

# February

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## PRAYER:

*Act of Hope*

## VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

*Cheerfulness: looking on the bright side*

In his book, *Orthodoxy*, the Catholic author G.K. Chesterton wrote that "pride cannot rise to levity or levitation." Levity is a lightness of mind (and levitation, lightness of body). Gravity means both *downward pull* and *seriousness*. Chesterton concluded that "it is easy to be heavy: hard to be light." And that "Satan fell by the force of gravity." So Satan basically fell because he took himself way too seriously. It is hard to imagine the fallen angels ever being cheerful. We too cannot be cheerful if we are fighting against God. We might experience pleasure at times, but not true, lighthearted joy. But when we are united to God's will and trust Him with our lives, we can be cheerful, even in difficult circumstances.

Practicing cheerfulness does not mean pretending everything is perfect all the time. Sometimes things are tough and not as we would like. But if we are filled with the joy of the Lord, a joy that nothing can take from us, we can see the good in the midst of difficulties. Jesus said, "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

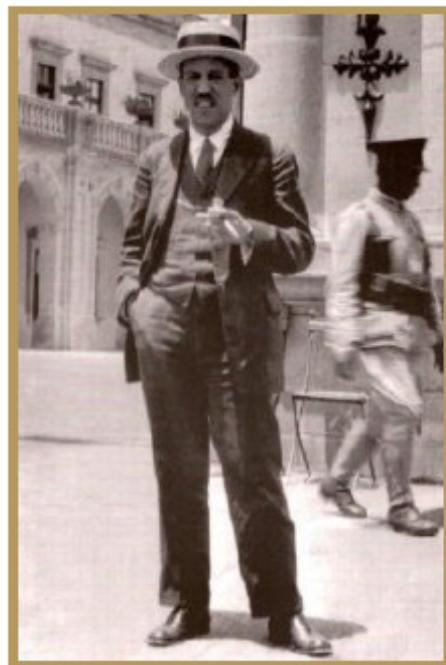
## SAINT OF THE MONTH:

*Blessed Miguel Augustin Pro*  
(1891 – 1927, Mexico)

Feast: November 23

Miguel Pro was the oldest son of a large Mexican family. He was a lively youth, gifted at mimicking voices of his family, friends, and neighbors, and at putting on dramas. He loved to tease his brothers and sisters and to play practical jokes on his family. Yet he was kind and sensitive to others' feelings too. He never used his humor to hurt others, but only to make them laugh.

At the age of 20, he felt God calling him to become a Jesuit priest. When he had been at the seminary for only a few months, the government began to persecute the Church in Mexico, closing schools and taking Church properties. Miguel and the other seminarians were worried about their families and were very homesick. The novice master asked Miguel to cheer everyone up by organizing hikes, dramas, picnics, feast day parties, and other activities. Eventually the government closed the seminary and the Jesuit novices had to flee in disguise and complete their training abroad.



*Blessed Miguel Pro in disguise*

CHEERFULNESS: looking on the bright side

After being ordained in Belgium, Father Miguel Pro returned to Mexico in the midst of a changing government. The constitution made practicing the Catholic faith illegal, but Father Pro was fearless and went all over Mexico City helping the poor, saying Mass, and hearing Confessions. With bravery as well as humor, he put all of his talents of mimicry and costume to use, evading the police who were searching for him, and often daring to make fools of them in ways they did not even realize. The photo on page 28 shows him dressed as a rich tourist standing in front of the President's palace with a police officer walking right behind him! Once, when the police found out where he was celebrating Mass, Blessed Miguel evacuated the congregation, but stayed behind himself. He casually pretended to be a wealthy student, and acted shocked when the police told him there was a priest around. He offered to help them look and lead them all around the building in search of the priest! Another time he even wore a police uniform to bring Communion to a Catholic who was in prison and awaiting execution.

Over time, Catholics in Mexico were tired of seeing their priests shot and their churches closed, and they began to fight for their religious freedom. In October 1927, two Catholic men tried to assassinate a high government official. They were captured, and because the car they were driving had formerly belonged to Miguel Pro's brother, Miguel and two of his brothers were arrested. The men who had planned the attack confessed and swore the Pro brothers had not been involved. The government would not believe them, though, and in addition, found out that Miguel Pro was a priest. Without a trial, all five men were condemned to death. Blessed Miguel was led before the firing squad. The government had invited reporters, thinking the Church would be embarrassed by a coward's death. Instead, Blessed Miguel walked by the soldiers, who were going to shoot him, and said, "I forgive you and I will pray for your families." He asked to kneel and pray, and calmly did so. He refused a blindfold, stretched out his arms as if on a cross, with a rosary in one hand and a little cross in the other. As they shot him, he yelled out, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" *Long live Christ the King!*

One of his brothers was also executed. His other brother was spared at the last moment. When Blessed Miguel's father saw the bodies of his two sons, he told the family not to weep, but to be proud because they were martyrs. Despite the fact that it was illegal to attend Mass, 30,000 people lined the streets for Miguel's funeral Mass, shouting "¡Viva Cristo Rey!"

#### PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created.  
R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*  
V. Let us pray.  
R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of His consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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#### PRAYER:

Dear Blessed Miguel Pro, you used your gifts of humor and cheerfulness to draw others to Christ. You proclaimed your belief in Him, even when it cost you your life. Help us also to use the gifts God has given us for the good of others and to stand firm in the Lord, even in the face of hatred and persecution. Amen. Blessed Miguel Pro, pray for us.