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Political Propaganda in the Reredos of Our Lady of Light

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POLITICAL PROPAGANDA IN THE *REREDOS OF OUR LADY OF LIGHT*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Art History and Visual Culture Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Art History and Visual Culture
at
Lindenwood University

By

Owen Keith Medina Loftus

Saint Charles, Missouri

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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Political Propaganda in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*

Owen Keith Medina Loftus, Master of Art History and Visual Culture, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Professor Sarah Cantor, PhD

This master's thesis explores the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, a stone monument situated as the focal point of a former military chapel known as *La Castrense* in Colonial Santa Fe, New Mexico. Crafted by Bernardo Miera y Pacheco in 1761, the reredos is analyzed as a multifaceted masterpiece that blends religious symbolism with propaganda messaging. Its central location in the capital and meticulous design make it a potent tool employed to shape perceptions, reinforce beliefs, and incite the viewer to take action in support of both the Roman Catholic faith and the ever-growing interests of the king and Spanish Empire. This multifaceted study delves into the established iconography to promote the propaganda messages of its patrons, don Francisco Marín de Valle, governor and captain general of Colonial New Mexico, and his wife, doña María Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte. This methodology includes examination of institutional backing, identification of targeted audiences, and analysis of the conveyed messages, and scrutiny of its visual elements, all while maintaining fidelity to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The thesis employs a comprehensive methodology to identify the reredos as a work of propaganda, examining its backing by institutional support, targeted audiences, messages conveyed, and its visual elements to reveal its complex layers of religious and political significance. Through this analysis, the research sheds light on the dual purpose of the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light,* illustrating its role as a powerful cultural, spiritual and political artifact.

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Dedication

Para Mi Familia

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Reredos of Our Lady Light* (Fig. 1) is an imposing work of art by any standard, especially when it was first created. The stone monument, unlike anything seen in Colonial New Mexico, served as a sign of stability and permanence in the region. Its ornate engravings and reliefs would have reminded immigrant audiences of their home churches in other parts of the Spanish Empire.[1] The size of the reredos would have humbled the viewer, showing the wealth and strength of both the Church and its political patrons. The work would have left an indelible impression on the viewer who saw the nearly life-sized saints surrounding the altar during Holy Mass and other religious ceremonies, especially as they heard homilies, prayed, chanted, and participated in communion with their family and brethren before the reredos. By praying before figures of God, the Holy Mother, and the saints in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, the worshipers would have spoken directly to the deity or being whose image is depicted in the work of art. These beliefs were powerful to the faithful beholder and were used to impact all parts of their lives, from healing a loved one, helping them find a lost animal, and to giving them strength to overcome an obstacle. Being the focal point of the military chapel, the artist, Bernardo Miera y Pacheco (1713-1785), and patrons Governor Francisco Antonio Marín del Valle and his wife, Maria Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte utilized well-known iconography to promote political propaganda messages in addition to Catholic teachings. Each of the saints depicted in the reredos provide specific propaganda messages: historical, spiritual, and political messages to its intended audiences and drives them to take action for both the state and the Roman Catholic Church.

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[1] Robin Farewell Gavin and Donna Pierce, "The Altar Screens of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco," edited by Josef Díaz, *The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco: New Spain's Explorer, Cartographer, and Artist (*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press. 2013), 71

Additionally, the reredos is the only known example of a monumental work of art sponsored by a named woman in Colonial New Mexico during this time. This fact adds another critical layer to the work and to the propaganda it espoused.

In order to understand the reredos and its meaning, one must first be familiar with the historical context in which it was created. In the northern recesses of what was once the territory of New Spain (Fig. 2), controlled by the Spanish Empire in what is now the American Southwest, lies an arid region marked by its striking, yet desolate and treacherous terrain. The first Spanish explorers entered the region in the sixteenth century, seeking treasures and riches, including the fabled "Seven Cities of Gold."[2] While the land lacked gold and other resources coveted by Europeans, the Spanish settled and colonized the area known as New Mexico. Despite its clear challenges, they did this for a variety of reasons, including to increase their territories in the new world; to prevent encroachment from their European rivals, such as England and France; and to expand their trade networks. Most importantly, the Spanish viewed New Mexico as a new mission field to spread the Christian faith.

Throughout the colonial period of New Mexico, the Spanish made a concerted effort to build churches and establish schools for immigrants and their new converts to worship and learn.[3] The Spanish settlers, like Christians throughout history, utilized holy images to aid in their communal and private worship. Most of the art that made its way into Colonial New Mexico at this time was created and shipped directly from Colonial Mexico. However, due to the extreme

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[2] The "Seven Cities of Gold," also known as the Seven Cities of Cibola or Antillia, were believed to contain vast amounts of gold and other riches. Legend held that in the year 714, seven Portuguese bishops fled Muslim invasion with their clergy and Church members and established wealthy communities, that had broad streets lined with shops that sold the finest goods, and large, multi-level houses; John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross and Crown* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 5.

[3] Scholars generally place the period of Colonial New Mexico between the early expeditions of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1540 until the time of Mexican independence from Spain in 1821.

distance, isolation and the various dangers that lay between Colonial Mexico and Colonial New Mexico, including attacks from native groups, art, even holy art, was seen as a luxury that could rarely be afforded. During this time, a journey from Chihuahua, Mexico, one of the closest metropolitan areas to Santa Fe, New Mexico could take up to five months since there were no highways or navigable waters.[4] Thus, traders and those making the perilous trek were focused on supplying more important provisions, such as clothing, food, mail, prayer books, seeds, tools, and weapons. As it was nearly impossible for settlers to transport the large oil paintings and sculptures undamaged from Europe and Mexico, necessity helped establish what is now the most widely known and unique forms of art to come out of Colonial New Mexico: the *santos*.

Santos are devotional works of art created for private homes and public places of worship alike, featuring holy figures and scenes. The term santos can refer to *bultos*, or statues, flat paintings and altar pieces known as *retablos. Santos* also appear on other religious furnishings, including screens or panels located behind the altar known as reredos, all of which were created with the intention of helping facilitate both private and communal worship and prayer.[5] As with other devotional art forms found throughout Christian history, *santos* were, and are today, used to draw people closer to the divine. Noted expert William Wroth wrote that images "inspire the faithful in emulation of the virtues of the personage depicted and to provide a channel of grace."[6]

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[4] Thomas J. Steele S.J., *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico (*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2021), 18.

[5] Unlike the words "*bultos*" and "*retablos*," "reredos" is not a Spanish word, but instead comes from Middle English, and was first used in the fourteenth-century. Farwell, 95.

[6] William Wroth, *Christian Images in Hispanic New Mexico,* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1982), 3.

It was this need to inspire, teach, and channel grace to the faithful that brought about the santos, and their creators, the *santeros*.

Santeros often had no or limited formal artistic training and struggled with form and perspective. E. Boyd wrote that the *santos* were "copies" of original works of art.[7] Their goal was to imitate what they had seen and experienced in the art from Europe and the South, including paintings, sculptures, *retablos*, and prints.[8] They did this by using local materials, with early examples of *santos* being painted on buffalo and elk hide, to later *retablos* and *bultos* being made of local woods like pine and cottonwood, animal glue, gesso and painted with homemade watercolors.[9] The lack of formal training explains why the art appears less naturalistic; however, the goal of the *santero* was not to accurately depict people, nature, or the material world. This was acceptable and even expected of the people of Colonial New Mexico who believed that the art was not a reflection of the world, but a prototype of the holy and divine.[10] This holy and mystical power surrounding the art was further imbued by the *santeros* themselves who were distinguished in their communities by their personal piety and devotion. Thomas J. Steele argues that since *santeros* were exclusively creating "an intrinsically sacred and powerful artifact," they "needed to possess personal sanctity and even quasi-priestly character."[11]

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[7] Boyd, E. *Saint & Saint Makers of New Mexico, (*Santa Fe, New Mexico: Western Edge Press, 1998), 5.

[8] Steele, S.J., Thomas J. *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico,* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1994), 2.

[9] Farago, 138-144; Steele, S.J., Thomas J. *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico (*Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith), 1994: 26.

[10] Steele, *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico,* 2.

[11] Steele, *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico,* 11.

While the majority of *santos* were likely created and used exclusively for religious purposes, there are examples of the art form being used to convey political messages as seen in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*. This thesis focuses on unraveling the political messages embedded in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, a monumental work of art commissioned in 1761 for the Chapel of Our Lady of Light. The chapel, better known as La Castrense, was a military chapel built in the heart of Santa Fe. The patrons of this remarkable reredos, Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte, sought to communicate distinct propaganda messages through this work, especially to remind and inspire viewers of their role in the territory as defenders of the faith and the Spanish Crown.

The reredos was created by Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte's friend, pious political advisor, and artist, Bernardo Miera y Pacheco. The masterwork incorporates unique features, such as the use of volcanic stone, detailed bas-relief carvings, and a diverse array of holy figures. Notably, the reredos includes an inscription crediting both Governor Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte for the commission, a significant departure from traditional attributions. This act of joint patronage, particularly one that includes the name of a woman, carries political implications about the active political role of women, the likes of which were unheard of in Colonial New Mexico.

During the eighteenth century there was no separation of church and state in New Spain. The Crown, the secular rulers of the region, the church and its clerics were inextricably linked to one another. These blurred lines of power caused consternation, confusion, and struggles for power amongst the various peoples and leaders in the region. However, while the Spanish king was the ultimate authority in the Spanish Empire, the clergy, first the Franciscans then the

Jesuits, had an upper hand as they had direct control of the most important parts of life in Colonial New Mexico, from education to overseeing the administration of the sacraments. Historian Mitchell Wilder explains "as in Old Mexico, life began and ended with the blessing of the *padre*, and it was only proper that this eminent man should be the guide during the years between."[12]

To fully comprehend the political imagery contained within the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light,* one must first understand the history of the region during the eighteenth century, including the different groups of peoples who were often at odds with one another. These groups included secular government, military officials, and the clergy, who were usually *peninsulares*, or individuals from the Iberian Peninsula. There were also *criollos*, or those Spaniards who were born in the Americas, indigenous people, as well as *mestizos*, or people of mixed race. These individuals would have viewed a work like the reredos from different perspectives and would have been targeted with different forms of propaganda by the patrons of the reredos.

These blurred lines of power between empire and church are seen throughout Mira's *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* The reredos itself is a low relief monolithic that stands over 25 feet high and 18 feet wide and weighs an estimated 225 tons.[13] While most reredos and altar pieces were made of locally sourced wood, Mira's piece is made of volcanic stone, quarried from land near the Nambe Pueblo in Colonial New Mexico.[14] The reredos features three layers of now

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[12] Mitchell A. Wilder, *Santos: The Religious Folk Art of New Mexico* (New York City, NY: Marchbanks Press, 1943), 20.

[13] Romero Cash, Marie. *Santos: Enduring Images of Northern New Mexico Village Churches*. Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado. 1999: 34.

[14] Eleanor B. Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light in Santa Fe," *New Mexico Historical Review* 22, 4 (1947): 337.

faded polychrome holy images carved in bas-relief. At the top of the reredos is an image of God the Father, wearing the three-tiered papal crown looking down on Our Lady of Valvanera. The original sculpture of Our Lady of Valvanera was believed to have been carved by Saint Luke, and it was hidden in a tree during the Muslim conquest of Spain.[15] The middle tier shows Santiago Matamoros, the patron of Spain and the Spanish military. The image of Santiago is flanked by the images of St. Joseph, the patron saint of the Spanish Empire, carrying the Holy Child on the left, and St. John Nepomuck of Bohemia, a martyred missionary honored by the Jesuits on the right. The lowest tier originally featured a large oil painting of *Our Lady of Light* (Fig. 3) by Miguel Cabrera from Mexico City, which was later removed by Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy (1814-1888) and given to the Sisters of Loretto, a catholic community of nuns who moved to New Mexico in the late nineteenth century and started a school known as Our Lady of Light Academy.[16] The sisters donated the painting to the Spanish Colonial Arts Society in 2022.[17] In place of the painting is a stone carving of *Our Lady of Light* which was originally placed over the door of the Castrense. To the left of *Our Lady of Light* is a carving of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits. And, finally, to the right of Our Lady

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[15] Josef Díaz, *The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco: New Spain's Explorer, Cartographer, and Artist (*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press. 2013), 9.

[16] "Loretto in New Mexico – the journey continues!" Loretto Community, posted September 26, 2022, https://www.lorettocommunity.org/loretto-in-new-mexico-the-journey-continues/.

[17] Donna Pierce, "About the Permanent Collection," *Spanish Colonial Arts Society*, Accessed March 21, 2023. https://www.spanishcolonial.org/permanent-collection-detail/.

is the great Franciscan missionary, St. Francis Solano preaching to a group of Native Americans.[18]

The intricate carvings and painting are direct copies of various engravings, paintings and sculptures that were disseminated throughout the Spanish Empire during this time. For instance, the image of Our Lady of Valvanera is likely to be taken directly from engravings of the image that were found in publications throughout the Empire.[19] The reredos, like many religious pieces made in Colonial New Mexico borrowed heavily from the elaborate Baroque style, which was popular in Europe and the Spanish Empire during in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and with which Miera y Pacheco was familiar from his youth in Spain.[20] Surrounding the holy images are carved columns of flora and fauna, with vases and the heads of cherubs in the *estipite* style, which is where the shaft is wider in the middle than at the top or base.[21]

A key aspect of the reredos that is unique is the inscription found at the foot of the reredos honoring the patrons: "By the devotion of don Francisco Anton Marín de Valle, governor and captain general of this kingdom, and his wife, doña Maria Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte in the

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[18] In addition the reredos was an altar made of the same stone and engravings matching the reredos. In the center of the high altar front was a carving of St. Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child, and other works made of the same stone, including side altars. Given the lack of research about these pieces, they are not further explored in this thesis. Fragments of the frontal of the high altar can be found at the Museum of International Folk Art, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

[19] William Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros of the Nineteenth Century," *The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco: New Spain's Explorer, Cartographer, and Artist*, edited by Josef Díaz, (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press. 2013), 105.

