

NOVEMBER 23
BLESSED MICHAEL AUGUSTINE PRO
PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, MARTYR
OPTIONAL MEMORIAL

Michael Augustine Pro was born at Guadalupe, Zacatecas (Mexico) in 1891 in a profoundly Christian home. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1911, did his priestly training in Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, and Belgium, and was ordained on August 30, 1925. Although of poor health, especially during his theological studies, and often in pain, he never lost his cheerfulness and sense of humor. He returned to Mexico in July, 1926, just a few days before a persecution law came into force. Fr. Pro began to carry out his priestly ministry clandestinely with extraordinary fervor and dedication. On a false accusation, but chiefly because he was a priest, he was jailed and subsequently executed in Mexico City on November 23, 1927, with no judicial process whatever.

From the Common of Martyrs, or the Common of Pastors, except the following

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

Extracts from letters of Blessed Michael Augustine Pro, priest and martyr

(*Vida íntima del padre Pro*, Antonio Dragon, S.J., ed. Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, A.C., México, D.F., 1952, 3rd edition, pp. 177-178, 112, 113, 130, 139-140, 136.)

*Deep esteem for the priesthood and ardent desire for
martyrdom*

Does God speak to the soul? . . . Yes, indeed, he does and his words are sweet. He does speak, and the soul understands his voice, understands his language. I know this from experience and assure you that I did not have the dispositions you have in order to understand his call.

Rather, I had all the opposite dispositions, all the obstacles, and these were not due to factors independent of myself but to my own actions and conduct, which were entirely contrary. But God in his infinite mercy cast his eyes on the dry and barren tree-trunk of my life and saw the statue he could carve with his most holy grace; he called me out, in spite of my opposition, from the corrupt world where I lived, so that the beautiful words of the psalmist might come true: *I raised you from the dunghill to place you among the princes of my people. . . .*

I have not found in all my religious life a faster and more effective means to live in intimate union with Jesus than the Holy Mass. Everything begins to look different, everything is seen from another angle, everything is shaped by wider, more generous, more spiritual horizons. You will not be the same as before: something more divine is going to flood your soul and change it altogether, and that something, which is the character to be conferred on you and is nothing else than the fullness of the Holy Spirit, will remove everything human that was left in you and stir your divine life, a closer and more real sharing in the *consors divinae naturae. . . .*

This something that I find within me and I had never felt before, which makes me view everything differently, is not the fruit of study or our own greater or lesser holiness, or anything personal and hence human. It is the divine mark the Holy Spirit imprints on the soul when he gives us the priestly character. It is a closer participation in the divine life that raises us to divine dignity. It is a superior power that renders easy and accessible the wishes and aspirations we might not have fulfilled before. . . .

I did not notice this change until I found myself in touch with souls. . . . God our Lord chose to use me as his instrument to do good. How many souls I consoled, how many tears I wiped, how much courage I infused to walk the difficult road of life! Two vocations that were almost lost returned to God; a seminarian who had decided to give up is now following the designs of Providence with new strength. . . . And is it not crystal clear that whatever good I happened to accomplish was all due to the grace of the priesthood, to the Holy Spirit, who was guiding and governing me, to that something that was not human and which I had not felt before the day I was ordained? . . .

The persecution is a fact; the reprisals, especially in Mexico City, will be terrible; the first to be struck will be those engaged in religious activities, and I am in the thick of it all. I wish I was given the privilege of being one of the first . . . or the last, for that matter, but one of the number anyway! . . .

Obedience is better than sacrifice and that is why I have not moved from where I am. But let me tell you one thing without meaning to criticize or murmur in the least. The situation out here is extremely delicate, and any activity is dangerous, and I do know that God wants us to help ourselves if we want him to help us. Nonetheless, the people are in dire need of spiritual assistance. Every day I hear of persons dying without the sacraments; there are no priests who confront the situation; they keep away due to either obedience or fear. To do my little bit may be dangerous if I do it the way I have so far; but I do not think it temerity to do it with discretion and within certain limits. My superior is dead scared and always thinks that, out of

two possibilities, the worse is bound to happen. I daresay there is a middle way between temerity and fear, as there is between extreme prudence and rashness. I have pointed this out to my superior but he always fears for my life. But what is my life? Would I not gain it if I lost it for my brothers and sisters? True, we do not have to give it away stupidly. But what are the sons of Loyola for if they flee at the first flare? I am not speaking in general; some should certainly be spared because they will be very useful some day. But types like myself? . . .

The present trial is turning out an ever-increasing number of fearless Catholics and has even produced martyrs . . . Victory will not be late in coming! The splendor of the resurrection is in the offing, precisely because the darkness of the persecution is now at its worst. We get reports from all sides of outrages and reprisals; the victims are many; the martyrs are on the increase day by day. Oh, if I had the luck! . . .

Responsory (2 Tim. 4:7-8; Phil. 3:8,10)

R. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.

V. I count everything as loss that I may know Christ and share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Henceforth. . . .

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, you gave your servant Michael Augustine the grace to seek ardently your greater glory and the salvation of your people. Grant that, through his intercession and following his example, we may serve you and glorify you by performing our daily duties with fidelity and joy and effectively helping our neighbor. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.