

THE CRISTEROS CATHOLIC SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

20th Century Mexico's Catholic Uprising

Olivier Lelibre

The 20th century was the bloodiest century in history, the "century of massacres,"¹ "hell's century,"² the century of martyrs—just like all the others? No, not just like all the others; it was the great century of martyrs, infinitely more than the others.... Never had there been so many martyrs in the space of 100 years, not even in the space of 1,000 years.³ And these tens of millions of Christians, the victims of a century in open revolt against God, remain unknown and unsung. Today I would like to recall for you the Mexican Catholics who, some 70 years ago, rose up against Freemasonry for the social reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were called the Cristeros.

A Century of Religious Persecutions

From the time its independence was declared in 1821, Mexico had a troubled history: civil wars, dictatorships, coup d'états, revolutions (1876-1911).... Maximilian's Empire (1863-67) was but a brief and very imperfect⁴ parentheses in the persecutions endured by the Church once the Spanish left: property despoiled, priests imprisoned, assassinations plotted, bishops expelled.... Why so many misfortunes? A proverb provides the answer: "Poor Mexico! so far from God and so close to the United States..." The United States did not want a great Catholic power at their door. At the time of Mexican independence, they worried about this potential rival whose land mass roughly equaled their own, and whose population, though less numerous (6.5 millions of inhabitants versus 9.5 millions) had become, thanks to a very lively Catholic faith, a true nation, while the United States remained, and remains even now, the "Salad Bowl."⁵

In the 1830's, war broke out. Betrayed by Masonic generals,⁶ Mexico lost its northern territory, California, Texas, New Mexico (1848), and was placed under United States political and economic hegemony.⁷

The puppets successively made presidents of Mexico were all corrupt Masons who immediately enforced the orders issued from Washington to "defanaticize" the country, that is, to destroy its Catholicism which dated from the 16th century when the Spanish (especially the Franciscans⁸), had evangelized Mexico; the order also demanded defiling the memory of its European heritage by exalting the pre-Columbian era⁹ and the "marvelous" Aztec civilization where the wheel and the vault were unknown, but where slavery, human sacrifice and cannibalism were practiced on a grand scale even in the 16th century!¹⁰

Here are just two examples of this policy: The first official act of President Juarez was to transform St. Francis of Mexico Church into a Protestant temple (1867),¹¹ and the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Humanum Genus* (1884) was prohibited (it condemns Freemasonry) even in the seminaries!¹²

In 1914, President Carranza, put in place by the US, inaugurated a period of open persecution: priests were massacred (160 were killed in Mexico in February, 1915). John Lind, one of Woodrow Wilson's advisors, rejoiced over the news: "Great news! The more priests they kill in Mexico, the happier I shall be!" An American pastor, indignant about the outraging of the nuns in Vera Cruz, received this reply from Wilson's personal representative: "After prostitution, the worst thing in Mexico is the Catholic Church. Both must disappear!"¹³

Calles's Offensive

In 1924, Plutarco Elias Calles became President. For this descendant of Spanish Jews,¹⁴ a 33rd degree Mason, "the Church is the unique cause of all Mexico's misfortunes." For him, too, she had to disappear.¹⁵ With the complicity of a Masonic priest, Fr. Perez, proclaimed by the government "Patriarch of the Mexican Catholic Church," Calles founded a schismatic "patriotic Church," as the Communists were to do later in China.¹⁶ The wine used in the Mass was replaced by mescal. But the maneuver was met with widespread contempt. The government could finance the opening of 200 Protestant schools and Calles could smooth the way for heretical sects (already well financed by the US), but the Mexican people remained stubbornly attached to Rome!

In 1926, the president and his clique launched a new offensive which they hoped to be definitive: "Now there must be a psychological revolution," Calles declared. "We must penetrate and take hold of the minds of the children and the youth because they must belong to the revolution." The Catholic schools were shut down, the congregations expelled, Christian trade unions forbidden, numerous churches confiscated and profaned (turned into stables or halls) or destroyed. Public school attendance became mandatory, atheism was officially taught, and religious insignia (medals, crucifixes, statues, and pictures) were forbidden, even at home. God was even chased from the language! The use of such expressions as Adios, "If God wills," or "God forbid," was subject to a fine. Lastly, the priests were "registered": some states (Mexico is a federal republic) required them to swear not to proselytize, others tried to command them to marry if they wished to continue in their function! Msgr. Carvana, the Apostolic Nuncio, protested; on May 12, 1926, he was expelled. Throughout the country, Catholic public figures were assassinated, girls coming out of church were kidnapped, imprisoned, raped. Msgr. Curley, the Archbishop of Baltimore, vented his indignation: "Calles persecutes the church because he knows that he has Rome's approval. Our government has armed Calles's killers. Our friendship has encouraged him in his abominable enterprise: to destroy the idea of God in the minds and hearts of millions of Mexicans."¹⁷

