and community,” Chavez said. “We are still part of a living community, with many of our members still active Mission San Gabriel parishioners. Through this exhibition we also want to give non-native audiences a look at how many people were here and hope they walk across the breezeway from the main museum to the building where community photos are on view to see we are still here, living in our neighborhoods and communities.”

Visiting Mission San Gabriel Museum

Public opening: June 30

Location: 428 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel, CA 91776

Museum website, dates, and times: Mission San Gabriel Museum

Original source can be found here

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MISSION SAN GABRIEL

Full Mission San Gabriel Arcángel campus reopens for first time since 2020

The reopening coincides with the Feast Day of the mission's founder, Father Junípero Serra.

By **City News Service** • Published July 2, 2023 • Updated on July 2, 2023 at 1:12 pm



The San Gabriel mission has finally reopened three years after having been damaged in a fire. As seen on air on July 2, 2023.

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel reopens with new exhibit

By Christina Gonzalez | Published June 30, 2023 | FOX 11



RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

MISSION SAN GABRIEL SET TO REOPEN NEARLY 3 YEARS AFTER DEVASTATING FIRE

Wednesday, June 28, 2023





La Misión de San Gabriel: Renace de las Llamas

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RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

Mission San Gabriel set to reopen nearly 3 years after devastating fire

Wednesday, June 28, 2023



Almost three years after being nearly destroyed by a devastating fire, the newly restored Mission San Gabriel is set to reopen.

SAN GABRIEL, Calif. (KABC) -- Almost three years after being nearly destroyed by a devastating arson, the newly restored Mission San Gabriel Arcángel is set to reopen to the public.

The reopening is "a great joy," Archbishop José Gomez of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles said, "because it was a tragic situation that we were in. And this, as we were talking about today, is a beautiful place."

Outside the mission's museum on Tuesday, a special blessing was given by members of the Gabrieleño/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

Inside the museum, a new exhibit celebrates the Native Americans who called the area home.



A man has been charged with setting on fire a historic Catholic church in San Gabriel last summer, prosecutors said.

"This exhibit is the first time that the museum has ever really shown the native history of this region," said Steve Hackel, curator of the museum. "Previously, the museum was largely focused on the building itself and the Franciscans who lived here.

"But we have tried to create a commemoration of the 7,000 natives who lived here over 60 years of the mission's life."

The mission's original hand-crafted altar was not seriously damaged in the 2020 fire. It has not been restored to its position at the front of the church to welcome the faithful.

More than 50 new pews have been installed inside the church.

"We are the people of God," Gomez said. "We all have different origins, and different ways of doing things, but we are together."

The mission and museum are scheduled to reopen to the public July 1.

California Catholic Daily

Museum at San Gabriel Mission cleaned, built out

Eurocentric cut back

July 1st, 2023 | California Diocese News



A digital map of Native Americans' migration to the mission. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Steven Hackel thought it was a prank at first when the call came, early in the morning: "What do you mean the church is on fire?" He raced from his Pasadena home to the 249-year-old Mission San Gabriel, which was ensconced in flames devouring the historic structure.

Hackel was not a member of the still active parish; but as a UC Riverside history professor specializing in California's missions, he was intimately familiar with the small, on-site Mission San Gabriel Museum, which he'd been helping to steer, in various unpaid capacities, for almost a decade.

As 80 firefighters from seven cities battled the four-alarm fire, Hackel and about half a dozen others set out to rescue the museum's collection, which the fire hadn't yet reached. They carried out about 100 objects — Native baskets, 17th and 18th century paintings, rare books and photographs — from the museum building, which was intact but for smoke and water damage. They stored the items at the convent next door before relocating them to proper art storage weeks later….

The Mission San Gabriel Museum — a new version of which opens to the public on July 1 along with the mission itself and its renovated church — may be small and little-known. But it's critically important, Hackel says. L.A.'s Southwest Museum of the American Indian, which was inaugurated in 1907, may be slightly older; the Autry Museum of the American West may be larger, with collections totaling more than 600,000 objects and cultural materials. But the Mission San Gabriel Museum offers curated historical objects within a relevant setting, providing unique context. The mission was established in 1771, the fourth of California's 21 Spanish missions, and the on-site museum has been in continuous operation since 1908. (Originally located in Whittier Narrows, the Mission San Gabriel was moved to its current location in 1774.)

