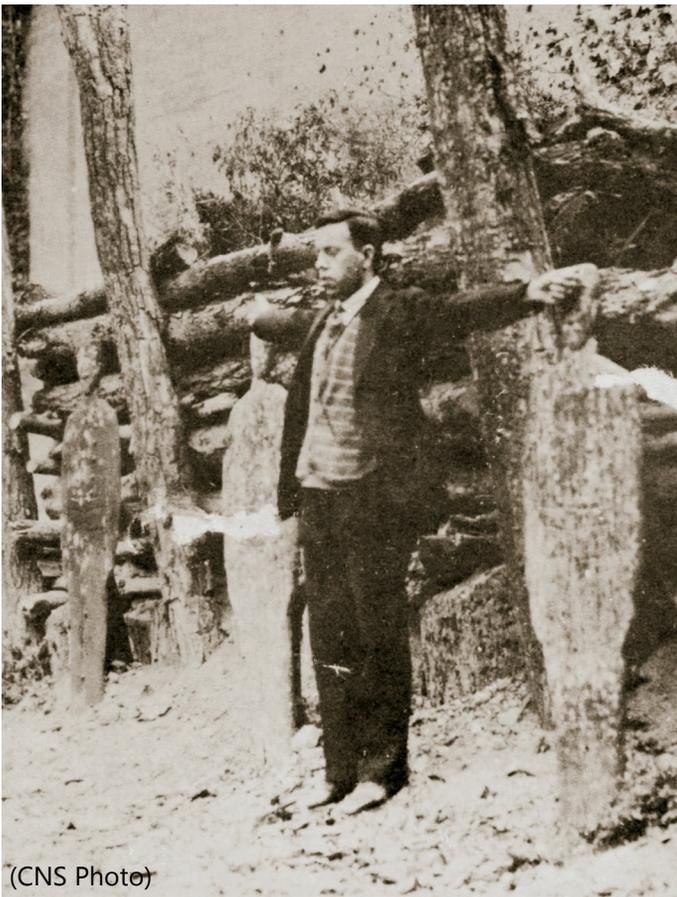


WITNESS TO FREEDOM

BL. MIGUEL PRO



“Viva Cristo Rey!”

As he faced a firing squad for serving the Catholic faithful in Mexico at a time when Catholicism was outlawed and severely persecuted, Fr. Miguel Pro of the Society of Jesus made a request. He asked to have a moment to pray on his knees, then he stood up, stretched out his arms in the imitation of Christ on the cross and submitted himself to his martyrdom, shouting “Viva Cristo Rey!”

This moment was photographed, and so we can look into the face of a martyr at the moment of his execution. What is astonishing about the images is the serenity with which Blessed Miguel submits himself to the state. He does not respond with violent resistance, because he is at peace with God. From that place of peace, the martyr triumphs over tyranny. Government cannot take away his inner freedom, the freedom that belongs to any person who submits himself totally to God.

Due in part to Blessed Miguel’s witness, the Mexican government was shamed and an uprising gained the strength to stand up to religious persecution, as well as other injustices. He did not know it at the time, but his death inspired a larger defense of political and religious freedom that has since permitted the Church to live more publicly her call to holiness.

Freedom through surrender is a paradox that is hard to understand and at times harder to live. Nonetheless, we are all called, like Blessed Miguel, to live in the freedom that only comes through an imitation of Christ’s faithful obedience.

Blessed Miguel’s life and death remains a witness to complete surrender to Christ in a way to which we might struggle to relate. Yet, we are all called to order our lives to Christ. We may not be asked to die for our faith, but we are asked to give each moment of the day to the Lord. This capacity requires freedom from sin, freedom from selfishness, freedom from all those things that stand between us and God.

Blessed Miguel Pro reminds us that even in extreme circumstances, we find true freedom when we live first for Christ. That witness, when adopted in our lives, may even inspire others to similar acts of love.

Blessed Miguel Pro, pray for us!



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