On May 28, Calles received the Masonic medal of merit from the hands of the Great Commander of the Scottish rite in Mexico. On July 12, the following communique appeared in the press: "International Masonry accepts responsibility for everything that is happening in Mexico, and is preparing to mobilize all its forces for the methodic, integral application of the agreed upon program for this country."¹⁸

On July 26, an elderly shopkeeper was coldly struck down by two policemen in civilian clothes. His crime? In his shop he had posted a sign reading Viva Cristo Rey! Long live Christ the King! The Mexicans peacefully reacted to the persecution: they boycotted state-owned enterprises (tobacco purchases and railroad traffic were reduced by 74%, and in just a few weeks, the national bank suffered a 7 million peso loss), and they also circulated a protest petition signed by 2 million (out of a population of 15 million).

But Christians have something even better than that, they have prayer, and the country was crisscrossed by gigantic penitential processions: 10,000, 15,000 faithful, barefooted, crowned with thorns, implored God for their country. The powers that be could not tolerate that; their heavy machine guns dispersed the processions, and the first martyrs fell, singing.

Public Worship Suspended

On July 24, 1926, Cardinal Gaspari sent a telegram from Rome to the Mexican episcopate: "Under no condition we will accept the registering of priests." The bishops decided to suspend public worship throughout the land starting July 31: all the places of public worship would be closed, there would be no Masses offered nor sacraments administered throughout the country except in private chapels. This was an unheard of, inexplicable decision, unless by it they intended to push the Mexicans to revolt, for the one thing they could not bear was to be deprived of the sacraments. During the final days of July, people thronged the churches day and night, going to confession, getting baptized, marrying...

People began to come to put their consciences well in order even though it was already time to begin working in the fields. With each passing day more and more peasants streamed into the village from the neighboring hamlets, their pale faces and sorrowful eyes bespeaking their anguish. There were three priests in Tlalte-nango parish, not enough to confess so many people. Despite being in the confessional from dawn to dusk, with no time to eat or rest, still they could not confess all who came... How surprising to see someone estranged from the sacraments come to receive forgiveness of his sins; and others who lived in concubinage come to seek out the confessor, asking to be united in marriage....¹⁹

And then the terrible hour came...

This day, there was to be a Mass at midnight and by the end of Vespers the church could no longer contain the immense multitude of the faithful. One after the other, the faithful would go on their knees from the door to the altar; no one wanted to see this most dolorous moment arrive, but God was going to permit it to come to pass. At 11:30 pm, the bells dolefully tolled the hour of the Mass. The nocturnal adorers, the pious associations and the Catholic social organizations with their groups and their banners were there, as were all the faithful. At midnight the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and the Mass began. After the Gospel, our dear Fr. Gonzalez mounted the pulpit. He had barely gone up when all the people gathered at the foot of Jesus-Host began to cry. The broken words that the father spoke, full of sorrow, were interrupted by sobs. After Communion, at the end of holy Mass, we were given the benediction with His Divine Majesty. Finally, the father, divested of his ornaments, knelt at the foot of the altar, his eyes fixed on the image of Our Lord of Mercies; silently he took leave of him and went out through the midst of the faithful. Christ and his minister had departed.²⁰

From the first days of August, the Mexican people, deprived of their priests (only 200 remained with their faithful) and of their bishops (only 1 remained out of 38) used force to resist the inventorying of the closed churches and the accompanying sacrileges. Their rallying cry was that of the Mexican shopkeeper: "Long live Christ the King!" To keep from hearing it, the soldiers had only one solution: cut out the tongue of those whom they were going to kill, of those whom, because of these cries, they named the Cristeros. One of them wrote before dying: "We are going to perish. We will not see the victory, but Mexico needs all this blood for its purification....Christ will receive the homage which is due Him." Blood flowed....Ireland broke its diplomatic relations with Mexico....No other state followed suit.

On September 18, 1926, Pius XI published the encyclical *Iniquis Afflictisque*:

In narrating this, Venerable Brothers, we can scarcely keep back our tears, some of these young men and boys have gladly met death, the rosary in their hands and the name of Christ King on their lips....What a beautiful spectacle this, that is thus given to the world, to angels and to men!