[20] Miera y Pacheco was born in Cantabria, Spain, and was likely familiar with religious art from the late-Baroque period, including the altar screen in the Chapel of Santa Tecla of the Burgos Cathedral in Burgos, Spain. In The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, historians Robin Farwell and Donna Pierce have written about how religious works in Spain and Mexico inspired Miera y Pacheco, and whose elements can be seen in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

[21] Romero Cash, Marie. *Santos: Enduring Images of Northern New Mexico Village Churches* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 34.

Christian Year 1761."[22] The inscription overtly connects the religious and political by stating that it was a gift from the governor and captain general, and more surprisingly, his wife. The co-commissioning of such a monumental work by a woman at the time and in this region was unusual, but the fact that she is credited for the commission is remarkable. Like so many details included in the reredos and surrounding its creation, this attribution has not been examined in detail.

This thesis embarks on a comprehensive analysis of the iconography, imagery, history and political messages embedded in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*. It contextualizes the artwork within the broader genre of santos in Colonial New Mexico, explores the roles of the artist and patrons, and uncovers the political undercurrents that flow through this monumental piece. While some academic articles have touched on the reredos, a holistic study of the political messages it conveys remains a scholarly gap, making this research both timely and essential to understanding the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*.

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[22] "*A devocion de Senor Dn Fco Anton Marín del Valle, gobernador y capitan general de este reino. Y de su esposa Dna Maria Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte Ano Christiano 1761.*" Translation by Owen K. Medina Loftus.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

Despite the rich history of *santeros*, and the critical role this art form played in the development of what we now know as the American Southwest, it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that scholars began to seriously investigate *santos*, the artists behind them, and the political, religious, and cultural framework in which they were created. Given the somewhat delayed academic interest in *santos* and *santeros*, there is still much that needs to be understood about these culturally significant works of art. This includes uncovering the messages the *santeros* and their patrons were attempting to convey in works like the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*. Nevertheless, it is by building upon the research already conducted on *santos*; Colonial New Mexico; the Chapel of Our Lady of Light; biographical information about the artist and patrons; information about the reredos itself; and propaganda in art, that a clearer understanding of the work becomes known. Despite the relatively recent interest in *santos* and *santeros*, there is a wealth of scholarship and resources available from other fields, such as theology and history, that help shed light on the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

History of *Santos*

Despite the relatively recent interest in *santos*, art historians have been diligently working over the past few decades to catalogue the works of *santeros* from the Colonial Period, and to explore how they were made and used. One of the first scholars to investigate the creation of *santos* and *santeros* was E. Boyd. Her classic book, *Saints & Saint Makers of New Mexico,* was published in 1946 and was the first popular book devoted entirely to the *santos* and *santeros*.[23] The book remains a foundational text for anyone interested in the history of *santos.* In most of

[23] E. Boyd, *Saint & Saint Makers of New Mexico (*Santa Fe, New Mexico: Western Edge Press, 1998).

her writings, Boyd spends a great deal of attention looking at how the various *santos* were made and who created them. Boyd was one of the first art historians to make many important discoveries about the *santos* of Colonial New Mexico. For instance, she found that religious figures painted on various types of hides, including bison, deer and elk, were from New Mexico. Though many disputed this claim, recent research has proven that she was correct.[24] She was also the earliest art historian to claim that the *santeros* of Colonial New Mexico were not made by amateurs, but, instead, the majority were likely made by professionals who earned a living by creating these works of art.[25] Boyd argued that some *santeros*, including the famed José Aragon had *escultérías*, or workshops, where he served as the master artisan over apprentices.[26] Throughout her career, Boyd focused on providing the important contextual information necessary to understand the *santos* of Colonial New Mexico, why they were created, who created them, and when the works were created. Boyd does not spend much time exploring the imagery, symbolism, or the meaning behind the art. However, her research was pivotal to helping viewers identify saints through various bodily features, clothing, and other symbols. This resource has been critical as many of the saints depicted by *santeros* appear to be similar.

While not the focus of her work, Boyd fully understood the power behind *santos*. Boyd noted that individuals usually commissioned a *santero* to create a particular *santo,* to serve as "a symbol of the invisible power of holy personage to whom an individual's prayers were

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[24] E. Boyd, *Saint & Saint Makers of New Mexico,* 25; Claire Farago and Donna Pierce, *Transforming Images: New Mexican Santos In-Between Worlds* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 138-144.

[25] Boyd, *Saint & Saint Makers of New Mexico,* 19.

[26] E. Boyd, *New Mexico Santos: Religious Images in the Spanish New World (*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1995), 19.

addressed."[27] This information is critical to understanding why Catholics throughout Colonial New Mexico held devotion to certain saints, including some of those featured in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*.

Spiritual Role of *Santos*

An additional book about the history of *santos* and *santeros* of Colonial New Mexico is by Father Thomas J. Steele, S.J. The book, *Santos and Saints the Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico*, has been reprinted and undergone several revisions over the years.[28] The work is distinguished for not only providing background information about certain works of art and the artists, but also because Steele, a Jesuit priest and professor of English who curated his own collection of *santos* until his death in 2010, masterfully explains why *santos* were so important to the people of Colonial New Mexico. Unlike Boyd and other writers, Steele writes extensively about the meaning behind various works. For instance, Steele found that the *santos* served "as a dependent entity that shared the being, holiness, power, intelligibility, beauty, life, and purpose of its model."[29] Later, Steele claimed that art of the *santeros*, similar to Orthodox icons, were not seen as just a work of art, but that they could be used for "magico-religious" purposes, allowing the viewer to "exert a powerful persuasive force on the sacred powers – the God of the New Mexican Hispanics, along with his saints – that control the world."[30] The notion was believed by

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[27] Boyd, *New Mexico Santos: Religious Images in the Spanish New World*, 2.

[28] Thomas J. Steele S.J., *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico (*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2021); Steele, Preface.

[29] Steele, 2.

[30] Steele, 6.

people throughout Colonial New Mexico, as attested by the hundreds of works found throughout the region.

The literature surrounding the spiritual power behind *santos* is abundant. Art historian Larry Frank explains the spiritual aspect of the art.[31] The forward of the book states that each *santo* includes the spirit of the saint in heaven, as well as the associated powers.[32] These images, including those in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* were not simply used to beautify a space, nor were they only used to aid in prayer or meditation. Instead, they were, and are, believed to be portals to the heavens. In a similar manner, William Worth added an extra layer to the discussions about the importance of *santos* and how they were used by their viewers in Colonial New Mexico, writing "[t]he purpose of the sacred image is to provide a model of deified man for the faithful – and particularly the intent spiritual speaker – to follow."[33] Thus, Wroth argues that focusing on saints, such as Saint Francis Solano, might help the viewer emulate his works of charity, and meditating on an image of Saint Joseph could remind the viewers to accept the challenges in their lives and trust in God's providence. These themes will be explored further in the analysis chapter of this thesis.

To fully understand the history, importance, and power of *santos* and *santeros,* one also must understand the holy figures they represent and the history and stories behind them. Scholars from a variety of branches of academia have long studied the lives of the saints, their writings,

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[31] Larry Frank, *New Kingdom of the Saints: Religious Art of New Mexico 1780-1907* (Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 2004).

[32] Frank, xi.

[33] William Wroth, *Christian Images in Hispanic New Mexico,* Seattle (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1982), 8.

their place in art, patronages, and how and why they are invoked by the faithful. This research is critical to understanding the propaganda behind a piece like the *Reredos in Our Lady of Light* and has been incorporated into the analysis of this thesis. Works such as William Farina's *Saint James the Greater in History, Art and Culture* explores how Saint James, also known as Santiago, rose to be the central figure in Spain, and helps explain why the saint's likeness as *matramoros* was given a position of honor in Miera y Pacheco's *reredos*.[34] Likewise, there are many articles and books about the cult of the Virgin Mary and how she has been portrayed in art throughout history, which explore the variety of ways she was depicted and honored, including as the Virgin of Our Lady of Light and the Lady of Guadalupe. Books like *The Virgin in Art* provide a comprehensive exploration depictions of Mary throughout the ages.[35] This research also provides context and information as to why Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte dedicate the Castrense to the Mother of Light, rather than to other more prominent depictions, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe, or the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception.

History of New Mexico

In addition to the works relating to the history of *Santos* and *santeros,* there is a wealth of research regarding the history of New Mexico, specifically Colonial New Mexico. One of the leading scholars and experts in this area is John Kessell, professor emeritus at the University of New Mexico, whose voluminous catalog of works have covered everything related to the history. Kessell's research helps explain the unique cultural, economic, political, and religious dynamics

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[34] William Farina, *Saint James the Greater in History, Art and Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2018); Farina, 24.

[35] Kyra Belán, *The Virgin in Art*, (New York City, New York: Parkstone International, 2018).

of the isolated and disconnected territory of New Spain. Two of his works specifically provided the historical context needed to fully analyze the reredos. In *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776*, Kessell provides a detailed overview of the Castrense, from its construction to its ultimate deconsecration in the late 1850s.[36] His classic, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown* provides an overview of the history of the region, and specifically explains the interplay between politics and religion, especially in the light of colonialism.[37] These works help illuminate the political and religious dynamics that led to the founding of the Castrense and the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

There are several primary sources that art historians use when studying the artifacts that were found in the churches of Colonial New Mexico. One is *The Missions of New Mexico 1776* written by Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez and translated by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angélico Chávez.[38] Domínguez joined Miera y Pacheco and Fray Silvestre Vélez de Escalante as the canonical inspector of the Missions of New Mexico. This work is critically important to this thesis because it informs the reader about life in the church communities, such as feast days and confraternities, as well as some gossip about the Franciscan clergy, and, most importantly for this project, the contents of the various missions, including the *santos* mentioned within its pages. For instance, in the section of Villa of Santa Fe, Domínguez describes the architecture of the church, its furnishings, and important pieces of art, such as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*.[39] Another important firsthand account about the chapel and *reredos* is Pedro Tamarón y Romeral's

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[36] John L. Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2012), 44-49.

[37] John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross and Crown*.

[38] Eleanor B. Adams, and Fray Angélico Chávez, *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776 (*Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2012).

[39] Adams, 34-35.

journal entry.[40] Tamarón was the bishop of Durango, which included Colonial New Mexico in its jurisdiction. As bishop, Tamarón wrote about his time in Santa Fe, and wrote favorably about the chapel and its dedication, over which he presided.[41] These firsthand accounts not only help highlight some of the political and economic strife that was going on throughout Colonial New Mexico.

La Castrense and the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*

Unfortunately, like many of the churches and missions built during the colonial period, the Chapel of Our Lady of Light is no longer standing, though the original reredos was saved.[42] Research about the chapel is relatively light; however, most of the books regarding the art of Colonial New Mexico, and *santos,* and *santeros*, including those by Boyd, Frank, Steele, Wroth at least mention the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, if not further explain its contribution to the development of *santos* as a form of art. The available literature dedicated to *La Castrense* and the *reredos* depicts the structure as being gems in the heart of Santa Fe. One of the earliest studies on the chapel was written by historian Alexander von Wuthenau, which was published in the *New Mexico Historical Review* in 1935, prior to the *reredos* being moved to its current location at Cristo Rey Church from the cathedral of Santa Fe. In the article, von Wuthenau delicately explains the history of the structure and the *reredos,* stating the reredos "outshines every other

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[40] Marc Trieb, *Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 114-115.

[41] Trieb, 112.

[42] John L. Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776*, 48.

relic that has come to us from those times."[43] Von Wuthenau provides translations of first-hand accounts of the chapel and the *reredos,* including documents from the chapel's dedication. Despite the valuable information included, it is out of date, as demonstrated by von Wuthenau's assertion that the artist of the *reredos* was unknown.[44] The fact that it was not until relatively recently that art historians Donna Pierce and Felipe Mirabal revealed that Miera y Pacheco designed and executed the *reredos*.[45] In "The Altar Screens of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco," Robin Farwell Gavin and Pierce explore the vast and artistically significant altar pieces by Miera y Pacheco, specifically the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* The essay includes research about the history of the *reredos,* how it was constructed*,* the materials used, and iconography. The essay also attempts to connect the *reredos* to other altar screens that might have inspired Miera y Pacheco, which he could have encountered in Spain and other parts of New Spain. Another essay in the volume by William Wroth explores iconography that likely inspired Miera y Pacheco's *reredos* and the art of other *santeros.* Though these articles provide foundational information about the reredos, its history, and how it was created, there has been no study on the messages that Miera y Pacheco and his patrons meant to impart on the viewer. Understanding Miera y Pacheco and his patrons, Francisco Antonio Marín del Valle, Governor and Captain General of Colonial New Mexico, and his wife, Maria Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte de Ugarte will further illuminate the propaganda messages contain within the reredos.

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[43] Alexander von Wuthenau. "The Spanish Military Chapels in Santa Fe and the Reredos of Our Lady of Light," New Mexico Historical Review, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1935), 8.

[44] von Wuthenau, 8.

[45] Farwell Gavin, 71.

Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte

As previously mentioned, one of the most consequential books that has aided in the research of the artist is *The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco.* The book provides insight into the complexities of Miera y Pacheco, including the political, military, and religious roles he played in Colonial New Mexico. Miera y Pacheco was born in Spain in the 18th century. Amongst his many jobs, including cartographer, military leader, politician, and rancher, Miera y Pacheco was an accomplished *santero* who was commissioned to create many important works of art, including the altar screen dedicated at the former chapel of Our Lady of Light. The church was commissioned by Marín del Valle toward the end of his administration. Marín del Valle chose the church to replace a previous military chapel, and personally selected his friend Miera y Pacheco to make the altar screen.[46] In addition to being close to politicians like Marín del Valle, Miera y Pacheco was someone who held powerful offices himself, including as a military officer who was rewarded for his efforts on the battlefield and work on behalf of the crown and local governments.

Similarly, in his biography, *Miera y Pacheco: Renaissance Spaniard in Eighteenth-Century New Mexico,* Kessell writes about the life of Miera y Pacheco from his hometown of Cantabria, Spain to his death in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The book provides firsthand accounts of Miera y Pacheco's life, his artistic commissions, and the behind the scenes influences on his artwork, including the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* Miera y Pacheco included many important symbols relating to Spain, the crown, and military authority, such as a statue of Saint James. He

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[46] Thomas E. Chávez, "'Because within Me There Burns a Desire': Bernardo Miera Y Pacheco a Life and Times," *The Art & Legacy of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco: New Spain's Explorer, Cartographer, and Artist,* edited by Josef Díaz, *(*Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press. 2013), 17.

created many other pieces of art for churches and Pueblo missions throughout Colonial New Mexico and is credited with being one of the first artists to bring Baroque style to New Mexico, making changes to suit the provincial tastes of the region.[47] A key component of the Castrense was its *confradía*, or confraternity, devoted to "the greatest and most permanent cult of Most Holy Mary, with the advocation of Light, and to the suffrage to the souls of its deceased brethren."[48] In the Roman Catholic Church, confraternities are organizations for lay people dedicated to service, prayer, and living pious lives. In Colonial New Mexico, these brotherhoods were based on similar organizations in Spain and Mexico.[49]

Regrettably, little is known about Marín del Valle; however, his substantial impact on Colonial New Mexico is documented. In addition to his political and military roles, he is mentioned in the majority of studies surrounding the building of the chapel, and many of his actions are outlined throughout the literature in this review. A notable aspect of Marín del Valle's life is his dedication to the "Most Holy Mother of Light." In addition to sponsoring the construction of the Castrense and the reredos with his wife, Marín del Valle dedicated the Confraternity of Our Lady of Light, and served as the brotherhood's first *"Hermano Mayor*," or president. Confraternities, or brotherhoods were prevalent throughout the Spanish Empire.[50] Elizabeth Adams shed light on the significant role that Marín del Valle had on the Confraternity

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[47] Farwell Gavin, 66.

[48] Adams, 330.

[49] Michael P. Carroll, *The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 5.

[50] Trieb, 112.

of Our Lady of Light and how it affected the Castrense.[51] Additionally, the book, *The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico,* provides additional historical information about confraternities, specifically *penitente*, and their influence on New Mexico, especially in relation to *santos*. Carroll's work, while contributing to the discourse on art, provides an additional layer of context about Marín del Valle, the church community, his confraternity, as well as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* and the propaganda it espoused.

Compared to her husband, even less is known about Martinez de Ugarte. Wroth has written the extant of what is known, including that Martinez de Ugarte's father was Jacinto Martinez y Aguirre, one of the wealthiest merchants of Mexico City, and that the Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte arrived in Colonial New Mexico with "the finest clothing, jewelry, and furnishings they could bring with them."[52] While information about both is lacking, details about their political and religious beliefs can be gleaned from the *reredos* itself. Specifically, toward the bottom of the *reredos* is an inscription informing the viewer that the chapel itself was dedicated by both Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte. Mentioning a woman as a patron is rare anywhere in the world at this time, but it is unheard of in Colonial New Mexico. While there are no known details surrounding Martinez de Ugarte's reasoning for being named as co-patron with her husband, art historians have explored other instances of women patrons, including in Noelia García Pérez's *The Making of Juana of Austria: Gender, Art, and Patronage in Early Modern Iberia,* which is a compilation of essays regarding the Princess of Portugal's role as

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[51] Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light."

[52] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 122.

supporter and patron of the arts.[53] Another book on the subject of female patronage of the arts is *Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home 1492-1898.*[54] This is an exhibition catalogue with a collection of essays about how women in the Spanish Americas supported arts in order to draw attention to their wealth and prestige, and also for their personal political benefit. These books showcase how women patrons throughout Spain and New Spain were more known for supporting smaller pieces of art and furniture, usually for the home, than for larger public works of art, such as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* These and other articles on the subject also highlight another critical point: In addition to advancing personal political and faith messages, or displaying wealth, female patrons were also taste makers.

Propaganda

Besides utilizing literature discussing the spiritual power of art, a couple of pieces reviewed for this thesis delve into the temporal realm and the political power of art, especially propaganda. Tuttle Ross's "Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art" for the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, provides valuable insight into the history of governments using power, starting with the Vatican's Congregio de Propoganda. Tuttle Ross's definition of "propaganda," includes four elements: an "epistemically defective message," intent to persuade, a targeted audience, and the backing of a political institution or organization.[55] By examining the creative context of the *reredos*, it is possible to unravel the political messages

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[53] Noelia García Pérez, *The Making of Juana of Austria: Gender, Art, and Patronage in Early Modern Iberia,* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2021.)

[54] Richard Aste, *Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home, 1492-1898,* (New York City, NY: The Monacelli Press, 2013.)

[55] Sheryl Tuttle Ross, "Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 36, no. 1 (2002): 28.

communicated through the artwork's visual language and symbolism by the patrons and the artist. Another important work is Evonne Levy's *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque.* Throughout the book, Levy investigates the meaning of propaganda, how it has been used in the arts and elsewhere, and specifically how Jesuits employed propaganda tactics to achieve their goals in Europe and throughout the rest of their mission field: the world. Levy not only explores the power of propaganda in art, but provides a variety of examples of how Jesuits utilized art and churches for propaganda purposes. On a similar note, Jean Halgren Kilde's book, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space* surveys how church architecture exudes divine, social, and personal power and authority.[56] Halgren Kilde argues that these forms of power were built into churches throughout the history of Christianity. These forms of power are also on full displace within *La Castrense* and the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

Several scholars have investigated political messages in *santos*. A modern index of the *santos* in New Mexico is *Santos: Enduring Images of Northern New Mexican Village Churches* by Marie Romero Cash.[57] In the book, Romero Cash identified, measured, examined, and photographed more than 500 *retablos* in churches, chapels, museums, and even the *moradas*, or the chapter house of penitent brotherhoods, members of which are known, in part, for marking Holy Week with forms of corporal punishment. The book is important for many reasons, not the least of these is the number of *santos* included, and because it shows the dual purposes of these artifacts. While religious artifacts were created for religious reasons, there were often ulterior, political reasons. One example that Romero Cash cites is a popular wooden statue of the *Our*

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[56] Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*, (New York City, New York: Oxford Press, 2008).

[57] Marie Romero Cash. *Santos: Enduring Images of Northern New Mexican Village Churches,* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1999).

Lady of the Rosary, better known as *Nuestra Señora del Rosario la Conquistadora*, or *La Conquistadora,* as it is known by the locals in Santa Fe. Romero Cash and other historians, including Fray Angelico Chavez, argue that though originally a religious symbol, the *La Conquistadora* took on the political significance following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 when Captain-General Don Diego de Vargas promised to build a chapel for the Virgin should he be granted a quick and stable victory.[58] Since then, *La Conquistadora* has been seen as a symbol of the triumph of Spain and Christianity over the pagan Pueblo Indians of Colonial New Mexico. Other scholars have written about how *santos*, such as the Archangel Gabriel, Saint Ferdinand, and the Virgin of Guadalupe exuded political messages to the people of Colonial New Mexico.[59] Following the approaches taken in this scholarship, an analysis of the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* will explore the propaganda messages being shared with its viewers through the various saints and iconography incorporated.

Though scholars might be left wanting when it comes to the amount of research available on *santos* and *santeros*, especially critically important works such as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, there is a wealth of resources that can be effectively utilized to help better understand and further explore this monumental work of art. By investigating established research relating to *santos*; the history of Colonial New Mexico; the Chapel of Our Lady of Light; the artist and patrons; the *reredos* itself; and propaganda in art, one will be able to clearly see the propaganda included in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

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[58] Fray Angelico Chavez, "Nuestra Senora Del Rosario, La Conquistadra," *New Mexico Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (1948): 94-95.

[59] Farago, 26-43, 58-61.

Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this thesis comprehensively explores the religious and political dimensions of the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* by combining historical analysis and theoretical frameworks, starting with the definition of propaganda. This definition serves as the organizational structure of the analysis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the reredos and the propaganda the artist and patrons intended to convey.

While there is some variation in opinion, scholars have generally agreed upon the critical components needed for something to be considered propaganda. For the purposes of this thesis, three criteria have been identified before a work of art, such as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light,* can be considered propaganda. These criteria are based on the writings of art historian Evonne Levy and philosopher Sheryl Tuttle Ross, including having the backing of a political institution or organizations, that it must be directed toward a significant audience, and that it must promote a message and pursued the viewer into taking action.[60] The following section of the methodology briefly explores each of the components contained within this definition.

In order for a work of art to be considered propaganda, it first must have the backing of a political institution or organization. This means that there is a messenger disseminating messages on behalf of a political institution or organization.[61] Tuttle Ross wrote that the messenger must have some sort of political position.[62] In the case of the reredos, the messengers were the

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[60] Evonne Levy. *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Sheryl Tuttle Ross, "Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 36, no. 1 (2002).

[61] Tuttle Ross, 19.

[62] Tuttle Ross, 20.

governor and captain general of Colonial New Mexico and the Roman Catholic Church who were intent on advancing their religious and political agendas.

The second criteria that must be met before a work of art can be considered a form of propaganda is that it must be directed toward a significant targeted audience. That is, the work needs to reach either a large audience, or, if it is a smaller audience, it must be of great importance. In terms of the reredos, Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte were able to reach both by driving attention to clergy, military members, and the general Catholic population of Colonial New Mexico.

Finally, if an artwork is to be deemed propaganda, it is necessary that it not only be persuasive in promoting a message, but it must drive the viewer to take some sort of action. Example of actions that could be taken can range everywhere from encouraging someone to pray and amend their lives, to giving their life to join a holy order or fighting for the Church and empire.[63] Levy wrote the following of a work of art that make demands: "It is the annunciator, the self-reflexive moment of ideology: in saying 'I am,' propaganda demands that 'you are' as well. Art that functions as propagandas is making visible of the call of the subjects to the mirror."[64] These deeply held beliefs extended beyond the confines of the chapel and permeated many aspects of the viewers' lives, whether working in the mission field or on the battlefield, the connection established with the divine through this monumental artwork was profound and transformative.

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[63] Both Levy and Tuttle identify criteria in their respective definitions of propaganda that are not included in this thesis, such as Tuttle's argument that propaganda must have an "epistemically defective message." This was not included in the current definition as propaganda is not inherently defective. Other arguments, such as Levy's argument that a work should "confuse and overwhelm" is not included in the definition.

[64] Levy, 117.

Furthermore, the methodological framework mentioned above, other research methods are interspersed throughout the analysis, such as historical and religious contextualization, which provide background vital to understanding the Castrense, the iconography incorporated into the reredos and how the people of Colonial New Mexico would have perceived some of the images within the reredos. Likewise, the propaganda message is strengthened when looking at it from ontological and phenomenological approaches. The size of the *reredos* would have humbled the viewer, showing the wealth and strength of both the Church and its political patrons. The work likely would have left an indelible impression on the viewer who saw the nearly life-sized saints surrounding the altar during Holy Mass and other religious ceremonies, especially as they heard homilies, prayed, chanted, and participated in communion with their peers before the *reredos.* By praying before figures of God, the Holy Mother, and the saints in the monumental *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, the worshipers spoke directly to the deity or being whose image is depicted in the work of art. By facing the *reredos* during Holy Mass, participants take part in holy rituals in the presence of these holy figures. These beliefs were powerful to the beholder, and were used to impact all parts of their lives, from healing a loved one, helping them find a lost animal, to giving them strength to overcome an obstacle. And, given that there are so many images within the reredos, a comparative analysis was also used. This comparative analysis involved examining other religious artworks of the period in Colonial New Mexico, as well as comparing the various reliefs with one another. This process identified shared themes, motifs, and iconographic choices, providing a broader artistic context. The assessment highlighted the propaganda messages included within the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*

Chapter 3: Messenger

As the focal point of the military chapel, Miera y Pacheco masterfully harnessed established iconography to promote the propaganda messages of Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte while remaining faithful to Catholic teachings. *The Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, with its fusion of religious symbolism and political messaging, stood as an embodiment of their vision, serving as a potent tool in shaping perceptions, reinforcing beliefs, and driving its audience to take action in support of the faith and the Spanish Empire. The reredos meets all the conditions described in the methodology for being a work of propaganda, starting with its backing by an institution or organization.

Whether the reredos had the backing of an institution or organization is not in doubt, as it was funded by the head of Colonial New Mexico's government and military and had the support of the Roman Catholic Church. The Castrense, its confraternity, and the reredos itself were sponsored by don Francisco Marín de Valle, governor and captain general of Colonial New Mexico from 1756-1760, and his wealthy wife, doña María Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte.[65] Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte spent around 8,000 pesos to have the chapel built on a prominent site near the Governor's Palace in Santa Fe.[66] In addition to funding the project Marín del Valle, likely with the support and input of Martinez de Ugarte, oversaw every aspect of the Castrense, including its location, the design and building of the church and its various furnishings. The couple even selected their dear friend Miera y Pacheco, a well-known and

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[65] Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*, 54; Franciscan Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez wrote that Marín del Valle "displayed the glowing fervent ardor of devotion to Our Lady and Mother of Light by his plan to a chapel for her in this Villa of Santa Fe." Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light," 328-329.

