

Feast of Blessed Miguel Pro  
Saturday, 23 November 2019  
1 MC 6:1-13; Lk 20:27-40

A priest friend posted a really corny joke on Facebook back when this Gospel was the Sunday Gospel for the 32<sup>nd</sup> week. I believe one of the religion teachers at Hendricken uses it each year as well. It goes like this: “In this Sunday’s gospel the Sadducees confront Jesus with a question about eternal life. The Sadducees didn’t believe in eternal life so they were sad, you see?” Don’t laugh! It’s a terrible joke! Bad jokes are bad because they don’t make you laugh. Well today’s Gospel doesn’t give us a bad joke, but something worse, bad theology. Because while a bad joke might prevent us from laughing, bad theology can prevent us from growing in holiness and as priests, from leading our flock to Heaven.

The Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection from the dead. They didn’t believe in angels or in Heaven. What a sad way to live. But it allowed them to hold onto political power. Since there was no afterlife, no resurrection, they didn’t need to worry about a recompense for their sins. They could betray their people, collaborate with the Romans, and line their pockets while doing so. Bad theology leads men to do bad things. Which is why it is so important to get it right.

The Maccabees got it right when they refused to worship the false gods. They refused to collaborate. Many of them died fighting the greater powers. In 2 Maccabees is the story of the 7 brothers, all killed in front of their mother for refusing the king’s order to eat unclean meat (this is the story behind the Sadducees question). These young men were motivated in their courage by

the truth that God is a God of life. The mother says to her last son before he is executed: “Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with your brothers.”

Today we celebrate the memorial of Blessed Miguel Pro who also was killed for his faith. As a young priest in Mexico, bringing the Eucharist and other sacraments to people underground during the anti-Catholic persecutions, he was captured and executed. He had no trial, there was no justice, just a hatred for the faith. As he was shot he shouted “Viva Cristo Rey!” Long live Christ the King. He knew who his true king was, and he knew that his king and savior would welcome him into the true Kingdom of Heaven. The church in Mexico was at a low point. And it is in those moments that God sends us heroes like Miguel Pro. Who could have guessed in 1927 that a short 52 years later, the Bishop of Rome, John Paul II, would visit Mexico and that he would celebrate Mass in the open air with thousands of people. It was the sacrifice of Miguel Pro that made that happen, that motivated the Cristeros rebels to stand up, to fight back, and end the persecutions.

And Fr. Pro is not an aberration. The history of the Church is filled with men and women, but especially young priests, who have made this sacrifice, and shown the world a great light among the darkness. Priests like Blessed Jerzy Popieluszko (pop ie uz ko) in Poland, St. Andrew Dung-Lac of Vietnam, the many Jesuit martyrs of England, and on and on. When the persecutions start and fear begins to spread, it must be the priests who stand up and show the world why the Church will survive even the greatest of tyrants. More importantly they show the

world that this life is NOT all there is. That Christ promised each of us, like He did to the good thief on the Cross, that if we give our lives to Him, then we will be with Him in paradise.

We don't need any more collaborators in the priesthood, men who put the comforts of this world before the truth about life in the next, we have enough of those already. We need men of good theology, priests who believe in the promise of Christ and wish to share that good news with their brothers and sisters. We need men of courage who will offer up their lives for that message. Who will suffer the slanders, the injustices and the persecutions that the world, and even some within the Church itself, will throw at them, and they will continue to move forward, continue being good, courageous men of God. Those men, those priests, become a stunning reflection of Christ in those dark places of the world. It is their sacrifice, their witness, that will lead many souls to Heaven.