

before his death that they should get their petitions ready, because from Heaven he would deal out favors as if they were a deck of cards.

After several days, Father Miguel and his brothers were captured. President Calles, paying no mind to the lack of evidence against the priest, wanted instead to make an example of him. On November 23, 1927, Father Pro was led out to the site of his execution by firing squad. The soldiers wanted to blindfold him, but he refused the blindfold.

Father Pro blessed the soldiers, knelt, and briefly prayed. Then he stood with a crucifix in one hand and a rosary in the other, saying, "May God have mercy on you! May God bless you! Lord, Thou knowest that I am innocent!" He extended his arms in cruciform. He shouted, "With all my heart I forgive my enemies!" The firing squad took aim and Father Pro let out the defiant cry of the Cristeros, "Viva Cristo Rey!" – "Long live Christ the King!" Then, the gunshots. To ensure his death, he was shot at point-blank range.

President Calles had the entire execution documented by a photographer and published on the front page of newspapers, in an effort to scare the Cristeros and those who resisted Calles rule. But it only united them. In fact, about 40,000 people were part of Father Pro's funeral procession, and another 20,000 awaited at the gravesite.

***Father Miguel Pro, pray for us!  
¡VIVA CRISTO REY!***

### **For Reflection**

- What stood out to you about Fr. Pro?
- How does the Cristero War and the persecution of Mexican Catholics affect how you see your faith?
- How does his life inspire you to live your daily life?

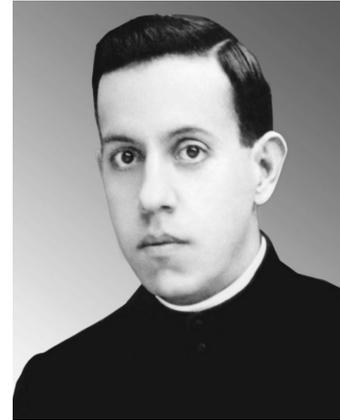
Watch the companion video for this presentation at our website!

Sources include: *Blessed Miguel Pro* by Ann Ball, and the Society of Jesus

**Socials with the Saints – PILGRIM CENTER of HOPE**

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## ***Bl. Miguel Pro***

*Priest & Martyr*

**Born:** January 13, 1891

**Died:** November 23, 1927

**Beatified:** September 25, 1988

**Shrine:** Holy Family Parish, Mexico City, Mexico

**Memorial:** November 23

Jose Ramon Miguel Augustin Pro Juarez was born in Guadalupe, Zacatecas in the heart of Mexico, to Josefa and Don Miguel. His father was the second in the family to become a mining engineer. The Pro family treasured a bottle of water from the Holy Land, and this was used in Miguel's baptism – which took place just 3 days after his birth, in a chapel of the local Franciscan monastery.

When he was still very small, Miguel developed encephelitis or brain fever, along with measles and whooping cough. A doctor announced that Miguel would not live much longer. The family gathered around his crib. Suddenly, Don Miguel took his son up into his arms and held his little body in front of the image of the Virgin Mary, pleading, "My Mother, give me back my son!" Silence. Then, an answer to prayer – Miguel vomited all over his father and seemed to awaken from the nightmare.

Within a few days, his health was normal. Miguel did recover from this, but he also suffered from stomach pains through his adulthood. Still, he seemed to have had a lifelong sweet tooth. He earned the nickname Cocol, after his favorite sweet bread made with anise tea.

Miguel's father oversaw his children's education, and Miguel himself was no star student, but he had an extraordinary memory which of course proved useful. The Pro family was a musical family, and they would enjoy and play music very often in the evenings together. The five oldest children played string instruments – Miguel played guitar and mandolin very well. He also enjoyed poetry, and would write and recite poems for family members as gifts on holidays and special occasions.

Miguel always went out to hear the traveling musicians who would pass outside the house on the street. After Miguel's father noticed that his son had left his studies to listen to them, he forbade him from leaving his books or setting foot in the street for such a thing. Well, next time the musicians came

around, Miguel walked on his knees with his book in his hand to come out and enjoy the music!

As he grew older, his mother had him and his two older sisters help their father in his mining office on paydays. Miguel's mother spent her free time starting a hospital for the mining families. But in this project, the Pro family would taste the bitterness of those political tensions of the time. In 1904, a new mayor forbade the hospital patients from receiving the Last Sacraments there – and also declared that the hospital was too exclusive, and should be opened up to everyone, not just the poor. These obstacles ran against the Pro family's mission, so they withdrew from this work.

Miguel's older sister entered religious life and, one year later, Miguel announced to his family that he had decided to enter the Jesuits – the Society of Jesus religious order of brothers and priests founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola. He did so in 1911 with his parents' blessing in Michoacan. He first dressed in his religious habit on August 15.

The Mexican Revolution had arrived. By 1914, the violence and anti-Catholic sentiment became such that the Jesuits were forced to flee Mexico. Miguel and some fellow Jesuits escaped together – and while on their way out of the country, Miguel actually found his mother and younger siblings taking refuge in a little hut. They did not know the whereabouts of their father, who – because he had worked for the government, was a marked man in the eyes of the revolutionaries. Miguel and his companions spent a few days in that little shack but continued on in obedience of their orders to leave the country. Their little band of Jesuits made it through Texas – even passing through San Antonio! Miguel's journey included California, Spain; and he was ordained to the priesthood in Belgium in 1925.

Throughout his seminary formation, Miguel had suffered terrible stomach pains. He would try to cover up his suffering by cracking jokes and maintaining a jovial attitude. But eventually these pains became so serious and affected his ability to eat that, six months after his ordination, having spent day after day with physicians, Miguel was directed by his superiors to receive life-saving surgical intervention.

After three operations, he had enough alleviation of his ailment that he was able to return to Mexico. His Jesuit superiors were hoping that being back in his homeland would facilitate his full recovery.

The year that Jesuit Father Miguel Pro returned to Mexico, is now the year regarded as the start of the Cristero War; a period of heightened conflict from 1926-1929 between the anti-Catholic Mexican government and the Catholic citizens. Alvaro Obregon selected the openly anti-Christian Plutarco Calles as his successor.

Calles is known for his enforcement of the anti-clerical laws that had been formally part of the Mexican Constitution of 1917. Just 23 days after Father Miguel Pro returned to Mexico, President Calles enacted what was informally known as the Calles Law. Part of this declaration included a ban on Catholic Mass or other such acts of worship. Vowed religious such as nuns and monks, as well as priests, were not allowed to wear their religious clothing in public; and in fact religious orders were outlawed. Religious education was no longer allowed. Clergy were denied the right to vote. Catholic properties were to be used however the local authorities deemed appropriate.

Father Pro decided to carry out his ministry clandestinely; signing letters by his childhood sweetbread nickname *Cocol*, and dressing up in various disguises. For example, he dressed as a mechanic to minister to cab & bus drivers; or as a farmer to go out to the rural areas.

He even dressed as a police officer, which allowed him to make a narrow escape once while celebrating Mass in a family's home. With just minutes to hide, he managed to dress up in his police inspector's costume and demand from the real officers who were searching for him why they had not yet managed to capture "that rascal Pro".

Father Pro's police costume allowed him to minister to those in prison, too. Soon, however, it would be he himself who would end up in prison.

In November 1927, General Alvaro Obregon and some friends were out for a drive when four assailants pulled up next to them and attacked their car, throwing a homemade bomb into it. None were seriously injured except one of the three assailants who were captured. When it was determined that the car used by the assailants was registered under the name of a man named Humberto Pro, Father Miguel and his brothers went into hiding although they had no connection to the plot or attack.

Father Miguel, accepting the likely future that he would be martyred, trusted that God would accept his life as an offering. He joked with his friends