[66] Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776*, 44.

devout artist, cartographer, rancher, and politician to design and carve the central reredos in the church, the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.*[67]

The fact that Marín del Valle was so involved throughout the process helps explain why every component of the Castrense is inextricable from another. From its location near the governor's palace, to the design of the church, from the military chaplain celebrating Mass, to the creation of the reredos, and the interment of holy martyrs, every aspect was supported by the head of Colonial New Mexico's government and military, and every part played off of another to not only create an unquestionably beautiful and holy space, but to show that it was completely supported by the government, the Roman Catholic Church, and even heaven itself. One of the most profound ways this was demonstrated was by Marín del Valle's efforts to find and inter the body of a deceased Franciscan martyr in Castrense.

Marín del Valle went to great lengths to legitimize the chapel as a place of religious and political significance, which included finding, transmitting, and interring the body of fray Jerónimo de la Llana in the Castrense.[68] Marín del Valle's efforts are similar to what Church leaders and patrons have done throughout the history of Christianity to further sanctify and provide legitimacy to their churches, cathedrals, monasteries, and other places of worship, which is interring relics and bodies of saints and holy figures, as well as items associated with their lives. The most famous examples of churches that serve as the resting place for saints and

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[67] Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*, 54.

[68] Though never canonized, Fray Jerónimo de la Llana was a legendary Franciscan martyr who died while serving the Church in Colonial New Mexico. Despite Marín del Valle's efforts, the bones were never confirmed to be those of Jerónimo. The Franciscan was believed to be buried in the mission of Quarai; however, while there was no evidence of priestly remains in the mission of Quarai, one was found in Tajique. Marín del Valle reasoned that the confusion was due to the Pueblo Indians mistakenly reversing the names of the missions. For more information, see: Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*, 55.

martyrs include Spain's Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which is believed to hold the remains of the Apostle James, and Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, which is thought to contain the remains of the first pope, the Apostle Peter. By making the Castrense the resting place of Fray Jerónimo, Marín del Valle was adding credibility to the chapel as a significant holy place. The laity were especially moved by relics, and found the bodies of holy people, including martyrs, as a direct physical connection to the holy, as well as a source of comfort, and vessel for receiving and carrying their prayerful requests to God.[69] Placing the martyr in the same building as the reredos, Marín del Valle further sanctioned the political and propagandistic messages he was attempting to convey through the reredos. Despite including Fray Jeronimó's remains in the chapel, and allowing a depiction of Franciscan Saint Francis Solano on the reredos and Saint Anthony of Padua on the altar front, Marín del Valle had contempt for the Franciscan order, preferring to expel the Franciscans and replace them with his preferred order, the Jesuits.[70] Unfortunately for Marín del Valle, the Franciscans were the priests most likely to serve in the Castrense due to a lack of available secular priests, or priests who are not members of a monastic order.[71] As with the chapel itself and the placement of Jerónimo's body, the founding of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Light further highlights his efforts to provide legitimacy and further backing of the Castrense and its reredos.

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[69] For more information on how Spanish Catholics viewed and utilized relics, read: Igor Sosa Mayor, "Experimenting with Relics: Laypeople, Knowledge and Relics in Seventeenth-Century Spain," *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, 59: 226–43.

[70] Marín del Valle was not alone in having disdain for the Franciscans. Throughout the history of Colonial New Mexico, Franciscan priests were known to mistreat Native Americans, which helped lead to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. As bishop, Tamarón even voiced consternation and displeasure with the Franciscans for their inability to properly evangelize and converse with Native Americans. Kessell, *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico*, 119-148; Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*, 63, 69; Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light," 327.

[71] Adams, 328.

It is unfortunate that while there is scant information about Marín del Valle's role in the creation of the Castrense and the reredos, there are no known documents that speak to how active Martinez de Ugarte's was in their creation. Understanding how engaged she was in the development of the reredos is made more difficult as there are not many known female patrons of the arts in in the Spanish Empire during this period. Indeed, there are no known major works of art that mention a female patron in all of Colonial New Mexico. However, the fact that Martinez de Ugarte is named right along with her husband, and that her patron saint is placed on equal footing is unprecedented, and a political statement in its own right. Having a female patron honored with her powerful husband indicates that she also wielded power in her own right. Thus, it is likely that she participated in creating the design, iconography, imagery, and messages espoused by both the chapel and the reredos, including its dedication to the Virgin Mary.

As the Castrense was being built, Marín del Valle founded *La Congregacion de Nuestra Señora de la Luz*, or the Confraternity of Our Lady of Light, and drew its constitution. This constitution required, amongst other things, that member pay an initiation and annual fees, observe various feast days, sponsor various masses, and that each member be "a respectable person of good life."[72] This confraternity was approved by its members, and Tamarón, sixteenth bishop of the enormous diocese of Durango.

As bishop, Tamarón paid an official visitation to Colonial New Mexico in 1760. While there, Tamarón saw the unfinished Castrense. About the church and his experience in Santa Fe, Tamarón wrote:

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[72] Adams, 329-330.

> In the plaza, a very fine church dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of Light was being built. It is thirty varies long and nine wide, with a transept…. The chief founder of this church was the governor himself, Don Francisco Marín del Valle, who simultaneously arranged for the founding of a confraternity which was established while I was there. I attended the meeting and approved everything.[73]

During this visit, Tamarón presided over the first meeting of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Light, personally approved the brotherhood's constitution, and provided various graces and indulgences for its members.[74] He also administered the initiation of new members of the confederation, including newly installed president Marín del Valle, all of whom took an oath promising to, amongst other things, defend the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.[75] Dedication to the Immaculate Conception was seen elsewhere in the Castrense, as the chapel reportedly held a painting of the Immaculate Conception in a gilded frame, further highlighting Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte's dedication to the Virgin Mary.[76]

Tamarón was personally pleased with the church and confraternity that Marín del Valle established, and, being the head of the diocese, they were directly under his authority. Prior to leaving New Mexico, Tamarón blessed and consecrated the altars and other furnishing within the chapel.[77] Though he does not specifically mention the reredos, Tamarón's writing and actions

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[73] Treib, 112.

[74] von Wuthenau, 188.

[75] Marín del Valle's personal devotion to the cult of the Virgin Mary is evident throughout the chapel, the confraternity's constitution, and the reredos itself. It is interesting that the constitution required members of the confraternity to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the belief that the Virgin Mary was free from original sin from the moment of her conception. During this time, the Immaculate Conception was not an official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Though the doctrine was gaining support throughout the Catholic Church, particularly in Spain, it was not declared an official dogma until 1854. For more information on the Immaculate Conception, see: Rosalie Hernández, *Immaculate Conceptions: The Power of the Religious Imagination in Early Modern Spain.* Toronto, Iberic.: University of Toronto Press, 2019.

[76] Adams, 334.

[77] Adams, 329.

indicate that the reredos and the holy messages contained within it were not only supported by the Church's leading authority in the region, but also celebrated. Thus, the reredos had not only the backing of the state, as evinced by the reredos being sponsored by the governor and captain general of Colonial New Mexico and being placed within the military chapel near the Governor's Palace, but it also had the backing of the Roman Catholic Church.

The reason for having one of the main criteria for propaganda being the backing of an organization or intuition is critical. Levy argues that propaganda, including the Baroque style that Míera attempted to replicate in the reredos, was intent on manipulating its audiences and an enlisting them "in a struggle for worldwide dominion."[78] Once it was established that the Spanish were not going to find the abundance of mythical riches and resources, they adjusted their purpose in the region to evangelization and defense of the empire. Thus, the question of what audience Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte were trying to reach is critical to understanding the reredos as a work of political propaganda.

[78] Levy, 40.

Chapter 4: Audience

The second criteria explored in this thesis is that if a work of art is to be considered propaganda, it must have a targeted audience. More specifically, Tuttle Ross argues that the audience must be "significant;" such as institutions or organizations.[79] In the case of the reredos, the group that is targeted are its parishioners, and, more specifically, the military members serving in Colonial New Mexico.[80]

Dubbed by the people of Santa Fe as *la capilla castries,* the Chapel of Our Lady of Light was a military chapel, served by a military chaplain, designed and used as a house of worship for government officials, military members, and their families serving in the region of Colonial New Mexico.[81] Governor Manuel Armijo (1827-29) attended church at the Castrense regularly with an entire garrison, all dressed in full uniform, and clergy for the chapel was funded by the military until the nineteenth century when the Republic of Mexico withdrew financial support and the chapel lost its congregation.[82]

Though the military was the chief audience of the reredos, it was not the only group who worshiped at the chapel, nor was it the only audience targeted by the propaganda within the

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[79] Tuttle Ross's argument for "significant" audience is important, or else any work, art or otherwise, directed to an individual or a small group, could fall within the parameter of "audience." Tuttle Ross, 20.

[80] Primary sources and current research explain that the chapel was specifically designed for military members, government officials, and clergy; however, the extent to which others were able to access the Castrense remains open. While it is likely that other individuals from Colonial New Mexico would have attended worship services, at the very least funerals and other special rites, these individuals were not the primary audience targeted by the reredos. For further information about the chapel, see: Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776, 44;* Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light in Santa Fe."

[81] According to Kessell, the chapel was not technically a military chapel, as it was not designated as such by the bishop of Durango; however, the moniker, La Castrense, stuck with the people of Santa Fe. Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776, 44;* Adams, "The Chapel and Confradia of Our Lady of Light in Santa Fe," 4.

[82] Marc Trieb, *Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 114-115.

reredos. Another audience that would have spent much time before the reredos were the clergy. Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte were a pious couple, and they were dedicated to the Christian faith and the cult of the Virgin Mary. By commissioning and overseeing the construction and decoration of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light, they were following in the footsteps of other patrons who built chapels and works of art to curry favor with God and the Church. Though Marín del Valle served as the official custodian Colonial New Mexico and representative of the empire, it was the Church that retained the most power.[83] To its donors, a gift like the chapel and the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* would have been a way to obtain divine mercy, show devotion to the church, and display dedication to its mission in Colonial New Mexico.[84] And to the clergy, including the priests and bishops, a donation such as the Castrense was a valuable affirmation of their mission in the region, one that would not easily forget.

Though the clergy was the smallest audience the reredos was meant to reach, the largest was the general Catholic population, specifically those who immigrated from elsewhere in the Spanish empire. In addition to military members and clergy, other dignitaries and wealthy merchants, ranchers, and political figures would have worshiped at the Castrense. Some of the individuals and families provided additional furnishings for the chapel, such as art, candleholders, mirrors, clothes, and other items necessary for celebrating the Mass.[85] And many of these individuals would have also joined the *confradia.* The *confradia,* or Confraternity of Our Lady of Light was established for the citizens of Colonial New Mexico, but those from other

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[83] Wilder, 20.

[84] Kilde, 78.

[85] Adams, 335.

regions of the Spanish Empire were not excluded from joining. Most interestingly, women were allowed to join, but they were not allowed to attend or participate in meetings or other events.[86] Members of the confraternity were some of the most devout and pious members of the community, and they would have been adept at understanding the messages contained within the reredos. These immigrants would have delighted in worshiping in an elaborately decorated space that reminded them of their home parishes in places like Mexico City, and Spain, and would have been familiar with the majority, if not all of the images encapsulated in the reredos, including depictions of saints celebrated in Spain, such as Santiago and Our Lady of Valvanera, a much celebrated depiction of the Holy Mother from Northern Spain, the home region of both Miera y Pacheco and Marín del Valle.[87] The relief images, including in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, including Santiago and Our Lady Valvanera, were specifically chosen by Marín del Valle, Martinez de Ugarte, and Miera y Pacheco to advance specific messages to its audiences and to drive those audiences to take action, both for their contemporaries and future generations.

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[86] Adams, 330.

[87] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 105.

Chapter 5: The Message

The *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* is replete with propaganda. Miera y Pacheco and the patrons selected each saint to impart certain historical, spiritual, and propagandistic messages to its audiences. And, more importantly, to drive them to take action for both the state and the Roman Catholic Church.

Starting with the material, the reredos was made of locally quarried volcanic stone.[88] Though other materials were used for decoration in churches throughout Europe, stone was the material of choice for altars, reredos and other furnishings; however, its use in the churches of Colonial New Mexico was rare. In fact, most reredos from Colonial New Mexico were made of locally sourced woods, which were easier and cheaper to procure and use.[89] Celebrated for its durability, Pueblo Indians have historically used stone, including volcanic stone to mark important sites, both for practical and spiritual reasons. For instance, Indigenous people from the area used stones to mark places of religious import, as well as water sources and routes.[90] The significance of building a stone monument of local materials that were used by the Indigenous populations would not have been lost to the viewers, many of whom would have been familiar with the traditions of local Pueblo Indians. Just as the Pueblo Indians used the stone to mark areas that had important meanings, Miera y Pacheco and his patrons were using the ornately carved stone as a guidepost to not only mark a place for worship, but, more significantly, it was a symbol of permanence and steadfastness, of both the Catholic faith and the Spanish Empire in

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[88] Adams, 337.

[89] Farwell Gavin, 75.

