

# ACA, Joan I to the Marquis of Villena, 2 March 1387

## Document Summary

A letter from King Joan I of Aragon to his kinsman Alfonso d'Aragó, Marquis of Villena, written from Barcelona on 2 March 1387 — less than two months into Joan's reign following the death of Pere III (5 January 1387). The king acknowledges receiving the Marquis's message, delivered by mossèn P. Marrades, that the Marquis intends to set out within seven days. Joan expresses pleasure at this news and explains that he had previously excused the Marquis's absence on account of an illness or physical incapacity. Now that the Marquis has recovered, the king uses a triple formula of increasing force — *volem, pregam, manam* ("we wish, we pray, we command") — to urge his immediate presence, warning that no further excuses will be accepted. The letter closes with a notable act of patronage: Joan sends via the same messenger the cross of the *empresa de Sant Jordi* (the chivalric enterprise of Saint George) for the Marquis's son, don Alfonso.

**Document type:** Royal letter (*missiva*), Catalan. **Register:** ACA [register reference to be supplied]. **Date:** 2 March 1387, Barcelona.

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## Reconciled Catalan Text

lo Rey

Marques car cosí. Entès em ço que mossèn P. Marrades nos ha dit per part vostra, que haviets voluntat de posar-vos en camí d'aquí fins a set dies. Havem gran plaer d'açò, car haviem gran desig de la vostra venguda per escusat de vostra [~~vengad~~] venguda per la necessitat que havets havda en vostra persona, e per les rahons a nos significades de part vostra e per lo dit mossèn P. Emperò, per saber que sots guarit volem eus pregam e manam que vengats prestament a nos, car plaser assenyalat nos en farets e vos retrets hi vostre deute axí com devets es pertany, certificants vos que no·us en rebríem escusació, pus sabem que podets cavalcar i no us embarga necessitat que haviets en vostra persona. E metem vos per lo dit mossèn P. la creu de nostra empresa de Sant Jordi per a don Alfonso vostre fill. Dada en Barchinona sots nostre segill secret a · ii · dies de março del any a nostre Senyor M·CCC·LXXXVII.

[*Directio:*] a marques de Villena consanguineo d[omi]ni Regis

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## English Translation

The King.

Marquis, dear cousin.<sup>1</sup> We have understood what mossèn P. Marrades<sup>2</sup> has told us on your behalf: that you intended to set yourself on the road within seven days. We take great pleasure in this, for we had great desire of your coming, having excused you from your [~~arrival~~] coming<sup>3</sup> on account of the incapacity that you have had in your person,<sup>4</sup> and for the reasons made known to us on your behalf and through the said mossèn P. However,

knowing that you are recovered, we wish and we pray you and we command that you come quickly to us, for you will do us a notable pleasure, and you will discharge your duty therein just as you ought and as is fitting,<sup>5</sup> certifying you that we would not accept any excuse from you, since we know that you are able to ride and that the incapacity you had in your person no longer impedes you. And we send you by the said mossèn P. the cross of our enterprise of Saint George<sup>6</sup> for don Alfonso, your son.<sup>7</sup> Given in Barcelona under our secret seal,<sup>8</sup> on the second day of March of the year of our Lord 1387.

[*Address:*] To the Marquis of Villena, kinsman of the King.

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## Footnotes

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### Unresolved Ambiguities

1. **Identity of the messenger.** The reading "mossèn P. Marrades" is based on reconciliation between a difficult abbreviation in the manuscript and the alternative transcription source. Prosopographic verification against the register and other documents from early 1387 is needed to confirm the surname.
  2. **Lines 3–4, exact syntax.** The clause beginning *per excusat de vostra venguda* is clear in sense but syntactically compressed. The construction could be parsed as "having [held you] as excused from your coming" (with an implied *vos havem hagut*) or as a more loosely constructed causal clause. The translation above opts for the former reading.
  3. **The *iussio* / chancery annotation** in the lower right of the folio remains only partially deciphered. It likely contains the name of the scribe or official who executed or expedited the letter and the standard formula of authorization (*mandato proprio domini Regis* or similar), but the hand is cramped and the reading uncertain.
  4. **"março" vs. "març."** The month name in the dating formula may preserve a form influenced by Castilian/Portuguese orthography (*março* with cedilla) or may simply be standard Catalan *març* with a suspended final stroke. Given that the addressee held Castilian-border territories, either form is plausible.
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1. Alfonso d'Aragó (c. 1332–1412), Marquis of Villena and Count of Ribagorça and Dénia. As a grandson of Jaume II, he was a first cousin once removed of Joan I's father Pere III, hence *car cosí* ("dear cousin"), using the broad kinship term standard in Aragonese royal correspondence. The Marquis of Villena held territories straddling the Aragonese–Castilian border and was a significant political figure whom Joan needed to secure at the outset of his reign. ↩
  2. The messenger is identified only as "mossèn P. Marrades" by abbreviation. The surname Marrades is attested among the Valencian lesser nobility. The identification remains provisional; comparison with other entries in the same register may confirm or correct the reading. ↩

3. The scribe began to write *vengada* (or *vengud-*), cancelled the false start, and rewrote *venguda*. This is a scribal correction visible in the manuscript. ↩
4. *La necessitat que havets havda en vostra persona*: a polite circumlocution for an illness, injury, or physical incapacity that had prevented the Marquis from traveling. The precise nature of this condition is not specified. Alfonso d'Aragó would have been in his mid-fifties at this date. ↩
5. *Vos retrets hi vostre deute axí com devets es pertany*: literally, "you will render therein your duty just as you ought and as is fitting." The verb *retreure* here carries the sense of discharging or rendering an obligation — the Marquis's feudal duty of attendance upon the new king. The phrasing carries an implicit reminder that the Marquis has not yet appeared at Joan's court, nearly two months after the accession. ↩
6. *La creu de nostra empresa de Sant Jordi*: the cross-insignia of the chivalric enterprise of Saint George. This is a significant act of patronage in the early days of Joan I's reign, extending membership in a royal chivalric order to the Marquis's son. The *empresa* (enterprise or device) of Sant Jordi was associated with the Aragonese crown and distinct from the older Castilian Order of Saint George. Sending the insignia via a messenger rather than investing the recipient in person was not unusual for distant or absent members. ↩
7. Don Alfonso d'Aragó el Jove (Alfonso of Aragon the Younger), son of the Marquis of Villena and later Duke of Gandia. He would become a significant figure in Aragonese politics in his own right. ↩
8. *Sots nostre segill secret*: "under our secret seal," indicating a letter issued under the king's privy seal rather than the great seal of the chancery — standard for personal royal correspondence of this type. ↩