



Padre Kino, Astronomer

Presentation by Astronomer Christopher J. Corbally, S.J., PhD

Padre Eusebio Francisco Kino, S. J.

There is a statue of Padre Kino in Tucson. He is on horseback. The head of his horse is drooping. It has been a long and hot day of travel in the Sonoran desert. But Kino sits upright, and he has a "blue shell" clutched to his chest by his right hand. He clearly has had a brilliant idea.

That idea connects his early expedition to Baja California to where he has just met the O'odham, in Tucson. That idea needed his travels and his science.

Let us, via his grasp of science, connect the dots and understand his great insight. His science covered many disciplines. Kino was a mathematician, an astronomer, an instrument maker, a map maker, an agriculturalist, and a cattleman. So it is going to be a wide-ranging story. As a Jesuit and an astronomer, I find the story a fascinating one.

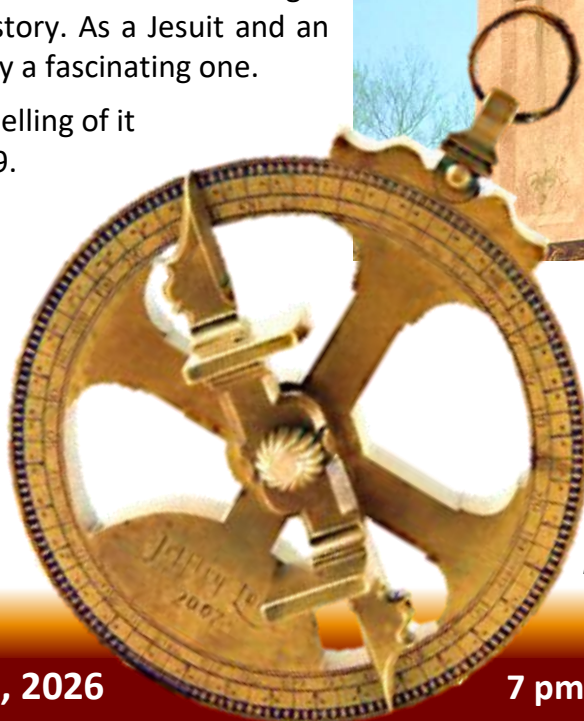
Please join me for the telling of it on Thursday, November 19.

Christopher Corbally, S.J.
Vatican Observatory

See next page.



Above: The equestrian statue of Padre Kino on a street in Tucson



Left: A Mariner's Astrolabe, a kind of early sextant

Padre Kino did make his own, similar in components to this one, and he used it in his expeditions to keep track of his location.

Thursday November 19, 2026

7 pm ARIZONA/Mountain Standard Time

To register for the Zoom program, click on this link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_iuJL189ITj6t2prQI2OfhQ

For more information contact Old Pueblo at info@oldpueblo.org or 520-798-1201.



Our Third Thursday presenter Christopher J. Corbally, S.J., PhD

is a Jesuit priest and an astronomer with the Vatican Observatory Research Group, for which he has served as Vice Director, and liaison to its headquarters at Castel Gandolfo, Italy.

He is an Adjunct Associate Astronomer at the Department of Astronomy, University of Arizona, and ministers to a wide variety of Catholics, including Native Americans, in Tucson, Arizona.

Christopher Corbally, S.J., at the Vatican telescope on Mt. Graham, Arizona

Padre Kino, Astronomer . . . In 1691 the Jesuit missionary Father Francisco Eusebio Kino and his military escort, Captain Juan Mateo Manje, explored northward from Sonora into the Santa Cruz River valley and visited the Sobaípuri O’odham village of San Cayetano in the Tumacácori area. In 1692 Kino and others visited the community of Wa:k, where San Xavier del Bac Mission was later established, as well as Sobaípuri rancherías along the upper San Pedro River.

In 1694 a Kino party went from San Xavier del Bac north down the Santa Cruz River to the Casa Grande Ruins and areas along the Gila River. They were the first ones to write about the Casa Grande Ruins. And in 1697 a Kino-led expedition was the first recorded exploration of the San Pedro River northward to its junction with the Gila. Thereafter Kino established missions in southern Arizona. Much of his exploration success was a result of his excellent astronomical and navigational expertise.

Even the most casual visitor to southern Arizona is likely to come across Kino’s name. We see Kino Boulevard, the Kino Sports Complex, the I-10 Kino Interchange. We see statues of the man in Arizona and Sonora, and have the opportunity to buy and drink a bottle of Vino Kino across the border in Nogales, Sonora. We hear about the “Kino Chain of Missions.”

After Kino nothing was ever the same in north-central Sonora and south-central Arizona. His arrival signaled the beginning of a series of profound changes that continue to this day.

By the time of Kino's death in 1711, changes that were underway in the Pimería Alta included introduction of a new, international religion, Catholic Christianity. The region was at least nominally a part of the Spanish Empire, and its inhabitants had become subjects of the Spanish Crown. Two new languages, Spanish for everyday and Latin for ritual use, were taking hold. New crops, including wheat, pomegranates, quinces, grapes, and many others were entering the area. New domestic animals, most particularly cattle, but also including pigs and chickens, were being raised.

Perhaps most importantly, the region was no longer relatively isolated, but was beginning to be linked to the greater world of Mexico, Europe, and Asia. This process continues to the present day, when wars, natural disasters, and epidemics abroad directly affect people living in present-day Arizona and Sonora. All these changes and many others came about slowly, to be sure, but they all began as a result of Father Kino's arrival and subsequent work.

Adapted from “Why Father Kino?” by the late James S. “Big Jim” Griffith, 2010, in *SMRC Revista*, Southwestern Mission Research Center, Tucson



The cover of Kino’s little book, “Exposición Astronómica de el Cometa,” a write-up of the great comet of 1680 for which he had taken careful observations, includes the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, for good reasons

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center Third Thursday Food for Thought Lectures						
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The Third Thursday Series

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