Its inaugural exhibition — "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism

in Los Angeles” — is an attempt to publicly recognize “a 250-year-long erasure of the mission’s Native history and to displace a Eurocentric understanding of the legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization,” the museum said in its opening announcement….

From the L.A. Times

17 Comments

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER
https://www.ncregister.com/cna/after-devastating-arson-los-angeles-famed-mission-san-gabriel-reopens-for-worship

After Devastating Arson, Los Angeles' Famed Mission San Gabriel Reopens for Worship

At a June 27 ceremony attended by area Catholics and others, Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles blessed the renovated mission more than 250 years after its founding by the Spanish priest St. Junípero Serra.



Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles blesses the newly renovated Mission San Gabriel at a June 27 ceremony. (photo: Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel)

Mission San Gabriel has reopened to the public for the first time since the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and a devastating arson fire in July 2020.

At a June 27 ceremony attended by area Catholics and others, Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles blessed the renovated mission more than 250 years after its founding by the Spanish priest St. Junípero Serra. He emphasized the "gift of faith" that Father Serra and other Franciscans brought, which many Indigenous Americans accepted and made their own.

"Mission San Gabriel will always be the true spiritual heart of Los Angeles," Archbishop Gomez said in a July 3 essay for the archdiocesan news site Angelus News. "The mission marks the birthplace of the Christian faith here and, 10 years after the mission was established, the city itself was founded by men and women who came from the mission."

"The mission is a sign of the Christian beginnings, not only of our city, but of our nation," he said.

The archbishop noted that St. Junípero's feast day falls on July 1, just before the United States celebrates Independence Day. He sees this as a providential reminder from God "that the missionaries were here first" and "that the people of this country were called Christians long before they were called Americans."

The mission, founded by St. Junípero in 1771, suffered a devastating fire during the early morning hours of July 11, 2020. The fire destroyed the roof and interior of the mission church, which is today the home of a Catholic parish.

The alleged arsonist, John David Corey, was charged with the crime in May 2021. He was known at the mission and had a history of conflicts with mission staff, law enforcement sources told the *Los Angeles Times*. Corey had already been arrested and sentenced to three years in prison for an unrelated incident when investigators named him as a person of interest in the Mission San Gabriel case. In December 2022, Corey, then 59 years old, pled not guilty to the charges and is awaiting trial.

The mission was the fourth founded by St. Junípero, a Franciscan priest who founded a series of missions across California. The saint helped to convert thousands of Native Californians to Christianity and taught them new agricultural technologies. San Gabriel would go on to be one of the most successful and productive of all the 21 California missions.



Catholics and others gather for a special ceremony June 27, reopening of Mission San Gabriel after devastating arson. | Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

In his essay, Archbishop Gomez described the mission as "built by and for the Tongva natives, the first peoples of this land." He said he blessed the mission church's "exquisitely renewed altarpiece," and its renovated museum and garden space on June 27. The ceremony drew about 100 people, including descendants of those who lived at the original mission.

Among the new features of the museum is a white wall inscribed with the names of the 7,054 Native Americans baptized at the mission from 1771 to 1848. Archbishop Gomez called the wall "a striking visual testimony to the truth that every soul is precious in the eyes of our loving God."

Tribal chief Anthony Morales, himself a parishioner of San Gabriel Church, led members of the Gabrieleño Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in singing traditional welcome songs, Angelus News reported. They remembered the Natives buried on the mission grounds.



Members of the Gabrieleño Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians sing traditional welcome songs June 27, 2023. | Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

Adela Garcia, a Gabrieleño tribe member, grew up coming to the mission with her family. She told Angelus News that seeing the restored mission "brings me happiness" after seeing it nearly destroyed.

"There is going to be a lot of healing here," she said.

The archbishop of Los Angeles reflected on their songs in his essay.

"The ceremony was built around their prayers, rituals, and sacred music, all in their native tongue," he said. He cited a "moving" line from one song: "O my ancestors, listen to my heart / O my ancestors, here is my heart."

"These words remind us that our faith is never a solitary journey," Archbishop Gomez said. "We owe the gift of faith to our ancestors, to those who have gone before us, that great cloud of witnesses down through the ages who professed the Catholic faith and proclaimed it."