In October the Holy Father declared: "The blood of martyrs has always been the seed of blessings from heaven." How could one fail to understand that one year after Quas Primas, the Cristeros were signing with their blood this text on the social reign of our Lord Jesus Christ? Freemasonry understood it, and in its American journal *The New Age* of December 1926, it expressed its stand:

The Catholic Church has perverted the Mexicans for 400 years. Calles's merit is to have delivered them from ignorance and superstition. That is why he can count on our understanding and on North America's support.²¹

The Rising

In January 1927, Catholic Mexico rose: 20,000 combatants (30,000 by the end of the year, and 50,000 in 1929); few arms (a few rifles and carbines, but mostly hatchets, machetes, and sometimes simply sticks); few horses; but all the people supporting them, offering them their money, and necessaries. A Cristero peasant recounted how they set out with songs and prayers on their lips:

We were 1,000, then 5,000, then more! Everyone set out as if to go to the harvest....We firmly intended to die, angry or not, but to die for Christ.

The old men and children, unarmed, followed behind the troops, in the hope of martyrdom. "The parents of Nemesio and Isidro Lopez did not want to see them depart for the war for fear that their flesh would go to feed coyotes and eagles; but they replied, "The coyotes may indeed eat our flesh, but our souls will ascend straight to heaven."²² Against them were 100 mobile columns of 1,000 men each, veritable "infernal columns" financed by the US (light armored cars, tractor-drawn artillery, combat aircraft...). The first clashes were bloody massacres. An officer of Calles wrote: "They are more like pilgrims than soldiers. This isn't a military campaign, it's a hunting party!" The president himself predicted: "It will be wrapped up in less than two months."

But when a pilgrimage takes up arms, it becomes a crusade! The Cristeros were able to equip themselves from the adversary, profiting from their cowardice or their corruption. The "Federales" were more like pillagers, drunk on tequila and marijuana, rather than soldiers worthy of the name. On March 15, 1927, they were defeated at San Julian; at Puerto Obristo, they left 600 dead. In November, the military attache of the US began to worry about the success of the "fanatics," 40% of whose troops were now equipped with excellent Mausers recuperated from the enemy. How was it possible?

The Miracle

The Cristiada was a succession of miracles. One was when the consecrated hosts flew into the sky before the very eyes of the squad that was getting ready to shoot them; it led to the conversion of the Masonic officer who commanded it, and who ended the war as a Cristero general. But there are very many more: God does not let Himself be outdone in generosity. I will just recount two.

A Christian general told how he arrived with 350 men who had been fasting for two days in a miserable hamlet of only 11 straw huts. He retired to write his report. Coming out, he saw his soldiers eating with

gusto and an old woman with tears in her eyes saying over and over; "I just had a few biscuits, and yet there is enough for everyone, and what is left over is more than I had to begin with!"

A Cristero spy had spoken with the Federales:

They are sorcerers, and the one who commands them is a very valiant general mounted on a white horse, and he is accompanied by a woman. When we open fire on them, it has no effect, and when they approach us, we cannot do anything to them. They command the mist to conceal these accursed Cristeros.

The spy added:

There is no white horse, and there is no woman in our army. In truth, we believe that St. James and the most Blessed Virgin accompany us, and if we cannot see them, it is because we do not deserve to.

Marvelous Cristeros! While the Federal army recorded an average of 30,000 desertions annually, they did not experience a single case of treason. A cobbler, become sector chief, was contacted by the enemy who offered to spare his life and make him a colonel, answered: "I am not fighting for a rank. I am fighting for the Church and for Christ the King. As soon as the victory is won, I shall return to my shoes." He was killed in combat in March 1928.

With diabolic tenacity, Calles's men tried to make their prisoners apostatize, but in vain. Fr. Reyes was tortured for three days and two nights. This pastor of Totolan, born in very poor circumstances (as a child he hawked newspapers) had decided to remain at his post. That was enough to unleash the hatred of the Federales, who tormented him with fire. "You say that God descends into your hands, well then, let Him descend and deliver you from ours!" his torturers taunted. They finished him off with bullets on the evening of Holy Wednesday. One of them testified: "We had already lodged three or four bullets in him when he roused himself to cry out once more: 'Long live Christ the King!'" Sabás Reyes Salazar was canonized on May 21, 2000.²³

Valencia Gallardo, a Cristeros leader, was tied to a stake and tortured but only cried out throughout: "Long live Christ the King!" They tore out his tongue; he freed one of his hands from the bonds and pointed to heaven. They cut it off, and then split open his skull with their rifle butts.

