

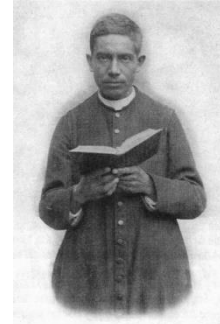
Christopher Magallanes (Cristobal Magallanes Jara) was born in 1869 in the province of Guadalajara, Mexico, of devout parents who were poor farmers. As a youth, he worked as a shepherd, but felt called to be a shepherd of souls. He entered the seminary at nineteen and was ordained at the age of thirty. He worked as a parish priest in his hometown of Totatiche for two decades, and there also opened a carpentry business to help provide jobs for the local men.

When, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the atheistic Mexican government launched a merciless persecution of the Catholic Church, a new constitution in 1917 banned the training of priests. Initially, written into governmental law, specific prohibitions were declared in regards to organized religion. For example, wearing clerical garb in public (i.e., outside Church buildings) earned a fine of 500 pesos (approximately 250 U.S. dollars at the time); a priest who criticized the government could be imprisoned for five years. Some states enacted oppressive measures permitting only a single priest to serve the entire Catholic congregation of the state. Church property was seized, foreign priests were expelled, and all monasteries, convents, and religious schools were closed.

May 21, we celebrate the feast days of 25 Mexican Martyrs who died during the Mexican Cristero War. The Cristero War (also known as the Cristiada) occurred throughout Mexico between the years of 1926 and 1929, and consisted of an uprising against the Mexican government of the time, set off by religious persecution of Catholics and Catholic religious. The governor of Mexico's Tabasco state in the 1920s, Garrido Canabal, was so insanely anti-Catholic that he named his three sons Lenin, Satan, and Lucifer. He was also a farmer and named one of his bulls "God," a hog "Pope," a cow "Mary," and a donkey "Christ." He ordered the removal and destruction of all crucifixes from public buildings and graveyards in Tabasco. Canabal was a political protégé of the Mexican president, and later strongman, Plutarco Calles. Calles was an illegitimate child, born to unmarried parents. Calles hated being called an illegitimate child and especially resented the Roman Catholic Church for this title of illegitimacy. In

time, Calles became a devout believer in the religion of atheism, eagerly shared his beliefs with others, and put great energy into evangelizing others to his side. As governor of the state of Sonora, he expelled all Catholic priests. As president of Mexico, he carried out an overtly violent, ferocious, scorched-earth attack on Catholicism without par in the twentieth century. Priests were killed for no other reason than for being priests. While the Christian rebellion started out peacefully, following increasing fines, restrictions, and persecution and martyrdom of priests, things became more deadly. The rebels began calling themselves Cristeros because they felt they were fighting for Christ himself.

In 1915, Fr. Christopher had opened his own small seminary in Totatiche where he soon had a dozen students. He also authored a newspaper, founded schools for both adults and children, and assisted the people of his congregation with employment via the organization of carpentry shops and an electric mill. Father Cristobal encouraged the cooperation of his congregation with the indigenous peoples of the region, together forming an agricultural cooperative which was quite successful.

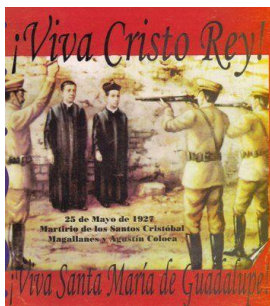


Consequently accused of trying to incite rebellion, Fr. Christopher was arrested on May 21, 1927, along with a brother priest, Father Caloca, on their way to say Mass to celebrate the Feast of St. Rita. They were imprisoned and condemned to be shot without trial. His few possessions he gave away to his jailer and they were both pulled out to the courtyard on May 25, 1927. His final words were, "I am innocent and die innocent. I absolve with all my heart those who seek my death and ask God that my blood bring peace to a divided Mexico." The priests absolved each other, spoke some few words of comfort, and then were shot to death by a firing squad of fellow Mexicans in soldiers' uniforms. Father Caloca's last words were: "For God we lived and for Him we die." He and 24 others were canonized by Pope John Paul II on May 21, 2000.

