

Fernando de Rivera y Moncada to Antonio Bucareli y Ursua

San Gabriel, California, 20 October 1776.

Autograph manuscript signed, 3 pages.

Oct^{re} 20 de 76¹

Excmo Señor

El dia 14 del presente marche de Sⁿ Diego, quedo quieto sin nov^d aquel terreno, y trece presos apricionados, y en dos cepos; me acompañan los 13 soldados q^e alli se hallavan de Monterrey. Poco antes de salir estuve en el cuerpo de guardia, llame p^a esso al Then^e Dⁿ Jph Francisco de Ortega y presente los mande y previne a los soldados la debida subordinacion; y q^e en saliendo a la redificacion de la de S. Diego, y a continuar los principios de la de Sⁿ Juan Capistrano, q^e en ambas lebanten su casa de Guardia, y q^e en lo demas ayuden a los P. P. q^e aunque no les mandava hazer lodo, ni adobes, q^e siempre ay muchos otros q^e hazeres y modos en q^e ayudar, q^e hazian en esso servicio a Dios, y al Rey; Me ha parecido exponer a V.E. la noticia conforme lo execute para demostrar q^e no omito passo ninguno. Para el tiempo en q^e se ha de dar principio a las referidas Misiones no he dexado otra orn al Then^e q^e la sola, de q^e proceda al primer aviso q^e le de el Padre Presid^{te} q^e queda en aquel Presidio. Dicho Padre me hablo sobre la segunda, q^e asistirian los Indios de Californias, y con gusto le oi la noticia; deje para essa un moso sirviente.

¹ **Error! Main Document Only.** Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, military commander of Alta California, wrote this letter from Mission San Gabriel. He was returning to his headquarters at the Presidio of Monterey after a nine-month stay at the Presidio of San Diego. There he supervised the hunt for the leaders of the Indian uprising that had destroyed Mission San Diego in November 1775. In this communication to the viceroy, Rivera y Moncada related some of the steps being taken to re-build Mission San Diego and to re-found Mission San Juan Capistrano, which had been evacuated after the destruction at San Diego. He informed the viceroy that he had ordered the soldiers at San Diego to assist in some, but not all, aspects of mission construction. He also told the viceroy of his plans relating to the construction of two missions which had recently been approved for the San Francisco Bay area— Mission San Francisco de Asís and Mission Santa Clara de Asís.

De Sⁿ Diego avise a V.E. q^e la escolta de esta en donde escribo la dejaria de ocho, ultimam^{te} me ha parecido, q^e pues haze tiempo q^e la mantenia con nueve, no disminuirla por ahora.

Boy con el animo de passarme luego a Sⁿ Francisco, llevare las familias q^e se detuvieron en Monterrey; se pondra mano a la primera Missⁿ y no procedere a la otra hasta nueva orn de V.E. por la razon, q^e a lo ultimo supe el pensam^{to} del Padre Presid^{te} en querer se ponga a la costa y camino de Monterrey para aquel Puerto, por lexos del Fuerte, y no ser essa la orn q^e V.E. me tiene dada, espero me mande; y en assunto a la esc^{ta} por q^e no considero suficiente la de seis hombres; Dos son los Parajes el uno distara del Fuerte acia 18 leguas. Y el otro passaran de 20.

Quando se marchó el Barco se me quedo la memoria de lo q^e sup^{co} a V.E. para la Yglesia de Sⁿ Carlos, la q^e acompaña a esta.

Dios gue la importante vida de V.E. por muy dilatados años.

Sⁿ Gabriel y Oc^{re} 20 de 1776.

Excmo Señor

Fernan^{do} de Riv^a y Moncada

Excmo Señor B^o Fr. Dⁿ Antonio Bucareli y Ursua

October 20, 1776

Excelentísimo Señor¹

On the 14th of this month I left San Diego. Nothing new to report. All is quiet at that site. Thirteen prisoners shackled and in two stocks. The thirteen soldiers from Monterrey who were there [in San Diego] are accompanying me. Shortly before leaving, I went to the guardhouse. I sent for Lieutenant Don José Francisco de Ortega. As soon as he arrived, I gave the soldiers their orders and informed them that they would be reporting to him. They are to assist in the reconstruction of Mission San Diego and then begin working on Mission San Juan Capistrano. At both missions they are to build their guardhouse. They are to assist the Fathers in whatever manner possible. Even though I am not ordering them to prepare the mud and make adobe bricks, there are always many other tasks and ways in which they can offer assistance, and by doing so they will be serving God and the king. I felt that I should share this information with Vuestra Excelencia exactly as I carried it out so as to demonstrate that I did not omit one single step. With regard to when work should begin on the missions I just mentioned, the only order that I gave the lieutenant is that he should not proceed until he is notified to do so by the Father President, who has remained at the presidio. That Father spoke with me about the second mission and he said that Indians from the Californias would be helping. I was pleased to hear that news. I left a servant boy behind to help at that mission.

¹When translating from one language to another, some words and phrases do not have a precise English equivalent, such as words that name positions in an official bureaucracy or semi-official titles. In this Rivera y Moncada letter, titles such as “Excelentísimo Señor” and “Vuestra Excelencia” have been left in the original Spanish. Substituting these titles with the English “Most Excellent Lord” or “Your Excellency” would bestow an inaccurate tone and flavor to the letter and give the translation a tone of obsequiousness that the original Spanish did not have. When Rivera y Moncada used these phrases, he was not groveling or affecting a false sense of humility. These phrases were simply the normal polite phrases of the day, for which we really do not have an equivalent meaning in American English of the twenty-first century.

When I was at San Diego I informed Vuestra Excelencia that I was planning on reducing the number of soldiers of the escort at this mission from where I am writing to you² from nine to eight. Ultimately, I have decided not to reduce the number of soldiers for the time being, since this mission has been defended by nine for quite some time.

I am leaving with the intention of later heading to San Francisco. I will take the families that had stopped in Monterrey. Work will begin on the first mission and I will not move on to the other one until I receive new orders from Vuestra Excelencia to that effect. Just recently I learned that the Father President wants to situate the second mission along the riverbank and the route from Monterrey to that port³ because it would then be far from the fort. Since that is not the order I was given by Vuestra Excelencia, I await further orders. And with regard to the escort, I do not believe that six men is sufficient; there are two sites under consideration– one is eighteen leagues away from the fort and the other is more than twenty leagues away.

The ship had already set sail when I realized that I had not sent Vuestra Excelencia the requisition in which I am requesting items for the church of San Carlos. That requisition accompanies this letter.

May God protect the esteemed life of Vuestra Excelencia for many years to come.

San Gabriel, October 20, 1776.

Fernando de Rivera y Moncada

Excelentísimo Señor B^o Fr. Dⁿ Antonio Bucareli y Ursúa⁴

Notes: Transcription, introduction (see footnote 1), and translation by Rose Marie Beebe, Santa Clara University, October 2013.

² He is writing from Mission San Gabriel.

³The port he refers to is San Francisco.

⁴Excelentísimo Señor Bailio Fray Don Antonio Bucareli y Ursúa. “Bailio” refers to Bucareli being a Knight of the Order of San Juan.