Admirable Cristeros! The Cristiada was not a counter revolution with its share of exactions: it was the opposite of a revolution. Read the order of the day of one of its generals (killed in combat in 1927):

Disciplinary measures affecting the southern division:

The division chiefs of the South of Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit and Western Michocan of the National Liberation Army have adopted the following measures:

- 1) To render an official, public, and solemn homage to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, sovereign King of our army, and to humbly and lovingly consecrate to Him all the works and all the persons of this division;
- 2) To never omit, under any pretext, the daily group recitation of the rosary to the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, and to accord this observance the same priority as a strict disposition of military regulation;

3) Whenever possible, to arrange things to allow all the leaders, officers and soldiers to officially fulfill the precepts of Sunday worship, confession and Communion;

4) To guarantee divine protection during the battles by making the army and the Catholics prepare themselves by humble, confident prayer, and by recommending making acts of perfect contrition.²⁴

Their awareness of the supernatural character of their fight did not lead the Cristeros to neglect temporal realities: "Fight and organize; fight and moralize" was one of their mottoes. In the liberated territories, "administrators" were appointed, Catholic schools were opened (more than 200), public sins (drunkenness, prostitution) were suppressed.

Universal Resistance

Who were these new crusaders? They were the people. As one Federale wrote: "We run no risk of making a mistake (by massacring one and all): they all resist." They were 95% rural folk: peasants, artisans, miners, muleteers, or rural landholders. There was, for instance, Luis Navarro Origel, with a degree in philosophy and a third-order Franciscan: in 1926, he took the lead of the men of the village where he was mayor. He declared: "I am going to kill for Christ those who kill Christ, and perhaps die for Him if need be; I am going to offer the blood of redemption." He fell at the head of his troops on August 10, 1928, at the age of 30.

The city folk who joined them were especially students and the women involved in the St. Joan of Arc Brigades. Some of these 25,000 heroines were only 14 years old. They acted as liaison agents or scouts, nurses, collectors of money or munitions in the arsenals where they infiltrated as workers! Woe to those who fell into the clutches of the Federates' hardened soldiers....But they never betrayed any information.

Beautiful youth of Mexico. José Sanchez was 13. In February 1928 he was surrounded by the Federales. He gave up his horse to the group leader who was wounded and covered his retreat. Running out of ammunition, he was captured. "Know it well," he said, "I am not surrendering, I have merely run out of ammo." He was slaughtered. A note was found in his pocket: "My dearest Mom: Here I am a captive, and they are going to kill me. I am happy. The only thing that troubles me is that you are going to cry. Don't cry. We shall meet again." Signed, José, killed for Christ the King.

Tomasino was a member of the executive committee of the ACJM (Mexican Catholic Youth Association) and prefect of the congregation of Mary. Arrested, he was offered his freedom if he talked. "Really, you would be making a mistake: free, I would continue to fight for Christ the King. For us, the fight for our freedom of worship is not optional." In August 1927, he was hanged. He was 17.

Manuel Bonilla, a student, kept a daily diary:

I well know that, to do great things, God uses littler ones, and that help does not come whence we were expecting it...I trust in God's goodness: all these sacrifices will not be in vain.

He was shot at 22 years of age, on Good Friday, 1927, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. In 1942, his body was discovered perfectly intact.

The Mystery of Iniquity

The year 1928 was terrible: the infernal columns had received the order to deport the rural population to "concentration camps"²⁶ where famine and epidemics decimated them. At the least show of resistance, the Federates would massacre them. Harvests and flocks were seized, grazing land burned, and villages destroyed by the thousands. Despite this scorched earth policy, the Cristeros stood fast like latter-day Machabees.

In 1929, the government renounced its policy of governing the countryside. Three-fourths of inhabitable Mexico was in the hands of the troops of Christ the King, victory was in reach especially as the riffraff in Mexico were fighting each other, and in the United States Hoover, who was not a Mason, was elected! Then they learned that the secret negotiations between the Mexican government and the Vatican had resulted in an accord. On June 21, the Mexican episcopate (except for one of its members, His Excellency Jose de Jesus Manriquez y Zarate) signed a "resolution" of the conflict with the ruling power on bases "negotiated" by a US Jesuit, a Fr. Walsh. The accord provided for: (1) immediate, unconditional cease fire; (2) the resumption of public worship beginning the next day (June 22).

That was all. It restored them to the same situation that prevailed in 1926 with all the anti-Catholic laws then in effect, including the registration of priests! In the text, the Cristeros are called fanatics directed by a few third-rate priests; their revolt was an error, an imprudence, even a sin: they must lay down their arms under pain of excommunication...

Jésus Degollado, commander in chief of the Cristeros, addressed his troops, his voice breaking from sorrow:

His Holiness the Pope, by the intermediary of the most excellent Apostolic Nuncio, has decided, for reasons which are unknown to us but which, as Catholics, we accept, that public worship will be resumed tomorrow without the law being changed...This arrangement...has wrested from us that which is most noble and most holy on our flag, at the moment when the Church has declared that she will resign herself to what she has obtained...Consequently, the National Guard assumes responsibility for the conflict....As for ourselves as men, we have a satisfaction that no one can take from us: the National Guard does not disappear defeated by its enemies, but rather abandoned by the very ones who were to be the first to receive the fruit of our sacrifices and abnegation! Ave, Christ! Those who for You are going to humiliation, to exile, and, perhaps, to an unglorious death,...with the most fervent love salute You, and once more proclaim You as King of our country.