[90] Ruth M. Van Dyke, "Enigmatic Rock Features: Shrines, Herraduras, Stone Circles, and Cairns on the Great Chaco Landscape," *The Greater Chaco Landscape: Ancestors, Scholarship, and Advocacy.* Edited by Ruth M. Van Dyke and Carrie C. Heitman, (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2021), 135.

the region. The practice of reappropriating materials of spiritual significance to Indigenous cultures was a common practice throughout New Spain. In Mexico, for instance, priests repurposed indigenous statuary to be used as baptismal fonts, which could be understood as the Spanish and Catholics overtaking indigenous cultures.[91]

In addition to the imagery and iconography included in the reredos, Miera y Pacheco used the placement of each figure to enhance the message he sought to communicate. According to Farwell Gavin and Pierce, Miera y Pacheco followed the conventional hierarchical structure that was popularized during the Counter Reformation in the design of the reredos. With this structure, "founding fathers" are on the lowest register, which includes founders of religious orders and preachers with the center niche reserved for the church's patron.[92] In this case, the images are of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits, and Saint Francis Solano y Jimenéz, the Franciscan missionary who served and died in Peru. In the center of the reredos was the painting of Our Lady of Light. The next register up is reserved for prominent saints. In this case, Saint Joseph, and Saint John Nepomuk with the central place of honor containing Saint James, or Santiago Matamoros. Above Santiago is Our Lady of Valvanera with God the Father at the top of the reredos. While utilized by Miera y Pacheco in this case, the hierarchical order was not followed in many other reredos or altar screens in Colonial New Mexico.[93] Instead, later *santeros*, and even Miera y Pacheco himself,

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[91] For this and additional examples, see: Linnea Wren, Travis Nygard, and Kaylee Spencer, "Establishing and Translating Maya Spaces at Tonina and Ocosingo," *Memory Traces: Analyzing Sacred Space at Five Mesoamerican Sites.* Cynthia Kristan-Graham and Laura M. Amrhein (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 181-182.

[92] Farwell Gavin, 80.

[93] Farwell Gavin, 80.

took a more localized approach to creating reredos, focusing on the inclusion of images of saints and holy figures in a way that would resonate and properly focus the faithful in their prayer and worship. Many of these *santeros,* such José Rafael Aragón, appropriated from Native Americans, including Pueblo Indians (Fig. 4). According to Wroth, some of the elements incorporated into later reredos and other *santos* and church furnishings, were rain clouds, lightning bolts, and lunette.[94] While this structure of the reredos was traditional, it also framed the propaganda messages that the patrons and artist sought to impart.

Starting on the lowest level of the reredos are the Spanish evangelist saints Ignatius of Loyola (Fig. 5) and Francis Solano y Jiménez (Fig. 6). The two were well known throughout the empire and the new world and were incorporated into the reredos as a reminder to the clergy of their responsibility to evangelize the Native populations of Colonial New Mexico directing them to follow the lead of these estimable fathers. Saint Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus, Marín del Valle's preferred Catholic order.[95] In the relief, he is shown standing on two globes, which likely symbolize East and West. The saint also holds cloth draped staff and book with the society's Latin motto: "*Ad maiorem Dei Gloria*," which means "for the greater glory of God." The Jesuits looked at their role in evangelizing, especially in the Americas, as twofold: First they were missionaries, and second, they were responsible for religious needs of Roman Catholic settlers. The Jesuits developed a reputation for learning and recording information about other

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[94] Wroth writes that while the lunette is seen in other Baroque sources, those created by *santeros* sometimes added Native American elements, with some made where the petals are made to look like feathers, and others that combine stepped rain symbol, which "effectively combine European and Pueblo motifs." Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 120.

[95] For more information on the Jesuits in Colonial New Mexico, see: David J. Collins, *The Jesuits in the United States: A Concise History*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023); and Kessell's *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico;* and *Kiva, Cross, and Crown.*

cultures that aided in their evangelization work, including their languages, spiritual practices and culture, which they shared with the European immigrants.[96] Thus, the inclusion of Saint Ignatius not only spoke to the missionary calling of priests, but also alluded to the priestly responsibilities the clergy had to the settler populations, including the military members who lived and worked in the region, and worshiped at the Castrense.

On the opposite side of the reredos is the relief of Saint Francis Solano, a seventeenth-century Franciscan missionary. The relief of St. Solano shows him raising a small crucifix above his head in one hand, while he baptizes five Native Americans in the other. Both of these images are reminders to Catholics, especially the clergy to emulate these holy figures and to take their calling to serve and evangelize Native Americans seriously. The inclusion of Solano, a celebrated missionary with a keen ability to learn the indigenous languages was a not-so-subtle jab directed toward the Franciscan missionaries of Colonial New Mexico. During his journey to the region, Bishop Tamarón derided the Franciscans for the inability to communicate with the Pueblo Indians in their own tongue, thus preventing them from fully participating in the sacraments.[97] The Franciscans had been given an ultimatum, either learn the indigenous languages, or give Spanish lessons, which the king of Spain had ordered the missionaries to teach the indigenous populations.[98] The inability of the clergy to properly communicate with the Native Americans prevented them from being able to fulfill their obligations as priests and missionaries, including teaching the faith and properly administering sacraments. In addition to encouraging the clergy,

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[96] Collins, 21.

[97] Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown*, 337.

[98] Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown*, 329.

the inclusion of Saints Ignatius and Francis Solano was another nod to their patrons of the reredos, Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte.[99]

In addition to the stone plaques affixed to the reredos recognizing Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte for their generosity, Miera y Pacheco ensured that both were recognized within the relief carvings by incorporating the saints for whom they were named: Saint Francis Solano for Marín del Valle, and, more surprisingly, Saint Ignatius of Loyola for Maria Ignacia Martinez de Ugarte.[100] Having a male saint serve as a form of donor portrait for a female patron is unconventional as patrons throughout Christianity usually associated themselves with saints who share the same gender and were relevant to their lives and values.[101] Thus the evocation of a male saint by a female patron, as seen here, alludes to Martinez de Ugarte's own self-perception as a devout and powerful woman, a perception that was likely endorsed by both the her husband and the artist.

These two saints had dual meanings to the viewer: On the one hand, both saints were symbolic of the authority of the Church and of the need to spread the Gospel and Catholic faith to the world, including the Native populations of Colonial New Mexico; and, on the other hand, they served as reminders of the devout and generous governor and wife who supported this mission through their financial, professional, and spiritual means.

In between the two missionary saints was an oil painting of *Our Lady of Light,* painted by Miguel Cabrera (1695-1768) of Mexico City. The professionally produced piece would have

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[99] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 122.

[100] Steele, *Santos and Saints*, 24.

[101] Sharon E.J. Gerstel, "Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998), 95.

stood out against the less naturalistic polychromed reliefs that surrounded it. The oil painting, which was removed from the reredos, shows the Virgin Mary above cherubs.[102] With one hand, the Holy Mother pulls a sinner from the mouth of a beast, or Leviathan, representing Hell, while she holds the Christ Child in her other arm. An angel lifts a basketful of hearts to the Christ Child, while two additional angels fly overhead, ready to place a crown on the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven. The Jesuits showed special devotion to Our Lady of Light, the intercessor for the salvation of souls.[103] As with the images of Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Solano, having the Mother of Light as the patron of the chapel and central figure in the reredos highlighted for viewers that their collective responsibility in the region was to spread the Christian faith to the Native Americans.

While the first tier of the reredos promoted propaganda messages of evangelization and missionary work, the second tier focused on the patron saints of Spain and the Society of Jesus, and calls upon the viewers to dedicate their lives to both, starting with the example of Saint Joseph (Fig. 7), the earthly, adoptive father of Jesus Christ. In the relief, Saint Joseph is holding a flowering staff, the symbol of his purity and worthiness to wed the Virgin Mary in one hand,

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[102] The painting was removed by Lamy and donated to the Sisters of Loretto around 1852. For more information on the history of the oil paint of *Our Lady of Light*, see: Donna Pierce, "About the Permanent Collection," *Spanish Colonial Arts Society*, Accessed March 21, 2023. https://www.spanishcolonial.org/permanent-collection-detail/.

[103] The legendary and miraculous depiction of Our Lady of Light was popular in both Europe and the Americas. The image was regularly used for evangelization purposes, and also to encourage people to attend church, convert to Christianity, and pray for the Virgin Mary's intercession of lost souls. For more information, see: Norman Neuerburg, "La Madre Santísima de la Luz," *The Journal of San Diego History*, Spring 1995, Vol. 41, No. 2.

while carrying his adopted son, the Christ Child in the other arm.[104] The inclusion of Saint Joseph in this reredos is threefold: First, Saint Joseph was the most powerful saint after the Virgin Mary; second, he was a symbol of ideal manhood; and finally, he was the co-patron of the conquest and conversion of Mexico, along with the Virgin of Guadalupe, and protector of the Spanish realms.[105]

As previously stated, one of the chief functions of ecclesiastical art such as the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, is to aid the viewer in prayer and worship. Starting in the 1600s, the cult of Saint Joseph began to spread throughout the Catholic Church, along with belief in is exceptional power due to his closeness to his son, Jesus Christ, and his wife, the Virgin Mary.[106] Theologians like Joseph de Barcia y Zambrano (1643-1695) attested that the Saint Joseph was the first saint recorded in the entire New Testament, and the cleric and poet, Fray Antonio Joseph de Pastrana wrote that the patriarch was "the greatest saint, and the one that shines most in grace and glory."[107] Given his prominence, Jesus Christ's foster father was powerful intercessor for those who worshiped before the Castrense's reredos. As important as having an intercessor like Saint

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[104] The flowering staff usually associated with Saint Joseph comes from the legend of his betrothal to the Virgin Mary. According to one particular account, described in the play, *El Major Esposo, San José* by Spanish dramatist Guillén de Castro (1569-1631), the eligible bachelors of Jerusalem went to the Temple where Mary was living. Each man brought a dry branch, and the one whose branch bloomed would be engaged to the young woman. Upon arriving, Joseph's staff bloomed. The innuendo is obvious, and was not lost on the viewers of the play. However, other theologians contended that the flowering staff was an allusion to Josephs purity. For more information, see: Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of Saint Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 42-45.

[105] Villaseñor Black,13.

[106] Cynthia Hahn, "'Joseph Will Perfect, Mary Enlighten and Jesus Save Thee': The Holy Family as Marriage Model in the Mérode Triptych," *The Art Bulletin* (Mar. 1986, Vol. 68, No. 1), 54.

[107] Villaseñor Black, 21.

Joseph was, Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte were also raising the saint as model figure for the men in the region.

Throughout much of the Middle Ages, Saint Joseph was seen as an insignificant, elderly, and kindly man; however, starting in the fifteenth-century, artists began portraying the saint as a younger husband to Mary and father to Christ.[108] This is how Miera y Pacheco depicted Joseph in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* In the reredos, the saint is viewed as a younger father, holding his baby son who in turn gently touches his father's face. Texts from this period pointed to Saint Joseph as the model husband and father who cared for his family, was present for his child, and even helped with household chores.[109] It is this version of Saint Joseph included in the reredos and would have encouraged the young military members and merchants who sought adventure and riches to reassess their priorities and focus on being the caring husband and father that Saint Joseph was to his family and to those who call on his intercession.

Given his role as the loving foster father of Christ and the belief that he was one of the most powerful saints in heaven, Saint Joseph has historically been the patron of many social welfare organizations, including hospitals, and orphanages.[110] Thus, the inclusion of Saint Joseph would have appealed to the viewer to be kind and generous to those in need. Despite his reputation of being a nurturing family man and powerful saint, he was called upon by the leaders and people of Spain and the Spanish Empire time and again.

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[108] Hahn, 55.

[109] Villaseñor Black, 16.

[110] Villaseñor Black, 18.

Starting in 1555, Saint Joseph was named patron of the conquest and conversion of Mexico. Saint Joseph also served as the patron of Spain under King Charles II, and was later proclaimed the patron of New Spain, including New Mexico.[111] The people of Colonial New Mexico would have seen his image in the military chapel as a symbol of the Spanish empire itself, encouraging viewers to not only pray for the empire, but also serve it with honor and pride. Adjacent to the image of Saint Joseph is the relief of Saint James the Greater, another symbol and patron of Spain and the Spanish military.

In one of the most prominent and esteemed positions on the reredos, in-between two images of the Virgin Mary, is the relief carving of the Saint James the Greater (Fig. 8), the Apostle of Christ whose remains miraculously found their way to Spain and were interred in the pilgrimage Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. In this low relief carving, the saint is depicted in the familiar style of Santiago Matamoros ("Moor-killer"), a patron saint of Spain and the official patron of the Spanish military.[112] This is a traditional rendering of the saint during the legendary Battle of Clavijo.[113] In the relief, Miera y Pacheco depicted the Apostle of Christ wearing a cape and hat, while wielding a sword while mounted on a white horse, triumphantly overcoming Muslim Moors underfoot. In case anyone doubted the identity of the sword wielding saint, symbols of Saint James are included in the image, including the pilgrim's

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[111] Villaseñor Black, 13, 27.

[112] Erin Kathleen Rowe, *Saint and Nation: Santiago, Teresa of Avila, and Plural Identities in Early Modern Spain* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 24-25.

[113] In a dream before the mythic ninth-century Battle of Clavijo, Saint James appeared to King Ramiro in a dream the night before a battle with the Muslims. Saint James assuaged Ramiro's concerns about the battle, promising victory for the Spanish Christians. The next day, the Apostle himself rode into battle and helped Ramiro and the Christians defeat their enemy. Rowe, 29.

shell emblazoned on the saddle blanket, a familiar sign worn by pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago.

The image of Santiago Matamoros was well known, having gained notoriety after the First Crusade in the twelfth century. Similar depictions have been found in prayer books, paintings, and sculptures throughout the empire.[114] Members of the Spanish military routinely called on Santiago for help and used his name as a rallying cry.[115] Even in New Spain, Spanish fighters, including Diego de Vargas shouted "Santiago!" as they charged the battle field against the Pecos Indians and their Pueblo allies in 1693.[116] His addition to the reredos sent a clear message to its audience: Members of the Spanish military were fighting a holy war for Christianity and the Spanish Crown. The inclusion of the trampled and dead, or dying, Moors was an overt comparison to their battles with the Native populations, and served as a reminder that the Spaniards were on the side of God and his heavenly army.[117] Furthermore, the depiction would have reminded Native populations that they were under a new authority, sanctioned by the Christian God.

