

# FR. SERRA'S IRRATIONAL CRITICS



Bill Donohue comments on critics of Father Junípero Serra; the 18th century priest will be canonized by Pope Francis this fall:

Politics, laced with emotion, is motivating the anti-Serra crowd. In fact, Father Serra has become the whipping boy for left-wing, anti-Catholic activists bent on using his life story to beat up on Western Civilization, the United States, and the Catholic Church. Just as bad, the most sweeping and condemnatory generalizations are being made without rebuttal by the media.

Over the weekend there was a staged, and poorly attended, anti-Father Serra event at the Mission San Juan Bautista in California; it is one of the missions founded by the heroic priest. Leaders from the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and the American Indian Movement blamed Catholic missionaries for the deaths of over 100,000 Native Americans. The event was long on accusations but short on evidence.

To be sure, Native Americans were unjustly treated, but not, in most instances, by the missionaries. It was the Spanish authorities and soldiers who were guilty of wrongdoing, not the priests. To blame Father Serra is itself an injustice: he did more than anyone to stand up for the rights of Indians, winning concessions from recalcitrant officials. Demonizing the one man who fought to secure human rights for Native Americans should be denounced by everyone.

The media are strikingly incurious when it comes to assessing those who claim to speak for Native Americans. To be explicit, organizations such as the American Indian Movement and the Mexica Movement are notoriously unreliable, yet they are extended legitimacy by reporters and commentators. These groups seek division and are impervious to reason.

Pope Francis chose the right priest to canonize; the ceremony will take place on September 23 in Washington, D.C. To read my account of Father Serra see our website.