Six thousand Cristeros obeyed, and were immediately massacred. In three years, they had only lost 5,000 men in combat! The Mexican episcopate decreed the excommunication of the Cristero priests, but those who had not been killed during the war (180) had already been martyred...All was lost.

The new president, the Masonic lawyer Fortes Gil, rejoiced. At the summer solstice banquet, he acknowledged his astonishment at the unconditional capitulation of a victorious army, and his intention to continue the fight: "The fight did not begin yesterday. The fight is eternal. The fight began 20 centuries ago." Indeed, but the novelty was that the Vatican was not on the right side. Freemasonry, condemned by all the popes from the 18th century (Clement XII, in 1738) to the end of the 19th (in 1892, Leo XIII equated Freemasonry with Satanism), had infiltrated the Church at the highest levels of the hierarchy: Were not G. della Chiesa (the future Benedict XV) and A. Ratti (the future Pius XI) the "proteges" of Cardinal Rampolla? In 1926, was it not Pius XI who condemned Action Frangaise in accordance with the sect's desires. In 1928, was not Fr. Vallet expelled from Spain and his work suppressed by a hierarchy that preferred to favor the Opus Dei.²⁸

When, from 1934 to 1937, a new Cristiada was launched, Pius XI let the Mexican episcopate excommunicate the Cristeros and then waited until they were all dead before daring to write (in his Letter to the Mexican Episcopate, 1937):

When power rises against justice and truth,...one cannot see how one could condemn the citizens who unite to defend the nation and themselves-even by the use of arms-against those who, by means of the state's power, devise their misfortune.

The same year, in *Divini Redemptoris*, he blamed Communism for the atrocities perpetrated against the Christians of Mexico...but he did not mention Freemasonry.

Another Vendée

The saga of the Cristeros reminds us of the famous rising of the Vendée during the French Revolution, and the two epics have many points in common:

- 1) The refusal of priests to take an oath of loyalty to the state;
- 2) The creation by the state of a schismatic church;
- 3) Religious persecution;
- 4) Part of the episcopate's indifference to the suffering of the flock;²⁹
- 5) The character of the country folk at arms, poor, unequipped, unprepared and undisciplined, yet courageous, joyous, generous even towards the enemy, and profoundly Christian. This letter from a colonel to his regiment embodies this spirit of the crusaders:

Beloved in Christ:

It is not merely a question of a few flatterers who can be doubted, but of a very widespread belief that our regiment is the best in the region, either because its leaders and followers are motivated by the right intentions or, considering the numbers involved, because of the order and especially the solid piety responsible for urging its men to unashamedly frequent the sacraments. For better or worse, those in the other regiments see this.

I render thanks to our Lord for such a beautiful thing, and I believe that you, too, do as much, and that you have the real desire to continue brandishing on high the flag of your people for the glory of Christ the King, and that your honor will know how to efface the black mark that your compatriots have cast upon your people.

Knowing your sincerity and human misery, I put you on guard against a danger that would vanquish you without remedy, that of vain glory, the dear daughter of the pride that manifests itself under the name and sentiment of self-love.

Far from falling into such a great evil, my beloved in Christ, remember often, and in all of your actions,

that everything good in you belongs to God alone, and what evil there is in your regiment belongs to you; to God all the glory, all the good, all the triumph, because you are vile instruments.

Show yourselves, then, to be always faithful and subject to your king Jesus Christ our Lord. Never forget the rosary, recommend yourselves to our Lord morning and evening. Love your soldiers as your sons and be fathers to the neediest. Treat all with charity, but never let justice suffer. Never speak well of yourselves unless there is good reason and then do so with modesty. Do not denigrate the men of the other regiments and do not criticize their faults. Keep a right intention. Live united. Never let your rank of colonel, major, captain, etc., go to your head. Remember death and the rigorous judgment that you will undergo according to your works; keep Christ always present and imitate Him in everything. Be faithful sons of Mary your good Mother, the most holy Virgin of Guadalupe. Do not misuse what little you have, for your families live in misery, and remember those of others. This is what I always ask of our Lord for you, and many other things as well which I do not mention in order not to lengthen a letter which is becoming a journal. May His Divine Majesty hear our poor supplications.³⁰

6) The role of women: wives who encourage their husbands (and, if need be, chase them back to the fight with blows), and mothers who have understood that martyrdom is the crowning of a truly Christian education. Dona Guadalupe, mother of Luis Navarro Origel, would say: "I offered the life of my four boys to Christ; but the Lord came up short: He only took two!"

