

Rt Rev. Bishop Ignacio Valdespino 5/15/1928

"Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum" (Blessed are they who suffer persecution for Justice' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven) Matt. V:10

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Three weeks have hardly passed since the death of the illustrious Primate of the Church in Mexico and here we are again assembled in this venerable cathedral to assist at the solemn obsequies of another of the exiled bishops: the Rt Rev. Bishop Ignacio Valdespino of Aguas Calientes. The bloody, cruel tragedy, staged by Calles in Mexico, is thus once again, through the death of this latest victim of the religious persecution, brought vividly before the eyes of the American people.

The saddest feature of the Mexican situation is doubtless the universal apathy of the civilized world: Mexico is bleeding from a thousand wounds, and no one seems to care; Mexico is being drowned in the tears and the blood of its best sons and daughters and the nations of the world remain cold and unconcerned. The only one whose voice thrilled in solemn protest and condemnation was the White Father of Christendom, Pope Pius XI. Liberty is being crucified at our very door and the United States looks on with perfect indifference. Not a voice is raised in protest; yea, despotism seems to have become popular amongst us: are we not sending endless "good-will" parties to Mexico? Are we not courting the friendship and favor of the very men whose hands are dripping with the blood of their countless innocent victims?

If we ratify the solemn judgment of the great American President Abraham Lincoln: "those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves and under a just God cannot long retain it", there cannot exist a bond of friendship between the liberty-loving American people and the so-called Government across the Rio Grande which is torturing, killing and outraging men and women who dare to invoke the name of God or dare to raise up their voice in defense of the most elementary liberty. And yet what sad, what monstrous picture rises up before our eyes! We see the great American nation, prosperous, happy, free, proud of its championship of true liberty; while in the deep dark shades of the picture appears poor Mexico, wounded to death, groaning under the tyrant's heel, bound hand and foot--and (we may as well face the stubborn facts) bound with shackles which we--oh the pity and the shame of it--have helped to forge! Did we not support the unspeakable Carranza? Did we not encourage that arch-bandit Pancho Villa? Did we not lift into the Presidential Chair Alvaro Obregon? Are we not even now bidding for the friendship of Calles and selling him the aeroplanes with which he is bombing the heroic men who are dying for freedom and Conscience' sake in Jalisco? Indeed for over half a century we have been a bad neighbor to weak, poor, suffering Mexico. In final analysis, we are largely responsible for the present Mexican tragedy. If the blood of the innocent Abel cried for vengeance against Cain the murderer, will not the innocent blood poured out in Mexico, be crying against us for the help and friendship we have so lavishly bestowed on the men responsible for that horrible carnival of crime across our Southern boundary?

No, we do not want war with Mexico. No one wants armed intervention. Least of all the noble suffering people of Mexico. They are patriots



not traitors. They love their country and are ready to lay down their lives in defense of their dear native soil against the unjust invader. To say that the Mexican exiles would welcome American armed intervention is a LIE, on a par with the repeated assertions that Archbishop Orozco is leading the warriors of Jalisco into battle; that the priests in Mexico are fighting with sword and rifle with the "Libertadores"; that the Church in Mexico has fabulous wealth! (While the two prelates who died amongst us had not even the money wherewith to cover their funeral expenses!)

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No one wants war with Mexico. Yet, would not decency, would not humanity, would not love of liberty demand a manly protest from the civilized nations of the world and in the foremost place, on account of our Monroe doctrine, from Washington, against the brutal, barbarous policy of a Government trampling under foot all freedom: freedom of speech; freedom of peaceful assembly; freedom of the Press; freedom of education; freedom of worship and conscience? The internal government of a country is no concern of any other nation. But violent, brutal persecution is the concern of humanity. What noble contribution to Civilization; what blessing to poor Mexico would be a ringing protest against this shameful disgrace of our 20th Century!

No nation was ever oppressed but received words of encouragement from the American people. While still a young nation and far from being the Power we are today, we expressed our sympathy with the Greeks languishing under the tyranny of the Sultan of Turkey. Wherever people were downtrodden and denied the liberty so dear to the American heart the voice of America was heard in no uncertain tone. It was thus in Roumania, Ireland, Cuba, Armenia, Russia. How then explain that ominous silence today of our State Department, of our Congress, of the Press, of the pulpit, as though we are forgetting that this Republic was founded by men who held that resistance to Tyranny is obedience to God.

One of the greatest of the Roman Pontiffs and one of the most remarkable men of all times, Pope Gregory the VII uttered, as he was breathing his last, these words: "Dilexi justitiam et odivi iniquitatem; propterea morior in exilio". (I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore do I die in exile). Well might the deceased Prelate make these words his own. For no other reason ~~did~~ he die in a land far from the beloved land of his Fathers, but that he loved Justice and hated iniquity. The Martyrs of the Coliseum could have saved their lives by burning a handful of incense before the false gods of Rome. But they chose death and torture above disloyalty and dishonor. And so Bishop Valdespino. One word, one gesture doing violence to his conscience would have spared him suffering, dungeon and banishment. He nobly preferred suffering and death rather than be false to his God, his duty, his conscience. Is it not the peerless Southern leader, Robert E. Lee who wrote that the noblest word in the English language is "DUTY"? The one who lies in that bier died a Martyr to Duty. Could nobler ~~Death~~ come to any one? Yes, we feel that the Master's solemn promise is being fulfilled in him already: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for Justice" sake; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven". Yes, the magnificent words spoken by the Holy Ghost in the Book of Wisdom (3:5) "God has tried them and found them worthy of Himself" are applicable to the glorious Martyrs of Mexico; to all who are suffering for Justice' sake. May his soul and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.



*1) Thus he made
to eat the bitter
bread of exile;
for no other
reason did*