

**MASS AT THE TOMB OF BLESSED MIGUEL PRO, S.J.
HOLY FAMILY CHURCH, MEXICO CITY
DECEMBER 10, 2001**

Homily

It is most fitting that we begin our pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe by making a little pilgrimage to the tomb of Blessed Father Miguel Agustín Pro, priest and martyr, who entrusted himself to the protection of the Virgin of Guadalupe and strove to be, with her, the faithful messenger of God's infinite mercy.

The life of Father Pro, from his earliest years, was sustained by a profound devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, first on the part of his good parents and then on his own part. When he was very small, he suffered from a food poisoning which threatened to take his life. When it seemed only a matter of time until his death, his father lifted up-before the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe-the unresponsive body of his small son, praying desperately, "My Mother, give me back by son." (Ann Ball, *Blessed Miguel Pro: 20th Century Mexican Martyr*, Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1996, p. 3) The immediate physical reaction of the baby marked the beginning of a rapid and miraculous recovery.

Also, at the end of his life, Father Pro gave witness to his lifelong devotion to the Mother of America. His brother Roberto and he were arrested because of the practice of their Catholic faith under the cruel persecution of the Catholic Church in this beloved nation of Mexico from 1890 to 1940. Thrown in prison to await execution, they adorned the walls of their death cell with their favorite exclamations of love of the Redeemer and His sinless Mother: Long live Christ the King! (Viva Cristo Rey!) Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe! (Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!) (Ibid., p. 76) Surely, Our Lady of Guadalupe assisted this dearest son as he gave his life for Christ on November 23, 1927, crying out in prayer before the firing squad: Viva Cristo Rey!

II. The pouring out of Father Pro's life in fidelity to Christ is the ultimate witness to the Kingship of Christ in his life, to which Our Lady of Guadalupe was constantly leading him. His entire priestly life and ministry was given in service of Christ the King, in order that Christ's gentle reign of self-sacrificing love might extend to the minds and hearts of all whom God had called him to serve.

Father Pro understood that Christ the King rules from His pierced Sacred Heart. The victory of divine truth and love was consummated when the Roman soldier pierced the Heart of Jesus, from which the water and blood of His life poured out, symbolizing the faithful gift of His life to us in the Church, His Mystical Body, born from His wounded side, that same pierced Heart. In imitation of Christ, Father Pro poured out his life blood for Christ and the Church when his heart was pierced by the bullets of the firing squad. The total oblation of Father Pro's life was the consummation of the daily oblation of his priestly ministry. Especially during the time of the persecution, when so many were arrested and executed for teaching the Catholic faith, celebrating secret Masses and hearing confessions, and practicing their faith openly, Father Pro put his considerable talents, especially his joy and good humor, at the service of Christ and the Church. He continued to celebrate the Mass for the people and to hear their confessions in whatever home he could. He taught the faith in the homes of the devout Catholic families who were hungering for a deeper knowledge of Christ. He went about gathering food and clothing for those in need.

In all of his priestly activities, in the giving over of his entire life to the reign of Christ the King, Father Pro was inspired and assisted by the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom God has granted to us of the American continent to call Mother by a special title because of her apparition here in 1531. In the five apparitions which took place during these very days, December 9th to 12th, the Virgin Mary, appearing as the Mother of God, proclaimed the message of God's infinite mercy toward all

His children in America.

The Shrine which she requested to be built had one only purpose, that she might always manifest the mercy of God which comes to us in the Divine Child conceived in her womb, Who is indeed Christ the King by the offering up of His life on Calvary. Our Blessed Mother, as always, leads us to Christ who bestows upon us, without limit, God's merciful love.

III. Through the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the priestly ministry of her faithful son, Blessed Miguel Pro, the children of America have seen the glory of the Lord, the splendor of God in their midst: Jesus Christ, alive for us in the Church. (Reading I) Even as the coming of God into our midst to save us was accomplished by the Redemptive Incarnation of the Divine Son of God, who is also Son of Mary, so God's saving presence, in Christ, continues in the Church.

Through our pilgrimage, Our Lady of Guadalupe desires to lead us to a deeper knowledge of God's mercy in our lives, to a deeper knowledge of Christ, the mercy of God incarnate for us. We come on pilgrimage with the faith of the paralytic in today's Gospel. With him, we can be confident that our encounter with Christ will bring the forgiveness of our sins and the healing of our souls.

During these days of pilgrimage, bring your entire life to the Mother of God, the Virgin of Guadalupe, so that she may lead you to give your entire life over to the reign of her Son, Christ the King. Through prayer, a good confession and daily participation in the Holy Mass, Mary will lead you to place all your trust in God and His mercy. Bring all the joys and sorrows of your life to Christ through Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, so that you may know the joy and peace of His gentle reign of self-sacrificing love in your daily living, so that you may experience the forgiveness of your sins and the healing of your soul.

IV. Throughout this time, remember that you are on pilgrimage, that you have come away from your home and familiar surroundings in order to journey to a sacred place, a place which God has favored with special graces. Concentrate your attention on the journey and on the grace of divine mercy given at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

It will not be easy. The journey to an unfamiliar place presents its own challenges and distractions. Many pilgrims have joined us on the journey, both in our own pilgrimage group and in the many pilgrim groups we will encounter at the Shrine. The differences of each pilgrim can also be a distraction and even challenge our patience. Remember, too, that when we set out on a holy journey, Satan strives to keep us from our goal, a deeper devotion to our Blessed Mother, and the fuller reign of Christ the King in our lives. Call upon Our Lady frequently throughout these days, entrust our pilgrimage into her hands, so that Christ the King may pour out upon us the grace of God's mercy, the grace of His self-sacrificing love. Call, too, upon the intercession of Blessed Miguel Pro, so that the Virgin of Guadalupe, to whom he entrusted his life, may lead us in these days to Christ the King.

V. Christ the King now comes to us under the humble species of bread and wine, truly His Body and Blood. May the substantial food of the Body and Blood of Christ sustain and heal us in our service of Him, our King. May Mary, His Mother, lead us to Him and to His service. Then, each day we can proclaim in prayer, with Blessed Miguel Pro, "Long live Christ the King. Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe."