

St. Mateo Correa Magallanes: Martyr of Confession



During the 1920s and 1930s, the Catholic Church in Mexico faced severe persecution. Many priests and religious were killed, and others were forced to flee to the United States and Europe. Several Carmelite monasteries in California owe their founding to sisters who survived the persecutions and escaped.

One of the priests who gave his life for the Faith is St. Mateo Correa Magallanes. In 1927, as he was bringing the Eucharist to a sick woman, he was caught by the police and imprisoned. On February 5, 1927, St. Mateo was ordered to hear the confessions of the other prisoners. He gladly heard them and encouraged the prisoners to keep their faith and hope and die in a state of grace. After he had heard their confessions, the general in charge of the prison, who had ordered St. Mateo to hear their confessions, ordered him to reveal everything they had confessed. St. Mateo refused. The general threatened to kill him if he did not reveal what the prisoners had confessed, but still, St. Mateo refused. The next day, a group of soldiers took St. Mateo to a cemetery outside the city and killed him.

On May 21, 2000, Pope St. John Paul II canonized St. Mateo and twenty-six other Mexican saints. In his homily, the Holy Father said, “They did not stop courageously exercising their ministry when religious persecution intensified in the beloved land of Mexico, unleashing hatred of the Catholic religion. They all freely and calmly accepted martyrdom as a witness to their Faith, explicitly forgiving their persecutors.”

“You know well, General, that a priest must keep secret all he hears in confession. I am willing to die.” —St. Mateo Correa Magallanes