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Gargantiel, Dsidro Oral History Interview: Class Projects

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Martin Tilley
Sue Hagen

Transcript

Father Dsidro Gargantiel
9/28 77

ST. Francais de Sales Rectory

Tilley: Father , would you be able to tell us why the Mexican people have such a ornimented Christmas ? I found out the Mexicans do not have lights as we do but they have clay figures.

Father: What figures for example ?

Tilley: Oh, Angles , turkeys , chickens and each one was finely painted and most of them were made of clay.

Father: I think I can add something to that . When the Mexicans decorate their house for Christmas , there are always a great amount of stars too . All over the house they have them.

Tilley: Right , stars .

Father: Stars. We, here in America are contented with having a Christmas tree and all the lights . But the star occupies a prominent place inside the house during Christmas. Well, of course the star has a relation to the star of Bethlehem as mentioned in the Bible.

Tilley: You mentioned before you were in Peru .

Father: Yes , I was.

Tilley: For how long ?

Father: Six years.

Tilley: Are there a lot of similarities in Peru to Mexico ?

Father: UH, you see, I had no opportunity to celebrate Christmas in a large city.

Tilley: Or in a small city, or in a town ?

Father: No. Why? I was living up in the mountains at 12,000 feet above sea level , in the shoulder of the Andes mountains . Christmas is very diffrent up there.

Tilley: How do they celebrate there ?

Father: They don't have the winter custom , up in the mountains. of even giving gifts . They don't even have the custom of putting up a Christmas trees up . Yeh , they don't even have that . It started mabey, in the mountains to have Christmas trees in the houses when we put trees in our own house .

Tilley: You started it ?

Father: Yes , that is what we gave them . The idea , that is the Christmas spirit ; with lights , stars , Angles , candles , and things hung around .

Tilley: What I wanted to ask you , I am sure at the end of six years that you were there , people caught on to our idea of Christmas and the spirit that goes along .

Father: Yeh .

Tilley: What did they think of it in their own aspect .

Father: Christmas , after they were re-evangelized , not exactly evangelized , they were evangelized a long time ago . We taught them that Christmas is really sharing . Before , the people of the mountain did not know the idea of sharing in the sense of Christmas and it was one of our goales to show them this . We taught them every way we could .

Tilley: Right , and you did this in your Mass now as you did then ?

Father: Yeh, yeh, the same way. Christ came into this world to share his love for us .

Hagen: The Mexicans around here, do they havetheir own special celebration at Christmas time , like within the Church ? Do they do anything particularamong themselves ?

Father: No, my own way of understanding is that I want the Mexicans of this town , that is , the Mexicans that belong to this Church , to intergrate into the American culture, but not to assimilate it; and so, instead of making their own celebration , I want them to intergrate their customs of Christmas with the American customs .

Tilley: Well, won't you loose their charm of Christmas ?

Father: Yes , but their own rhymn of music , their own way of melody is very diffrent. Their melody is diffrent from our own from the English Christmas hymns .

Tilley: Is the Mass said in spanish , or in latin ?

Father: During Christmas , it is said in English , but we have spanish hymns.

Hagen : Does ST. Francais have a bazaar or anything like that around Christmas time ?

Father: Yes . This coming October 20 , we have a small bazaar . It is not really Christmas but , it is a time we can get together. We also have other times when we get together too . For instance, we have a mother and daughter , father and son dinners.

Tilley: Sounds pretty good !

Father: But, the bazaar has no connection with Christmas . It is a project of a certain organization in the Church .

Hagen : Would you know anybody well enough you could ask if we could talk to about Mexican Christmasses . About anything special they do in their homes ?

Father: In Mexico , or in Holland .

Hagen : Here in Holland .

Father: I know a person but she is in Mexico .

Tilley: Oh, I am sorry to hear that .

Tilley: Is there an other person you could recommend to us ?

(We find the person)

Tilley: Can you tell us one way Mexicans celebrate Christmas ?

Father: One of the best Christmas celebrations for Mexicans in Holland is to drink They drink , yeh , they drink .

(Laughter)

Tilley: That sounds pretty good !

Father: They really drink .

Hagen : Really!!!

Father: Yeh. but, they really just don't drink during Christmas .

They drink the whole year through . I don;t mean to say that they are drunkards . That is a part of their custom. Back home in Mexico , way backfrom the Aztecs andthe Poltecs ,they produced their own wine or their own rum taken from the Magay plum which is now called tecquiela . So, this wine occupies a central part of the table during meals . This is why the Mexican loves to drink . Americans are drunkards too as well as other peoples . (Joke)

Tilley: So, if you were to bring a bottle or something like that , the family would not reject it .

Father: No, No. Somebody gave me a bottle of Tecquiela ; that one over there .(on top the shelf on the left hand side of the book shelf .)

Tilley: That's a wild bottle . (the bottle is dark green , non transparent, and is in the shape of an idol , and is in a squatting position)

Father: (laughs)

Tilley: Getting back to Christmas , what are some of the ways Mexican people rejoice during the Christmas season

Father: It is one of the best customs of the Mexican people during the Christmas season , or at least the days before Christmas thru New Years , that some go singing from house to house . This carroling is all preplanned and people know when to expect the singers .

Hagen: Out of the Bible , which character plays the most important role during the Christmas season for the Mexicans ?

Father: I would say that the Blessed Mary plays the most important role because of Mary, Jesus Christ came about in this world. You will find that most houses have the scene of the birth of Christ. This gives the Mexican family a real sense of Christmas .

Tilley: So, there is a real devotion to everything in the Christmas season .

Father: Yeah

Tilley: Is it possible for us to tape parts of your Mass ?

Father: Oh, sure sure.

Tilley & Hagen: Thank you Father for your time and thank you for Helping us

(End of tape no.1)