7) The conflict's apocalyptic dimensions, of which both camps were aware: The one side's admirable religious fervor corresponded with other side's satanic mania for sacrilege and spiritual destruction. (Viva el Demonio! was the Federates' rallying cry.)

8) The ultimate betrayal of the Catholic troops...by the religious authorities.

These similarities should not, however, mask an essential difference: the sole motive of the Cristiada was religious. The defense of the faith was not mixed with any other cause, be it political, social, economic, or particular (as the refusal of the draft by the Vendée).

The army captured them and the general commanding the Place d'Arandas asked them for whom they had taken up arms to create such disorder. They replied that it was not to create disorders that they had taken up arms, but to defend Christ the King, who was no longer on the altars. They were shot immediately.³¹

This single-mindedness explains the remarkable homogeneity of the Mexican counter-revolutionary movement, its purity and its efficacy. It is a lesson worth meditating on.

The Kingdom of Our Lady of Guadalupe

More than 70 years after the epic, what remains of the Cristeros? Until July 2000, Mexico lived under the yoke of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) founded by Calles. Despite the backing of Messrs. Clinton and Gore, he was defeated in the elections, a victim of scandals and divisions between different Masonic obediences. Since the beginning of the 1990's, relations between the powers that be and the episcopate were the best: the "government's tribune" dominates the sanctuary of the new basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and, in 1995, its rector, Fr. Shulembrum³² publicly declared the

apparitions of 1531 to be false. The Mexican "miracle" is that this scandal prompted millions (which some estimate at a dozen) of pilgrims to come from all parts of the country, often on foot, sometimes on their knees, in reparation. It is well to briefly recall the facts, whose supernatural character was recognized by Benedict XIV in 1754, when he declared: "Non fecit taliter omni nationi-Not with every nation has He dealt thus."

On Saturday, December 9, 1531, Juan Diego, an Indian peasant of 57, recently converted, was on his way to Mass. At the foot of Tepeyac hill, a maiden of marvelous beauty appeared to him in a cloud of light: "I am truly the perpetual and perfect Virgin Mary, holy mother of the true God...and mother of those who have confidence in me." She asked him to go and find the bishop and ask him to have a church built. He did, but was shown the door. The same evening a new apparition reiterated the same request. On December 10, the bishop, troubled, requested a sign. On the 12th, there was a new apparition: "Climb to the top of the hill and gather the flowers." Nothing grew on the hilltop, especially in December! But Juan Diego obeyed, and filled his tilma...with Castilian roses! Overjoyed, he ran to the bishop's house, opened before the bishop his tilma full of flowers, and revealed beneath them the portrait of the Virgin, the only portrait of our Lady which has not been made by human hands! At the same time, our Lady appeared to the seer's uncle, who was dying, cured him, and told him the name by which she wished to be honored: Tequantlaxopeuh, that is, "she who crushes the serpent." The Spanish would hear this as "Tequatlasupe" and would associate it with Our Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura, Spain (apparition in 1323). One can imagine the devotion the Mexicans have towards this miraculous image which, like the Holy Shroud, reveals its marvels progressively to the scholars of every age. Here are just the principle inexplicable aspects of the image:

- 1) The cloak's fabric (made of the fiber of the maguey cactus) should have decomposed in 20 years; 470 years after the apparition, it is in perfect condition.
- 2) The back of the tilma is rough (which is normal), but the side with the image is as soft as silk.
- 3) The colors are as vibrant today as on the first day, despite the effects of time, light, candles, handling, attacks (acid, an explosion in 1921...), etc.
- 4) The colors are of an unknown origin (conclusion of Dr. Kuhn, winner of the Nobel Prize in chemistry).
- 5) It is not a painting. NASA declared the image to be "incomprehensible" in 1979.
- 6) Finally, digitization of the image has enabled researchers to peer into the eyes of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and to discover there the scene that occurred on December 12, 1531: the bishop, the Indian, a servant and some Franciscans who were there when Juan Diego opened his tilma. One can readily understand the devotion of the Christians of Latin America to Our Lady of Guadalupe, "Queen of Mexico, Empress of the Americas."

An Army of Martyrs

In 1988, Miguel Pro (a Jesuit) was the first Cristero to be beatified. Born in 1891, he was obliged to take refuge in France in order to continue his studies. He was ordained at Amiens in 1925. Having returned clandestinely to Mexico in July 1926, he was shot on November 23, 1927, along with his brother who was also a Cristero, while crying out: "Long live Christ the King!"