“The missionaries came to this country with that noble intention, to share what they believed was the greatest gift they could ever give, the gift of knowing Jesus Christ and his love and salvation,” the archbishop added.

“As I walked the mission campus, I felt the strong sense that I was on holy ground, walking among the souls of the 5,000 Natives who are buried here, proud sons and daughters of this land’s ancient peoples who had met Jesus Christ and decided to make him the way and the truth for their lives.”

Archbishop Gomez noted that the mission’s baptistry still has the original baptismal font used by St. Junípero and other Franciscans. The museum also has the confessional believed to have been used by the saint as well as masterpiece paintings from the Spanish colonial era.

Before the fire, much of the artwork in the church had been removed as part of an ongoing restoration. A historic painting of Our Lady of Sorrows, depicting the Virgin Mary in a somber, dark landscape, was the only piece of artwork remaining in the church that survived the fire.



Altar at Mission San Gabriel | Photo courtesy of Mission San Gabriel

The museum has also been renovated to emphasize Native American perspectives.

Steven Hackel, a history professor at the University of California-Riverside, served as a curator on the renovation with Yve Chavez, a member of the Gabrieleño Tongva. The visual, audio and interactive exhibits aim "to suggest the varieties of Catholic experience at the mission and the persistence of Native belief and practice within an expanding Spanish and Mexican realm," Hackel said in remarks at the ceremony, according to Angelus News.

Museum visitors with smartphones can listen to historical audio recordings, including a rare recording of the Our Father in the Gabrieleño language.

Despite St. Junípero Serra's record defending Indigenous peoples, images of the saint have become focal points for protests and demonstrations across California by those who regard him as a symbol of colonization and Spanish abuses of the Indigenous people, including their enslavement.

In 2020, in the wake of protests spurred by the murder of Minneapolis man George Floyd, numerous statues of the saint were torn down or vandalized by protestors.

Some California institutions, such as the University of San Diego, have put their statues of the saint in storage to protect them. Mission San Gabriel had put its images, including a bronze statue, into storage for this reason not long before the fire.

Keywords: mission san gabriel archdiocese of los angeles

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CATÓLICOS LA

En la reapertura de la Misión de San Gabriel, lo viejo se hace nuevo

Pablo Kay | Angelus News (https://angelusenespanol.com)

01 Jul 2023 • Lectura de 4 minutos



El párroco de la Misión San Gabriel, el padre John Molyneux, habla al comienzo de la ceremonia de bendición del interior restaurado de la histórica iglesia, el 27 de junio. (John Rueda)

Read in English (https://angelusnews.com/local/la-catholics/mission-san-gabriel-reopens/)

Las grandes reaperturas no siempre ocurren de golpe.

En el caso de la Misión de San Gabriel Arcángel (https://angelusenespanol.com/tag/mision-san-gabriel/), que estuvo a punto de ser destruida en un incendio provocado en julio de 2020, su reintroducción al público se ha producido gradualmente, con cuidado, por etapas.

Primero, fue la clausura del Año Jubilar del 250 aniversario de la misión en septiembre de 2022, cuando la iglesia de adobe restaurada abrió sus puertas para una sola misa celebrada por el arzobispo José H. Gómez - sólo para cerrarlas de nuevo para que los artesanos pudieran completar el delicado trabajo de restauración en el interior de la iglesia.

La pasada Semana Santa se reanudó la celebración de la misa dominical, incluso mientras los andamios cubrían el retablo restaurado de la iglesia, la joya de la corona del templo histórico.

Finalmente, el 27 de junio, los andamios se desmontaron y la iglesia renovada estuvo lista para su primera presentación oficial. Más de 100 personas -una mezcla de feligreses, miembros de la tribu Gabrieliño-Tongva, benefactores y personal implicado en el proyecto de restauración- estuvieron presentes para presenciar la bendición del nuevo interior de la iglesia por parte del Arzobispo Gómez, así como la transformación del museo de la misión.



Andrew Morales (derecha) y su padre, el Jefe Anthony Morales de la Banda Gabrieleño San Gabriel de los Indios de la Misión, cantan en la inauguración del nuevo museo de la misión. (John Rueda)

"Es precioso", dijo la feligresa Mary Acuña García, de 71 años. "Parece una iglesia nueva".

Los lazos de Acuña con la misión son profundos. Ha vivido en la ciudad de San Gabriel toda su vida, fue bautizada en su iglesia y se casó allí, al igual que sus padres. A lo largo de los años ha desempeñado todo tipo de ministerios en la parroquia. A ella y a otros feligreses que asistieron al acto del martes por la tarde les impresionó cómo la restauración parecía sacar lo mejor de lo antiguo y lo nuevo.

"Me asombra cómo se puede restaurar todo y devolverlo a su estado original", dijo Acuña.

El ejemplo más visible es el retablo restaurado de la iglesia (también conocido como "retablo"), con las estatuas de la Virgen María y los santos Gabriel Arcángel, Joaquín, Domingo, Antonio de Padua y Francisco de Asís. Incluso antes de que se salvara por poco de la destrucción en el incendio de 2020, el retablo necesitaba trabajos de restauración. Largas horas de investigación por parte de artesanos e historiadores sobre el aspecto del "retablo" original del siglo XIX sirvieron de base para la combinación de colores utilizada en la renovación.

"No había suficientes datos históricos para saber exactamente cómo se hacía el 'retablo'", explica la directora del proyecto, Jill Short, del departamento de construcción de la Archidiócesis de Los Ángeles. "Así que tomamos los datos históricos que teníamos y tratamos lo mejor que pudimos de ser fieles al original".

Short supervisó un equipo de artesanos e historiadores que incluía a Enzo Selvaggi, director creativo de Heritage Liturgical, una empresa de arte sacro y arquitectura con sede en Orange County. A él se debe el delicado equilibrio.

"Quieres abrazar la tradición, pero también tienes que ser consciente de que estamos en la década de 2020", dijo Short. "Tiene que tener elementos que nos hablen hoy".

Después de que el arzobispo Gómez bendijera el retablo, la ceremonia se trasladó al exterior, donde el jefe de la tribu, Anthony Morales, dirigió a los miembros de la Banda Gabrieleño San Gabriel de los Indios de la Misión, que entonaron canciones tradicionales de bienvenida, mientras recordaban a los aproximadamente 6.000 nativos Gabrieleño-Tongva enterrados en los terrenos de la misión.

Después llegó el momento de visitar el museo de la misión, una versión "reimaginada" de su predecesor anterior al incendio, con exposiciones interactivas, obras de arte de la época de la misión, lecturas de las cartas de San Junípero Serra y mapas que detallan la historia tribal de la cuenca de Los Ángeles y su transformación tras la llegada de los primeros misioneros y colonos españoles.



El arzobispo José H. Gómez bendice el nuevo museo de la misión, que cuenta con una colección de 30 objetos de la época de la misión. (John Rueda)

Steven Hackel, historiador de la Universidad de California en Riverside y reconocido experto en la época de las misiones en el sur de California, ha trabajado como conservador del museo junto con Yve Chávez, miembro de la tribu Gabrieleño Tongva.

En su intervención en la ceremonia al aire libre, Hackel dijo que el museo pretendía "poner un nuevo énfasis en las experiencias nativas en la misión hasta 1900", combinando "elementos visuales y sonoros e interactivos para sugerir las variedades de la experiencia católica en la misión y la persistencia de las creencias y prácticas nativas dentro de un reino español y mexicano en expansión".

Varias piezas de la colección van acompañadas de códigos QR escaneables que dirigen a los espectadores con teléfonos inteligentes a grabaciones de audio históricas, entre las que se incluye un raro Padre Nuestro recitado en lengua Gabrieleño.

Uno de los elementos más llamativos es una pared en la que se exponen los nombres de más de 7.000 nativos cuyos nombres figuraban en los registros de bautismo hasta 1848, junto con los años de su nacimiento y muerte, cuando era posible.

Al menos algunos de ellos son antepasados de Adela García, miembro de la tribu Gabrieleño que creció acudiendo a la misión con su familia. Dice que ver la misión restaurada "me hace feliz" después de verla casi destruida hace tres años.

"Aquí va a haber mucha curación", dijo García.

Para el párroco, el padre John Molyneux, CMF, la reapertura oficial de la misión el 1 de julio -el día de San Junípero, fundador de San Gabriel- fue la culminación de un largo viaje marcado por retrasos inesperados y sorpresas aparentemente milagrosas. Más largo, al menos, de lo que él había previsto mientras recogía los escombros hace tres veranos.

"No me di cuenta de que este proceso iba a durar tres años", confesó el sacerdote claretiano.

Aún así, Molyneux dijo que él y el personal de la parroquia han visto la mano de Dios actuando a través de todos los desafíos.

"Siempre hablo de crisis y oportunidad", dijo Molyneux. "Y creo que por eso para mí ésta ha resultado ser la mayor oportunidad".

ETIQUETAS DE ARTÍCULO

Arzobispo Gomez (https://angelusenespanol.com/tag/archbishop-gomez/), Catolicos LA (https://angelusenespanol.com/tag/catolicos-la/), Misión San Gabriel (https://angelusenespanol.com/tag/mision-san-gabriel/), San Junipero Serra (https://angelusenespanol.com/tag/san-junipero-serra/)

PABLO KAY

Angelus News (https://angelusenespanol.com)

Pablo Kay es el redactor en jefe de Angelus.

New, untold history of Indigenous people is now part of revamped Mission San Gabriel Museum exhibition

news.ucr.edu/articles/2023/06/22/new-untold-history-indigenous-people-now-part-revamped-mission-san-gabriel

The gray, black, and red letters printed on wallpaper gush like a waterfall flowing down a 16-foot white brick wall. They are a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Misión San Gabriel Arcángel, more commonly known as Mission San Gabriel, in the city of San Gabriel, between 1771 and 1848.

The unveiling of this Wall of Names grants visitors first-time access and insight into the life and history of thousands of Indigenous people. It's a memorial and the heart of the newly reimagined Mission San Gabriel Museum, which opens to the public on July 1 after a three-year closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a 2020 fire that consumed the mission's roof, interior, and imperiled the mission's entire historical collection.



The museum's new exhibition, "Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, 1771-1900: Natives, Missionaries, and the Birth of Catholicism in Los Angeles," also coincides with the mission's reopening. This is the culmination of a multi-year effort to engage Native consultants and a range of experts in the research, interpretation, conservation, and presentation of the history of Mission San Gabriel.

The mission, built by Native labor, is the site of 5,600 Native American burials, and is a place of profound Native memory and religious observance. However, Native voice, knowledge, and history until now have never been incorporated into the mission museum's curatorial practices or gallery displays. This exhibition, therefore, seeks to acknowledge a 250-year-long erasure of the mission's Native history and to displace a Eurocentric understanding of the legacies of Spanish colonization and Catholic missionization.

The integration of Indigenous and Catholic church histories is a first for the mission, thanks to exhibition lead curator, Steven Hackel, a University of California, Riverside history professor who worked alongside a team of collaborators, including associate curator Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma.



Artwork sits in a room at Mission San Gabriel on Friday, May 26, 2023, in San Gabriel. (UCR/Stan Lim)

"We used to have a story focused on the missionaries of this area. Now we brought as much as we could of Native people, mainly the Gabrieleño community, who along with other Indigenous groups had lived in these lands for more than 10,000 years prior to the colonization period," said Hackel, who secured several grants, including $25,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and $30,000 from the California Bishops Council to help cover costs. "I think what's been unusual here — and both challenging and exciting — has been our work to create a narrative of the mission's history that honors and reflects

diverse interpretations of the history of the mission and its many legacies. The reopening of the museum is the culmination of a productive dialogue between the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Gabrieleño community, historians, curators, and a group of experts who helped us evaluate the mission's collection and present it in a responsible and respectful manner."

Mission San Gabriel, founded by Spanish Franciscans in 1771 as a small outpost in what is now Whittier and moved to its present-day location in 1775, is the fourth of the 21 Catholic California missions and a primary force behind the foundation of what is now the city of Los Angeles.



The Wall of Names is a memorial in honor of the Native American community. The wall is a complete name list of 7,054 Native Americans who were once baptized at Mission San Gabriel, between 1771 and 1848. It also includes the person's tribal affiliation. (UCR/Stan Lim)

For Hackel, historical facts are crucial components of telling a more comprehensive history. Part of his motivation on the project has been to make more widely known the importance of Native and Spanish colonial history in San Gabriel Valley, and the need for people to realize that American colonial history is not something that happened 3,000 miles away on the East Coast and culminated in the American Revolution but rather was "an everyday occurrence here for Native people beginning more than 250 years ago," Hackel said.

