

Adapted by Ingenio

English version: Danny Jean Paul Mejía Holguín

# TWELVE IDEAS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JOSÉ CELESTINO MUTIS

Priest, botanist, geographer, mathematician, physician and teacher of the University of Rosario. Leader of the Botanical Expedition in Colombia. He participated in outstanding researches on minerals, fauna, astronomy, mathematics, description of people and their customs.

**1** José Celestino Mutis was born there on April the 6th, 1732, in Cádiz, where the Sierra de Grazalema is and the rainiest Spain place, it is considered the oldest city in the West, it was founded between the XIII and XI B.C. and it is called Gadir by the Phoenicians and Gades by the Romans.

**2** Mutis was the son of Julián Mutis, bookman as a job, and Gregoria Bosio. His childhood and adolescence were surrounded by books, travelers and objects from all over the world, because Cádiz was one of the most important ports in the Atlantic and was devoted to maritime trade.

**3** His bachelors in medicine and philosophy in 1753 were from the University of Seville. He already had studies in grammar and philosophy and advanced training at the Royal College of Surgery of Cádiz. In 1757, after two years of practice, he traveled to Madrid. There he met teachers of medicine and became a doctor of the Real Proto-Medicato.





**4** Until the year of 1760 Mutis worked as an assistant teacher of the Anatomy lecture of the Madrid's General Hospital, while he expanded his knowledge of botany, astronomy and mathematics in the Botanical Garden of Soto de Migas Calientes.

**5** On September the 7th of 1760, he decided to sail on the *Castilla* warship towards the New Kingdom of Granada as personal physician of the viceroy Marquis Pedro Messía de la Cerda, with the promise that he would have time and conditions to dedicate to research in America.

**6** Almost two months later, on October the 29th, he arrived at Cartagena de Indias and from there he traveled to Mompox, where he went by boat along the Magdalena river until arriving at Honda. And from there, by land via Santa Fe de Bogotá, he toured Guaduas, Villeta, Albán, Facatativa and Fontibón where he admired the natural diversity of the route.

Illustration: Luis Fernando Torres Pulgarín



**7** In 1762 Mutis taught his course of mathematics and Newtonian philosophy at the Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario. In his lectio inauguralis he discloses the elementary principles of the Copernicus System - which contradicted the theories of Ptolemy and scholasticism - of modern science and the experimental method.

**8** It was in May 1763 when he started writing letters to King Carlos III, known as Representaciones, requesting support for the study of the natural history of America. These were the action plan for the Botanical Expedition, which had to wait twenty years for the Spain crown to authorize the commission.

**9** In October of 1772, during a trip, he discovered a cinchona tree on his way between Ibagué and Bogotá, a finding that led him proposing to market that product in favor of his majesty. That same year, on December 19, he was ordained as a priest.

**10** His first studies focused on insects, especially ants and cockroaches in the mines of Santísima Trinidad or del Sapo, near Ibagué. Later, Carlos Linneo, son of the famous *taxonomist* with the same name, published names and descriptions of the plants that Mutis found, including the Mutisia baptized in his honor.



Illustrations: Luis Fernando Torres Pulgarín

**11** In March 1782 the archbishop Antonio Caballero y Góngora is named viceroy and offers Mutis his support to carry out the Royal Botanical Expedition, which began in 1783. According to the royal order, it had to be: itinerant and to make stations in the localities privileged by their work. It was necessary to collect, draw, dissect and sketch skeletons of the most interesting plants, and send them to the Royal Botanical Garden of Madrid.

**12** Mutis wrote, in July 1808, his "Scientific testament", as the historians call it, where he canceled his obligations to the monarch and left indications to continue with the Expedition. He died in Santa Fe de Bogotá, Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, on September 11, 1808, one day after the oath of Fernando VI.

\*These 12 ideas about José Celestino Mutis life resulted from an exhaustive search on different sources of public domain. The text was prepared, reviewed and approved by the Editorial Committee of the Ingenio Magazine.