On the Feast of Christ the King, 1992,³³ Pope John Paul II beatified 26 other Cristeros (22 of whom were priests). Let us name some of them: Salvador Lara Puente, employee, killed in 1926, aged 21; Atilano Cruz Alvarado, ordained on Sept. 14, 1927, and killed July 1, 1928; or Manuel Morales, born in 1898, Catholic trade unionist, married and the father of three young children, who said before his execution: "I die, but God does not die; He will take care of my wife and children." "Dios no muere."...These were the last words of Garcia Moreno, President of Ecuador, assassinated by the Freemasons in 1875.

In October 1997, Matteo Elias Del Socorro Nieves was beatified. The son of peasants, the young Matteo heard God's call early, but his father having been assassinated, he had to support his mother and brothers; he became a priest at 34 years of age. Pastor of a village in the mountains of Culiacan, he refused to take refuge in the city and go underground. He spent 14 months in a grotto from which he only came out at night to exercise his priestly office. He was shot at 46, while crying out: "Long live Christ the King!"

On May 21, 2000, the Pope canonized 27 Mexicans, 23 of them from the Cristiada era (20 priests and 3 laymen). The press only mentioned the name of Fr. Cristobal Magallanes, pastor of Totatiche, martyred in 1927. Documentation Catholique did not deem it newsworthy enough to publish the text of the ceremony; yet 20,000 Mexicans converged on St. Peter's Square, for until then their country only had one canonized saint (St. Philip of Jesus, martyr of Japan), and the memory of the Cristiada remains strong there.

Five of those canonized were martyred by reason of hatred of the faith, as they had not participated in the resistance: Cristóbal Magallanes Jara (1869-1927), pastor; Luis Batis Sáinz (1870-1926), pastor; Augustín Caloca Cortés (1898-1927), seminary prefect; Mateo Correa Magallanes (1866-1927), pastor; Margarito Flores García (1900-1927), vicar.³⁴

The other canonized priests had gone underground, and were leading lives worthy of the "refractory" priests of the Vendee.

O admirable Blessed and Sainted Cristeros, known or unknown, pray for Mexico!³⁵ Pray for us, You luminous examples of humility, who, without bitterness or revolt, accepted the terrible trial of persecutions in a spirit of penitence and expiation for your sins and those of Mexico. Obtain for us from God an unshakeable faith while today, more than ever, the Masonic beast, to whom repentance is unknown, furiously wars against God.

"The great power of our enemies," wrote Blessed Miguel Pro, "is based on money, arms, and lies; it will crumble one day soon like the statue that Daniel saw collapse under the shock of a pebble falling from heaven. "

This is the transcript of a lecture given in 1997 at the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary School located in the Vendee in western France. It was translated by Angelus Press from the *Sel de la Terre* (Summer 2001). The unidentified quotations are mostly from Hugh Keraly's *Les Cristeros* [Greze-en-Boulere: DMM, 1986]. For readers unfamiliar with the history of the French Revolution and the resistance of the Vendee, a province in Western France where the people rose up against the regicide Republicans, Michael Davies's book *For Altar and Throne* [available from Angelus Press. Price: \$13.95] provides a

brief summary of the events and a moving tribute to those heroes and heroines.

The author M. Olivier Lelibre is a young father of a family and a high school teacher in the Vendee region of France.

-
1. Eugenic Corti, *La Responsabilite de la culture occi-dentale dans les grands massacres du XX" siecle, Atlantide, Europe No. 2, L'Age d'Homme (Lausanne, 1998)*. By "Western culture," the author means the "Enlightenment."
 2. French title of the book by Gustavo Corçao, *O Seculo do nada*.
 3. Jean Madiran, preface to *Siècle de l'Enfer* (Ed. Sainte-Madeleine, 1995), p.5.
 4. Maximilian, who became a Freemason as early as 1864, readily showed toleration to Protestantism and Judaism.
 5. "The Salad Bowl": a simile used by geographers to show how the different "ingredients" of the population are juxtaposed without blending. It would be useful to study the role of Protestantism in maintaining this state of affairs.
 6. A. Sanders, "La preuve par le Mexique," *Présent*, July 19-22.
 7. A. Sanders (article cited, July 22, 2000) lists the masters of the Mexican economy in 1914: Rockefeller (rubber), Goblentz (textiles), Guggenheim (mines), Hearst (alias Hirsch) who owned 3 million metric arces, and the Kuhn-Loeb bank, which financed Lenin.
 8. Beginning in 1529, the Franciscans opened eight colleges for the young Indians, as well as upper level technical schools. Financed by the king of Spain, in 1536 they opened, for the Indians alone, the Superior College of Holy Cross in Mexico (Latin, rhetoric, philosophy, music, medicine). In 1551, the University of Mexico was founded, open to Indians as well as Spanish. See *La Vraie contro-verse de Valladolid* by Jean Dumont (Paris: Criterion, 1995), pp. 130-131.
 9. Cardenas, president of Mexico from 1934-1940, named his son Cuauhtemoc, after the name of the last Aztec emperor. Having become a politician like his father, he was named the "Aztec sphinx" by the leftist media.
 10. Human sacrifices were offered almost daily. The number of victims, who had their hearts cut out still beating before being dismembered and eaten, have been estimated at 20,000 a year on the average (more than 50 a day!). The inauguration of the temple at Mexico was the occasion of massacring 20,000 victims in four days (some sources speak of 80,000). See "Croisades, Inquisition...: Faut-il demander pardon?" *Savoir et Servir* 60, 73-74.
 11. A. Sanders, art. cit. July 21 and 22 , 2000.