After formal rebellion began, fighting ensued for approximately two years, until diplomatic relations and pressure from outside countries led to an uneasy truce between the Cristeros and the Mexican government. In the years following the establishment of truce, however, the government continued to assassinate religious leaders and suspected members of the rebellion, killing approximately 5,500 individuals over a ten year period. Persecution of Catholics would not cease until

approximately 1940, with the election of a Catholic president. The effects of the war on the Church had been profound. Between 1926 and 1934 at least 40 priests were killed. Where there were 4,500 priests serving the people before the rebellion, in 1934 there were only 334 priests licensed by the government to serve fifteen million people. The rest had been eliminated by emigration, expulsion and assassination. By 1935, 17 states had no priest at all.

The Cristeros battle hymn, called upon Jesus, Mary, and the saints in protection.



La Virgen María es nuestra protectora y nuestra defensora cuando hay que temer, Vencerá a los demonios gritando "¡Viva Cristo Rey!", Vencerá a los demonios gritando "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" Soldados de Cristo: ¡Sigamos la bandera que la Cruz enseña el ejército de Dios! Sigamos la bandera gritando, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!"

The Virgin Mary is our protector and defender when there is something to fear, She will defeat the demons crying "Long live Christ the King!" She will defeat the demons crying "Long live Christ the King!" Soldiers of Christ let us follow the flag that the Cross shows the army of God! Let us follow the flag crying, "Long live Christ the King!"

With the assistance of the United States, a peace agreement was established on 21 June 1929 that allowed worship to resume in Mexico, permitted religious education in the churches and allowed clergy to petition for legal reform. Also the Catholic Church regained its property rights. With this agreement the Bishops called for an end to the rebellion and threatened rebels with excommunication. This, in turn, led the rebellion to die out.

For a visitor to Mexico today, or to anyone familiar with its culture, such events are difficult to imagine or comprehend. Mexico harbors one of the most vibrant Catholic cultures in the entire world, thick with devotions, processions, Masses, feast day celebrations, and religious song and dress. Yet the Cristero War did happen, and not a thousand years ago.

Other names you may know: St. José Sánchez del Río (shot at 14 years old); Blessed Miguel Pro; St. Oscar Romero

<https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/21-may-saint-christopher-magallanes-and-companions-martyrs-optional-memorial/>

<https://americaneedsfatima.org/Saints-Heroes/st-christopher-magallanes-and-companions.html>

Praying the Chaplet of St. Christopher Magallanes (Cristobal Magallanes Jara)



Opening Prayer on the Medal:

Almighty and eternal God, who made the Priest Saint Christopher Magallanes and his companions faithful to Christ the King even to the point of martyrdom, grant us, through their intercession, that, persevering in confession of the true

faith, we may always hold fast to the commandments of your love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

On each Lead Bead: Father Magallanes, your quiet witness and noble death are an inspiration to all who suffer physical violence for the faith in unknown ways and in unknown places. May your intercession and courage be an inspiration for all priests, laymen, and religious who are tempted to bend in the winds of persecution. Amen (Mention your request here...)

On the Three Beads: 1 Our Father... 1 Hail Mary... 1 Glory Be...

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, Help me to be courageous and steadfast in my devotion to you. Help me to identify causes and injustices in my day that are worth defending and standing up for. Give me perseverance and a desire to help others at any cost. Help me to revere Christ as the king of my life. St. Cristobal Magallanes, pray for us.

Cristero Prayer:

My Jesus Mercy! My sins are more numerous than the drops of blood that Thou did shed for me. I do not deserve to belong to the army that defends the rights of Thy Church and that fights for her. I desire never to sin again so that my life might be an offering pleasing to Thy eyes. Wash away my iniquities and cleanse me of my sins. By Thy Holy Cross, by my Holy Mother of Guadalupe, pardon me.

Since I do not know how to make penance for my sins, I desire to receive death as a chastisement merited by them. I do not wish to fight, live or die except for Thee and for Thy Church. Blessed Mother of Guadalupe, be at my side in the agony of this poor sinner. Grant that my last shout on earth and my first canticle in Heaven should be Viva Cristo Rey! Amen

<https://novenaprayers.com/2021/05/12/st-cristobal-magallanes-novena/>
https://www.traditioninaction.org/History/B_012_Cristeros_Prayer.html
<https://ace.nd.edu/news/honoring-saint-jose-sanchez-del-rio-viva-cristo-rey>