Adjacent to Santiago is the image of Saint John Nepomuk (Fig. 9), a Jesuit priest from Bohemia, the present-day Czech Republic. Nepomuk was the spiritual counselor of Queen Sophie (1376-1428); however, her husband, King Wenceslas IV (1361-1419), was jealous of his wife and wanted to know what she told Nepomuk during confession. Nepomuk refused to break

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[114] Rowe, 26.

[115] Rowe, 28.

[116] Kessell, *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico*, 154.

[117] Other santos found in Colonial New Mexico and New Spain often show the saint as Santiago Mataindios, or Santiago the Indian slayer. In these depictions, Santiago wears the familiar regalia associated with the saint while riding a horse over the lifeless, or near lifeless bodies of Native Americans.

the sanctity of the confessional, so the king had him tortured, killed, and thrown into the River Moldau.[118] In addition to being the patron of bridges, Saint John Nepomuk was patron of the sanctity of confession, the sacrament necessary to have one sins absolved.[119] Miera y Pacheco's rendering shows the saint in traditional priestly attire, standing in front of a bridge, holding a cross in one hand and a palm frond in another, which has historically been a symbol of victory and martyrdom.[120] The relief appears to be sourced from popular images of the time, including the prototypical statue of Saint John Nepomuk found on the Charles Bridge in Prague (Fig. 10). The saint was included in the reredos to embolden the audience to stand firm in the faith and defend its teachings, even to death.

The last depiction of a saint in the reredos is a relief of Our Lady of Valvanera, an image of the Madonna and child that was venerated by the faithful in the Rioja region of Spain, the home of Marín del Valle. Legend holds that the image was hidden in a hallow for protection during the Moorish conquest. An angel told Nuño Oñez, a former thief who was converted to a pious way of life, where the statue was, as is depicted in the background of the relief.[121] According to William Worth, the image is almost an exact replica of an eighteenth century engraving from Lagroño Spain, including the Virgin and Child emerging from a tree, and several small details such as the lion and castle, symbols of the Spanish provinces of Leon and Castile respectively (Fig. 11). Christ sits on her lap, and holds an open book, perhaps the Gospel or other

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[118] Selma Pfeiffenberger, "St. John Neomuck in New Mexico," *Journal of the Southwest* (Spring, 1994, Vol. 36, No. 1), 19-20.

[119] Farwell Gavin, 75.

[120] Stefano Zuffi, *Saints in Art* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 377.

[121] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 104-106.

scripture. Though not unheard of, the inclusion of two distinct Marian images in the same reredos is unusual, especially in Colonial New Mexico. The crowned Virgin of Valvanera reigns over the other saints, including Our Lady of Light. The inclusion of two distinct depictions of the Virgin Mary in the same reredos was no accident. As with the other saints in the reredos, both the Virgin of Valvanera and Our Lady of Light conveyed different messages of faith and political propaganda. However, their inclusion in the same reredos encourages the viewer to interpret the images together.

When comparing the images, one notices only a handful of similarities between the images: Both show the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child, and both show the Virgin Mary as royalty with the Virgin of Valvanera wearing a crown, and angels crowning the Virgin of Light. The historical and theological backgrounds of the depictions only provide a few additional clues as to how to read them together. One similarity is that the two were based on images that were already well-known to the faithful, and another is that the two have miraculous origins.[122] However, it is when viewing the reredos during the celebration of Holy Mass that one can see and understand the radical message that Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte were trying to convey.

The relief Miera y Pacheco carved into the highest point of the reredos is a depiction of *Dios Padre,* or God the Father, directly above the Virgin of Valvanera (Fig. 12). The juxtaposition shows that of all mankind, the Virgin Mary is the closest to God. While the Virgin of Valvanera is nearest to God the Father in heaven, the image of Our Lady of Light was placed nearest to God the Son. Those who attended Mass at the Castrense would not have missed that at

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[122] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 104-106; Neuerburg.

the moment of transubstantiation, or the instant when Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, Our Lady of Light could be seen directly behind the raised Eucharist and chalice (Fig. 13). The significance of this vital theological teaching was even more pronounced given the lack of a crucifix or other passion scenes built into the reredos. Passion scenes have historically been used in altar pieces to help the faithful focus on the elevated host.[123] While there was likely a standalone crucifix placed on the altar, the position of the titular image of Our Lady of Light behind the raised host would have advanced additional theological messages, including the continuous rebirth of Christ through the Eucharist.[124] With this choice Miera y Pacheco, Marín del Valle, and Martinez de Ugarte were forcing congregants to see that it was through the Virgin Mary, a woman, that they could access God.

Though not uncommon in New Spain, the images of Mary included in the reredos were a departure from those being popularized in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[125] In particular, neither the relief of Our Lady of Valvanera, nor the painting of Our Lady of Light show the Virgin Mary as a doting, matronly figure. Instead, these images show a powerful figure in her own right with God given authority.

The portrayal of the Virgin Mary as a powerful woman likely resonated with the patrons of the reredos, as shown by the plaque bearing the names of both donors, Marín del Valle and Martinez de Ugarte. The fact that a woman sponsored an immense work of art like the *Reredos of*

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[123] Beth Williamson, "Altarpieces, Liturgy, and Devotion," *Speculum* (Apr. 2004, Vol. 79, No. 2), 344.

[124] Williamson, 352.

[125] Belán, 149.

Our Lady of Light was unusual for the period. However, most astonishing is that Martinez de Ugarte was credited as a patron. Currently, there is no known work of this importance from Spanish Colonial New Mexico that credits a woman patron. Though little information about Martinez de Ugarte's life exists, her role as a patron of the arts is not in doubt thanks to her name and patron saint on the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*.

Atop the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, Miera y Pacheco portrays Padre Dios as wearing a three-tiered papal tiara, and holding a globe surmounted by a cross, symbols of papal and even royal authority.[126] Surprisingly, the image of Padre Dios remain fairly vibrant, showing him with a brown beard, wearing a brown cloak with white garment underneath, all on a field of blue, perhaps symbolizing the sky or the heavens. The images show Padre Dios raising his hand to give a blessing. This blessing was not only to bless the congregants worshiping below, but also the company of saints in the reredos and the religious and political propaganda they imparted.

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[126] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 107.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Walking into the adobe Chapel of Our Lady of Light, eighteenth-century Spanish government officials, military members, the clergy, and other worshipers would have felt a sense of awe. In the northern most region of New Spain, in the heart of the capital of Colonial New Mexico, stood the largest and most ornate piece of religious art in the region. Carved from local stone and brightly polychromed, the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* contained elaborate carvings that were familiar to viewers, many who came from Spain and other parts of the Spanish Empire where elaborately designed churches and cathedrals were more common. The imposing stone reredos in a region mostly known, and often derided for its structures made of mud brick and wood, connected the frontier of Colonial New Mexico to the larger empire and the Universal Church.[127] Everything about the reredos was designed to aid in worship and the administration of the sacraments, but it also served as an overt piece of religious and political propaganda.

The reredos meets each section of criteria necessary for a work of art to be considered propaganda. Starting with the messenger, the reredos was paid for and supported by government institutions. In the case of Colonial New Mexico, the governmental institutions included both the governor and captain general, as well as the bishop.

The second requirement for a piece of art to be considered propaganda, and which the reredos met, is that it must have a significant audience. The reredos was designed to be housed in the Castrense, or military chapel, and would have served as a religious home for military members. Other audiences that the reredos sought to meet were members of the clergy who

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[127] A British explorer wrote of Santa Fe, "The appearance of the town defies description, and I can compare it to nothing but a dilapidated brick-kiln or a prairie-dog town." John L. Kessell, *The Missions of New Mexico Since 1776* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2012), 36.

worshiped in the chapel and oversaw the sacraments there. The final audience is the wider Catholic community who lived in Colonial New Mexico.

The last component necessary for a work of art to be classified as a piece of propaganda is that it must advance a specific message, and that message must drive the viewer to take action. Levy wrote that a work of propaganda "makes state the author" in an attempt to enlist its viewers "in a struggle for worldwide dominion."[128] In the case of the reredos, the "worldwide dominion" that the governor and the Roman Catholic Church sought was twofold: Supremacy of the Catholic Church in Colonial New Mexico, as well as the continued expansion of the Spanish Empire.

There is currently no quantitative research measuring the effectiveness of the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light.* However, another way to understand the degree of success it had in moving people to action is by seeing how a work has been imitated, or how it inspired the works of other artists.[129] The reredos itself served as a template for other *santeros* and the genre of *santos* itself. Works influenced by the reredos and works that are almost direct copies of various images from the reredos can be found in the art of some of Colonial New Mexico's most legendary and prolific *santeros*, including José Rafael Aragón, and Pedro Fresquís.[130] An example of this includes the Fresquís's *Reredos of Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Truchas* (Fig. 14) and Aragón's altar screen of Vadito, New Mexico (Fig. 4). At the top of both reredos, one can see depictions of Díos Padre that are almost exact replicas of the one created by Miera y Pacheco, In Aragón's

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[128] Levy, 39-40.

[129] Levy, 184.

[130] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 106-113.

Díos Padre, the Father is seen with three-tiered crown, on his head, holding an orb, and wearing clothing similar to what is seen in the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*. In Fresquís's depiction, God the Father does not have the papal tiara, but he is wearing similar clothes and is also giving a blessing to the worships while holding a scepter instead of an orb.[131]

Another testament to the power of the reredos and the artist's belief in the messages conveyed therein is that upon their deaths, both Miera y Pacheco and his beloved wife, doña María Estefanía de los Dolores Dominguez de Mendoza of Janos, Chihuahua were both buried in the Castrense under his beautiful stone monolith.[132]

However, the clearest sign about the importance of the *Reredos of Our Lady of Light* and its messages is the fact that it still stands. Following the deconsecration of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light in 1859, Lamy had the reredos removed from the chapel and placed in the parish church of Santa Fe where it stayed for more than 80 years.[133] It was not until 1940 that a proper church was built to house the reredos.[134] To this day, the reredos stands as the focal point of worship and prayer, while still exuding the messages of the past to new generations of worshipers and New Mexicans.

This thesis has provided previously unexplored information surrounding the reredos and the theological and propaganda message that its artist and patrons conveyed to their viewers.

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[131] Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco and the New Mexico Santeros," 107-108.

[132] Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*,

[133] Adams, 340; The fact that Lamy is credit for saving the reredos might come as ironic to some, as many art historians have held him responsible for the removal and even destruction of many *santos* during his tenure and having them replaced with more conventional plaster saints and oil paintings from Europe. However, Steel and others have reported that there is no evidence that Lamy ever made such an order. Steele, 39.

[134] Adams, 341.

There is still much to discover about this momentous work of art and the Chapel of Our Lady of Light. In the future, art historians should consider investigating the cultural and religious traditions associated with the reredos in Santa Fe and the larger region further. It is likely that these traditions also led to the development of the reredos. Moreover, understanding how locals have interacted with the work since its creation, in the Castrense, in the Santa Fe Cathedral, and finally in its present home, Cristo Rey Church, will further illuminate how the propaganda conveyed by its artist and patrons have been understood, interpreted, and reinterpreted throughout its history. Researching primary sources and conducting interviews could help further illuminate how effective the reredos was as a piece of liturgical and propaganda art, and help provide insight into how audiences have reacted to the beloved and powerful work throughout its history.

Illustrations

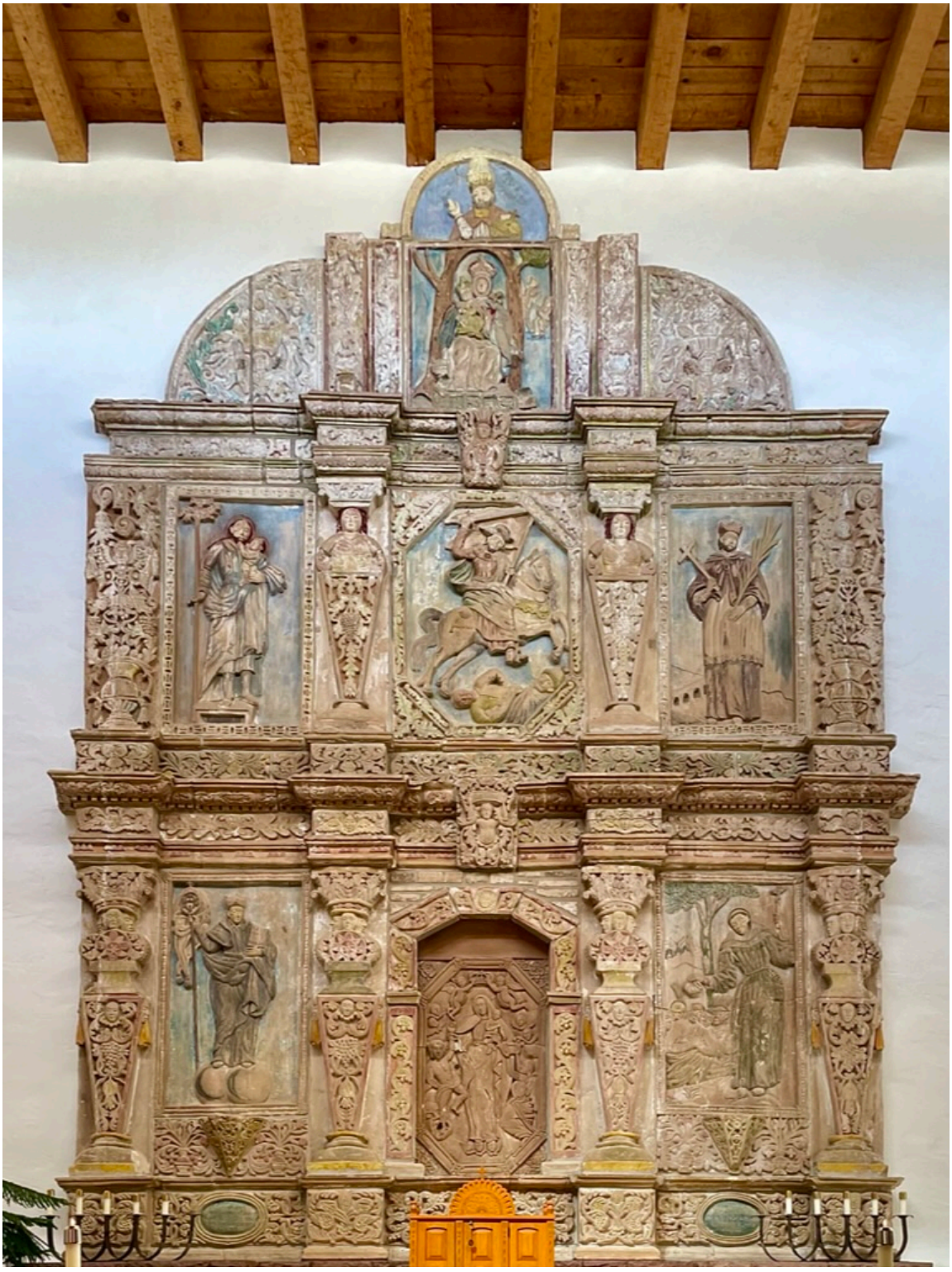

Figure 1: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

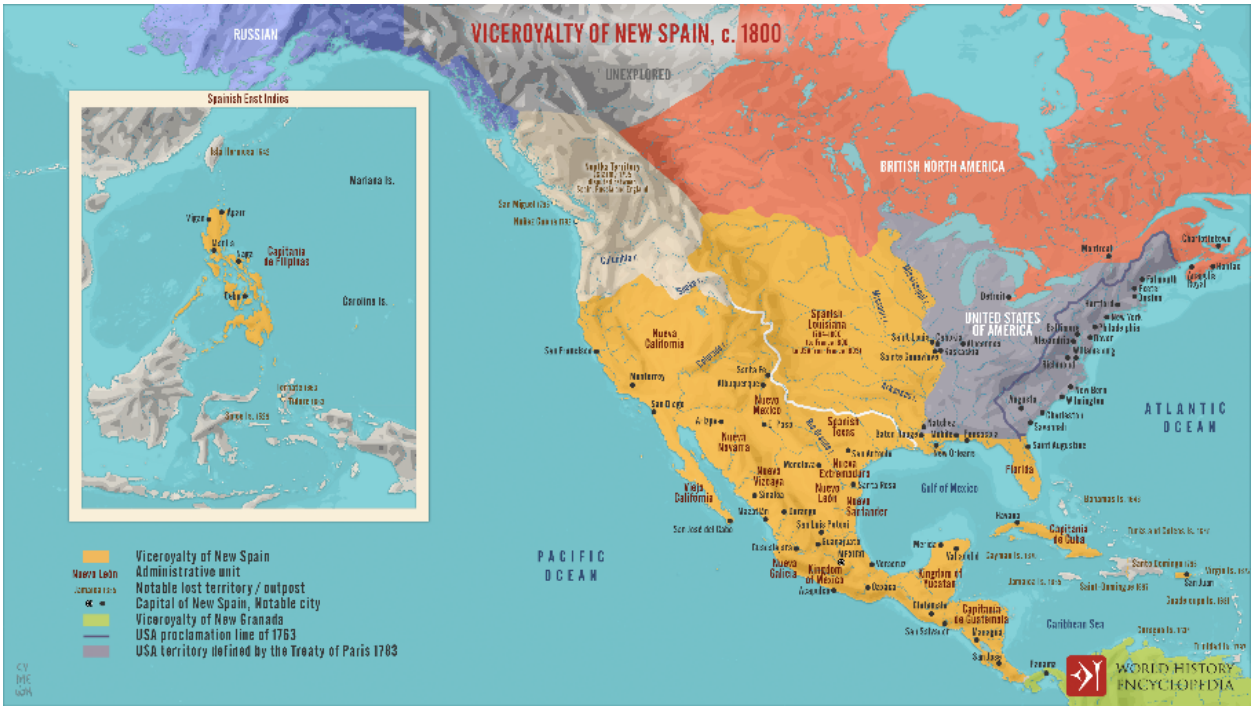

Figure 2: Netchev, Simeon. "Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1800." *World History Encyclopedia*. Last modified July 01, 2022. https://www.worldhistory.org/image/16081/viceroyalty-of-new-spain-c-1800/.

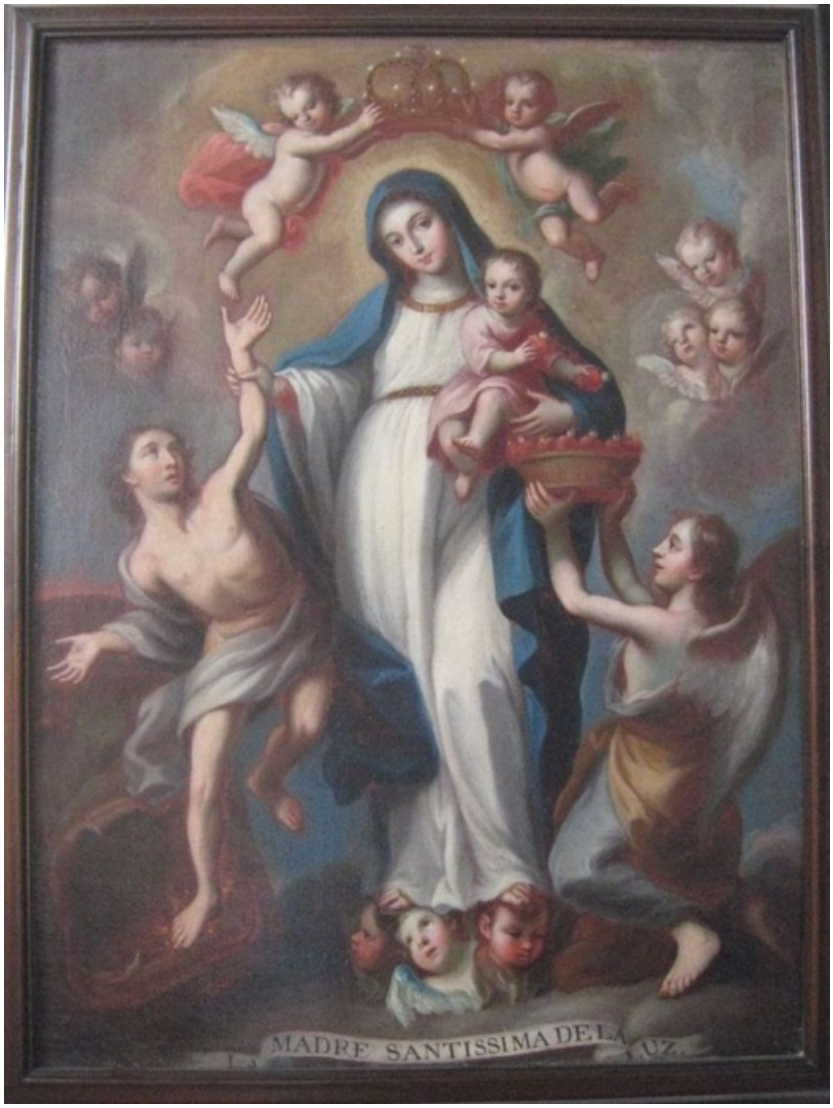

Figure 3: Cabrera, Miguel. *Our Lady of Light,* Oil on Canvas, c. 18th Century. Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Santa Fe, NM. https://www.spanishcolonial.org/permanent-collection-detail/.

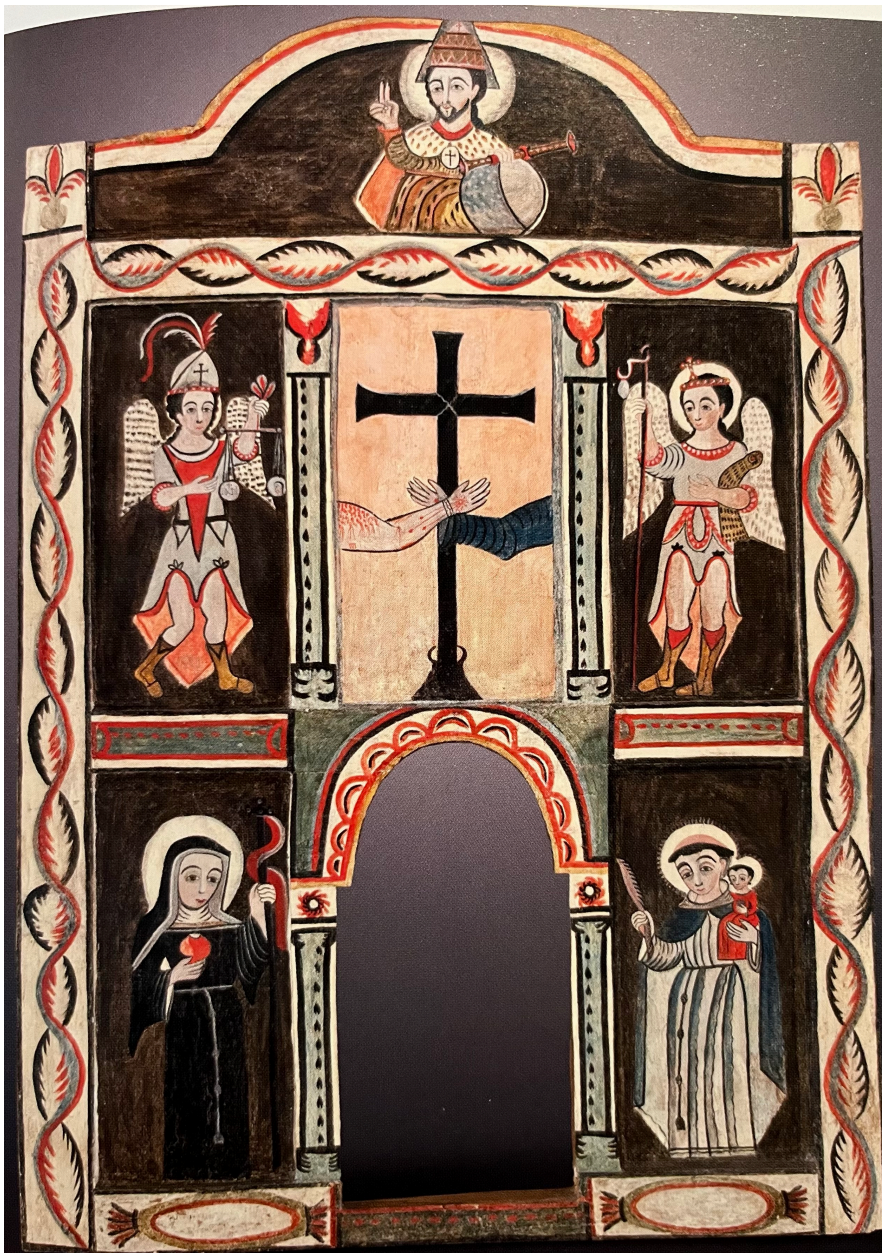

Figure 4: Aragón, José Rafael. *Altar Screen, Vadito, New Mexico,* 1830-1862, water-based paint on pine. Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Blare Clark. Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco an the New Mexico Santeros of the Nineteenth Century," 107.