Franciscans documented every baptism, marriage, and burial they performed at Mission San Gabriel, records that descendants now can consult to learn about their ancestors. Over many years, researchers incorporated these records and those of other California missions into a searchable database, the Early California Population Project (ECPP). Records indicate that an estimated 90,000 Native people came to California's 21 missions at some point. At the time the Spanish arrived in California in 1769, the Gabrieleño population stood at 5,000.

Mission San Gabriel was also the spiritual home to the thousands of settlers who came to Southern California. It was where thousands celebrated their most important family milestones — the births, marriages, and burials of loved ones — and where they regularly came to attend Mass.



A 100 square-foot building across the museum breezeway focuses on the contemporary Gabrieleño community. The photo shows a freshly painted space. (UCR/Stan Lim)

The 1,100 square foot museum includes seven galleries and a 100 square-foot building across the museum breezeway that focuses on the contemporary Gabrieleño community.

"This space features a video slideshow intended to drive home the point that the Gabrieleno are still here and always have been," Hackel said.

Museum visitors will experience 36 reproductions, two videos, five infographics, 30 original artifacts, and 12 audio components. The audio features a contemporary reading of the interrogation and testimony of Toypurina, a Native woman arrested and jailed during an attempted 1785 Native rebellion at the mission. It was voiced by actors from the Autry's Native Voices theatre group.

The audio also includes 18th century music composed for the California missions and performed by USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia, directed by Adam Knight Gilbert, as well as readings from the letters of the recently canonized California missionary St. Junípero Serra. At another part of the museum guests can scan a QR code to listen to Andrew Morales, a member of Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians pronouncing words recorded in what is the earliest vocabulary of one of the Native languages spoken at Mission San Gabriel. Visitors can also hear a recording of a Chumash man singing a 19th century song in Gabrieleño language.



The exhibition includes a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble woven in China and designed in Mexico by liturgical authorities — likely worn by St. Junípero Serra during one of his visits to the mission. (UCR/Stan Lim)

"What we are trying to do here is present a more inclusive and multivocal history, foregrounding the Native experience at the mission because until now it was merely a backdrop for the missionary's lives here," Hackel said. "While the former mission museum

did have a narrative it was largely a story of Franciscan piety and sacrifice in service of the conversion of Native peoples to Catholicism. We know the full story is more complicated and at times deeply unsettling when it comes to acknowledging the forced labor, corporal punishment, population decline, and other hardships Indigenous people suffered at Mission San Gabriel."

Among the museum's historical treasures on display are a 1775 confessional booth; a 1770s silk beaded, rose-colored chasuble woven in China and designed in Mexico by liturgical authorities — likely worn by St. Junípero Serra during one of his visits to the mission; religious paintings created by leading artists of 17th and 18th century Mexico, and a unique set of Stations of the Cross from the 19th century.



Yve Chavez, a Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians member and assistant professor of art history at the University of Oklahoma. Chavez is the exhibition's associate curator. (Photo courtesy of Yve Chavez)

Chavez, the exhibition's associate curator, said that prior to 2020, her community and other Indigenous peoples had very little representation in the museum. For the past year she and Hackel have worked together, along with Diocesan officials, to offer museum visitors a story that better integrates all histories.

One of the highlights for Chavez is knowing that members of the Native community participated in this historic project, she said.

“We are not a federally recognized tribe, so the mission is an important space for our history and community,” Chavez said. “We are still part of a living community, with many of our members still active Mission San Gabriel parishioners. Through this exhibition we also want to give non-native audiences a look at how many people were here and hope they walk across the breezeway from the main museum to the building where community photos are on view to see we are still here, living in our neighborhoods and communities.”

Visiting Mission San Gabriel Museum

Public opening: July 1

Location: 428 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel, CA 91776

Museum website, dates, and times: Mission San Gabriel Museum



History professor Steven Hackel is the lead curator of the new exhibition at Mission San Gabriel Museum in San Gabriel, California. The museum opens to the public on July 1, 2023. (UCR/Stan Lim)