

# The Bandera PROPHEET

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Two Augustinian Friars connecting Bandera to Rome

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The Bandera Prophet

Many were surprised at the election of the new Pope—an American! Robert Francis Prevost, 69, the 267th occupant of the throne of St Peter, now known as Leo XIV, is a cardinal priest from Chicago, who served as a missionary in Peru, and is a member the Order of St. Augustine (OSA), commonly called the Augustinians. The Augustinians are a small order who take to heart the profound writings of St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430).

We happen to have in Bandera some influence of another Augustinian Friar who has fascinated many visitors to the Bandera Natural History and Art Museum. If you have ever visited the museum, you have most likely been astonished at the remarkable Manila Galleon replica. The detail is astonishing and prompts great amazement and curiosity. However, if it hadn't been for an Augustinian Friar who lived in the 1500s, this intriguing Manila Galleon (and the adjacent Art Hall) would probably not exist.

In 1525, 17-year-old Andrés de Urdaneta served as a lowly page on a massive Spanish expedition to explore the Spice Islands (now known as the Maluku Islands) in Asia. It was a long and brutal journey; Urdaneta was one of 105 survivors—345 were lost to desertion, storms and scurvy.

During the trans-Pacific journey and eight years of exploring the islands, Urdaneta rose to become a key participant. Due to his perceptiveness and curiosity, he noticed a wide array of information, including currents, placement of stars, prevailing wind patterns, and various cultural norms and languages. Urdaneta was a fastidious note taker, and wrote down his varied observations.

At some point, Urdaneta had a daughter with a native of the Spice Islands; when he eventually returned to Spain, he brought this daughter with him.

Then, in 1538, at the age of 30, Urdaneta accepted a position in New Spain. So, he set sail again and began a new chapter of his life across the Atlantic Ocean in what we now know as Mexico. Resources are hazy; however, it has been asserted that he left his daughter behind in the care of his brother. It seems something deeply shifted in the mind and heart of Urdaneta, for at the age of 44, he joined the OSA.

It's hard to know what prompted this dramatic change in Urdaneta's life. Perhaps he was inspired by the Augustinians, who were already serving in Colonial Spain. Perhaps his increasing prominence left him feeling empty. Unfortunately, he did not leave any journals behind on his thoughts leading up to this decision.

In another intriguing twist, at the age of 56, despite being a priest, Friar Urdaneta was requested to lead an expedition to the Philippines. After getting approval from the order, he gathered four other Augustinian Friars, and in 1564, they boarded a galleon headed for the Philippines. During his time in the Philippines, Friar Urdaneta and the other Augustinians helped to establish the first Catholic mission and churches in the Philippines.

Some months later, the captain of the ship desired to return to Acapulco by crossing back over the Pacific Ocean. This eastward trans-Pacific route had been quite elusive for a long time and many put great hope into Friar Urdaneta's experience and knowledge. Knowing when to avoid monsoons and typhoons, Friar Urdaneta chose June 1, 1565 to set sail. Taking every precaution and using his vast knowledge, the San Pedro galleon safely arrived in Acapulco on Oct. 8, 1565—a 129-day voyage! Thanks to Friar Andrés de Urdaneta, a route from the Philippines to Acapulco was discovered and carefully charted. Due to his intellect and tenacity, abundant trade between Manilla (and many surrounding Asian lands), Mexico, Peru, and Spain flourished for 250 years.

The ingenuity of this 1500s Augustinian Friar made an indelible mark upon the world; and an Augustinian Friar, now known as Pope Leo XIV, has just begun to catch the attention of billions around the world.

### Fast Facts about the Augustinian Order

- 1) The order started with a group of hermits in Italy in 1244.

- 2) St. Augustine is their spiritual leader; he lived from 354–430 in Africa and left behind writings that established the foundation of the order.
- 3) The emblem of the Augustinian Order is a fiery heart with an arrow piercing through, resting on a book. It represents St. Augustine's words:  
You have pierced my heart with your Word.
- 4) The Augustinians were the first Christian missionaries in the Philippines (1565).