Figure 5: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: St. Ignatius of Loyola*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

Figure 6: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: St.* F*rancis Solano y Jimenéz*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

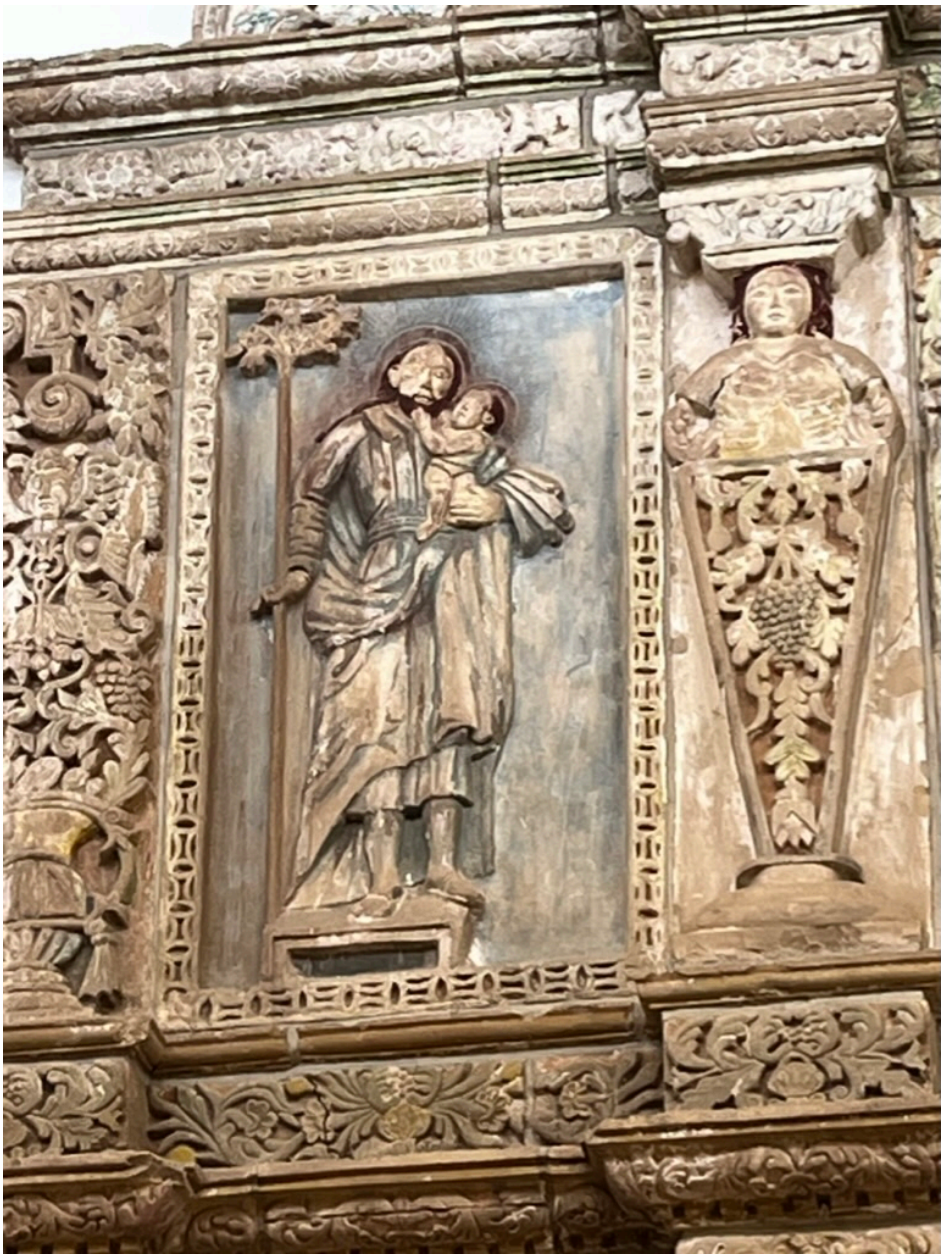

Figure 7: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: St. Joseph*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

Figure 8: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: St. James*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

Figure 9: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: St. John Nepomuk*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

Figure 10: Steele-Perkins, Chris. Photograph of Jan Bookoff's statue of John Nepomuk at Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic, 2003. https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/AMAGNUMIG_10311507268.

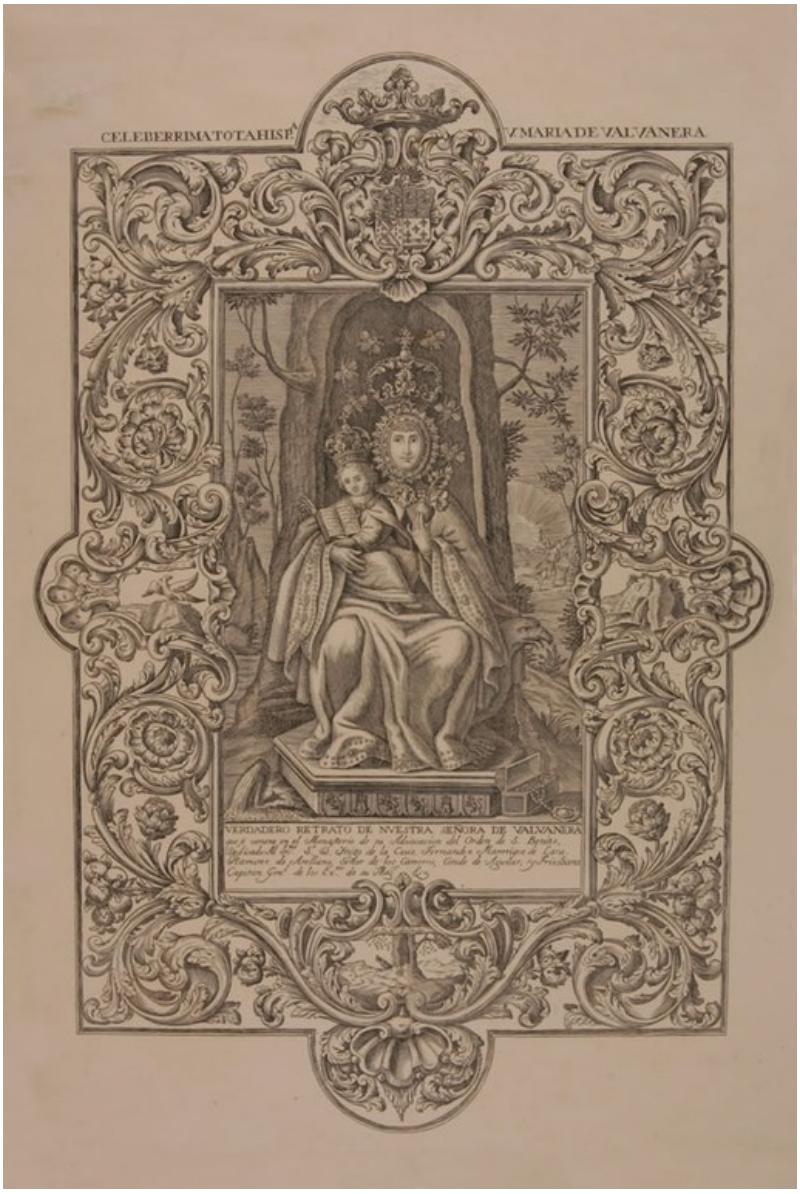

Figure 11: Our Lady of Valvanera. Engraving on paper, c. 18th Century. *Project on the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art (PESSCA)*, http://www.mcu.es/promoArte/MC/animalario/detallePieza_idPieza135.html.

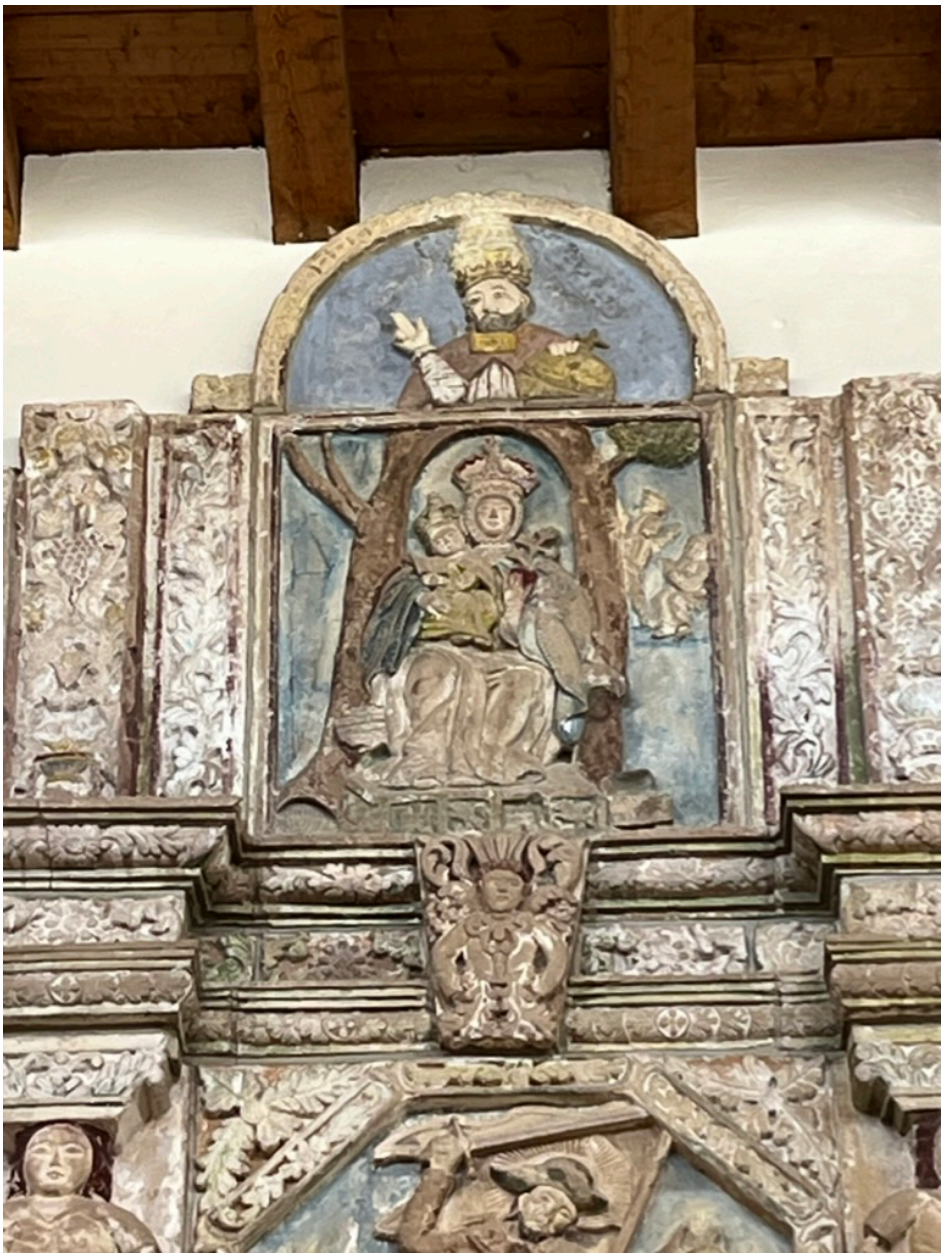

Figure 12: Miera y Pacheco, Bernardo. *Reredos of Our Lady of Light: Dios Padre and Virgin of Valvanera*, 1761, volcanic stone, paint, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, NM. Photo by Frank Mataipule.

Figure 13: Montoya, Luke E. "The Rev. Daniel James Gutierrez, center, blesses the sacrament during Easter Mass at the Cristo Rey Catholic Church." *The New Mexican,* 2015. https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/family/cristo-rey-75th-anniversary-a-community-of-young-families-built-beloved-church-adobe-by-adobe/article_74c8bcd2-8c07-5d59-988c-69a292ab0d82.html.

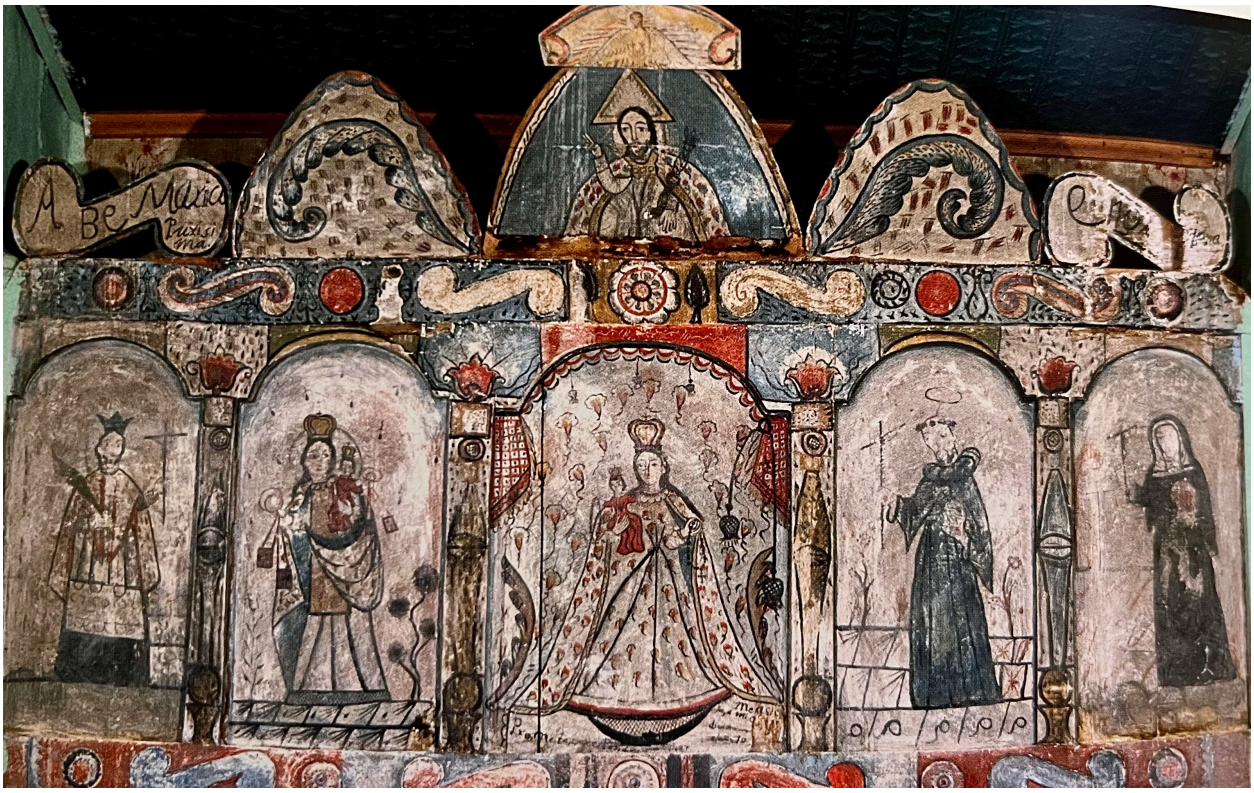

Figure 14: Fresquís, Pedro, *Dios Padre on Señora del Rosario Altar Screen (detail top center), Truchas, New Mexico,* ca. 1818, water-based paint on pine. Señora del Rosario de Truchas, New Mexico. Photo by Jack Parsons. Wroth, "Bernardo Miera y Pacheco an the New Mexico Santeros of the Nineteenth Century," 108.

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