12. Ibid.

13. A. Sanders, art. cit., July 26, 2000.

14. Ibid.

15. A. Sanders names Calles's entourage: Aaron Saenz, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Moses Saenz, Vice Minister of Education; the US advisor Habermann (an agent of the Soviet GPU); Hirschfeld, Master of the Mexican Grand Lodge (art. cited, July 27, 2000).

16. According to M. Reboul (*Monde et Vie*, Oct. 19, 2000), 15 priests and 1 bishop of the Chinese "Patriotic" Church visited seminaries and parishes in France and Belgium in 1994. They concelebrated Mass with the priests and even bishops of the places visited without provoking the least protest (p. 14). Cardinal Etchegaray is also reported to have concelebrated with the functionary-priests of the Patriotic Church last October in the Marian sanctuary of Sheshan (*Libre journal*, Oct. 27, 2000).

17. A. Sanders, art. cit., July 27, 2000.

18. *La Tribuna*, July 12, 1926, quoted by F. M. Algoud, "1600 Young Saints, Young Martyrs," 1994.

19. J. Meyer, *Apocalypse et Révolution au Mexique, 1926-1926* (Archives Gallimard-Julliard, No. 56, 1974), pp.54-55.

20. Ibid.

21. A. Sanders, art. cit., July 28, 2000.

22. J. Meyer, *Apocalypse et Révolution*, p. 175.

23. The biographical information on the Mexican saints comes from the internet site <http://www.sanctus.com/Paginas/SanctosMexi-canos.html>

24. J. Meyer, *ibid.*, p. 172.

25. Most of the 20 martyred priests of period (canonized in 2000) were of rural origin, and half of them of very humble circumstances (shepherds like St. Atilano Cruz Alvarado; newspaper hawkers like St. Sabas Reyes).

26. J. Meyer, "Les Cristeros," *L'Histoire*, 86, February 1986.

27. A. Sanders, art. cit., July 29, 2000.

28. N. Dehan, in *Sel de la terre*, 11 (1994-1995), 126.

29. The letter of Msgr. de Mercy, Bishop of Luçon, in exile in Italy, deserves mention. On June 1, 1793, he wrote: "For a long time I hoped to be able to save the furniture I left...at Luçon. I might have...but the troubles in the Vendée harmed my cause, even though I do not take their side." Quoted by X. Martin, *Sur les Droits de l'homme et la Vendée* (DMM, 1995) p.75, n.269. Absent from his diocese from 1789, he only returned from exile in 1802, and was named Archbishop of Bourges....

30. J. Meyer, *Apocalypse et Révolution*, pp.173-174.

31. *Ibid.*,p.175.

32. He was dismissed. See the Madrid daily ABC, Dec. 14, 1996.

33. Thursday, Oct. 22, 1992, was, in fact, close to the Sunday of the Feast of Christ the King (Oct. 25) according to the traditional calendar (for, in the new rite, it was the 30th "Ordinary Sunday." The new calendar has moved the Feast of Christ the King to the Sunday "of the End of Time," which closes the liturgical year, as if one thereby wished to signify that Christ's kingship is purely "eschatological."-Ed.)

34. The first one named had even condemned the Cristero movement insofar as they had recourse to arms; he offered his life "for peace." One might wonder why exactly he was chosen to head the list of the Cristero martyrs? [Ed. note.]

35. Was it, perhaps, due to their intercession? Last Oct. 1, abortion, which had been tolerated in Mexico in the case of rape, was forbidden. The law states: "As legislators, we must consider not only the injury and pain of the mother who was violated, but also the greater evil constituted by the death of an innocent minor" (Fails et Documents, Nov. 15, 2000).