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# Blesseds and Saints *of the* Knights of Columbus





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While Knights of Columbus are known for countless charitable activities in their parishes and communities, some members have made the ultimate sacrifice as martyrs for the faith. Still others have been officially recognized by the Catholic Church for their heroic virtue and sanctity. As a Catholic man, every Knight is challenged to live as a saint and eventually be one with God in heaven. Here is a list of Knights and role models whose reputations for sanctity have been recognized by the Catholic Church as blesseds and saints.

## Blessed Michael McGivney

Father Michael J. McGivney was an American parish priest best known for founding the Knights of Columbus. The eldest of 13 children born to Irish-immigrant parents in Waterbury, CT, he worked in a spoon factory before entering seminary, experiencing firsthand the hardships working men faced at the time. It was so that such men could protect their families from financial hardship and grow in their faith that Father McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus

with a group of laymen at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT in 1882.

Father McGivney was ordained to the priesthood on Dec. 22, 1877, and he became a central figure in the growth of the Catholic Church in America. Beloved by his people and wearing himself out through his selfless ministry, he died at the age of 38 on Aug. 14, 1890, while serving as a pastor in Thomaston, CT. He was beatified on Oct. 31, 2020, after the confirmation of a miracle attributed to his intercession that involved an unborn child who was healed in utero of a fatal condition.

Recognized by the Church for his holiness, heroic virtue and vision, Father McGivney remains to this day a model for clergy and laity alike.

## The Mexican Martyrs

These men were killed for their faith during the religious persecution of Catholics by the Mexican government in the early 20th century. During the persecution, which led to "La Cristiada," or the "Cristero War," priests, missionaries and members of religious orders were expelled from the country, more than a million Mexicans migrated to the United States seeking refuge, and others spontaneously organized to defend themselves against government oppression. Several of those martyred were members of the Knights of Columbus. Six of these men have been declared saints, and three of them have been named blesseds. These nine Knights are listed on the following pages.



Painting by Chas Fagan © Knights of Columbus



### **St. Luis Batis Sáinz, *Priest and Martyr***

Father Luis Batis Sáinz was a parish priest in the village of Chalchihuites, Zacatecas, and a member of Council 2367 in Durango. On Aug. 15, 1926, he and three laymen — David Roldán (who was only 19 years old), Salvador Lara and Manuel Morales — were lined up and killed by firing squad for participating in meetings of different Catholic groups and for having violated anti-Catholic legislation. When Father Luis

Batis asked for Manuel Morales' freedom, explaining that he had children, Manuel interrupted, saying, "I am dying for God, and God will care for my children." Smiling, Father Batis absolved him and said, "I'll see you in heaven."



### **St. José María Robles Hurtado, *Priest and Martyr***

Father José María Robles Hurtado was a member of Council 1979 in Guadalajara, Jalisco. He was ordained a priest in 1913 and founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus when he was only 25 years old. On June 25, 1927, he was arrested as he prepared to celebrate Mass. The following morning, he was brought to an oak tree to be hanged, but before his executioners could carry out the sentence, he forgave them

and said a prayer for his parish. Father José María even approached a farmer he knew well, whose task was to place the noose around his neck. He told the farmer, "Friend, do not dirty yourself," and, taking the noose, he placed it around his own neck. He was then executed.



### **St. Mateo Correa Magallanes, *Priest and Martyr***

Father Mateo Correa Magallanes was a member of Council 2140 in Zacatecas. He was arrested in Durango, and while in prison, the general in charge ordered him to hear the other prisoners' confessions. After doing so, the general ordered him to disclose what the prisoners had said during confession. Father Mateo Correa answered, "I'll never do it!" When the infuriated general threatened to shoot him, Father Mateo

Correa responded, "You forget, general, that a priest must keep the secrecy of confession. I am ready to die." The next day, he was brought to Durango's Panteón de Oriente and was killed in a hail of bullets.



### **St. Miguel de la Mora de la Mora, *Priest and Martyr***

Father Miguel de la Mora de la Mora was a member of Council 2140 in Zacatecas. He had been the chaplain of the Cathedral of Colima since 1918. In 1926, along with other priests, he publicly signed a manifesto rejecting the anti-religious Calles laws. The bishop and his priests were prosecuted, and many were exiled. Others, like Father Miguel de la Mora, went underground to offer the Sacraments. One day, he was

discovered and arrested. Intending to force him to reopen the cathedral under government control, the authorities freed him on bond. On Aug. 7, 1927, he was able to escape the city along with his brother, but when they passed through Carmona, a farmer recognized him. After being discovered, a general ordered the priest's execution without trial. Praying with his rosary in hand, Father Miguel de la Mora was shot in the presence of his brother, whom the authorities then allowed to go free.



### **St. Rodrigo Aguilar Alemán, *Priest and Martyr***

Father Rodrigo Aguilar Alemán was an interim parish priest in Unión de Tula and a member of Council 2330 in Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco. He was wanted for arrest for being a priest and because of this left his village of Unión de Tula, taking refuge in Ejutla. On Oct. 27, 1927, some 600 federal soldiers captured the town. He was found giving a Latin exam to a seminarian, and although they attempted to flee, they were surrounded.

When asked who he was, Father Rodrigo Aguilar responded, "I am a priest." They arrested him during the early morning hours of Oct. 28 and brought him to the plaza to be hanged. Underneath the mango tree from which he would eventually swing, he blessed the noose, forgave his executioners, and gave his rosary to one of them. Putting him to the test, one of them offered not to hang him if he shouted, "Long live the supreme government!" He answered, "Long live Christ the King and Holy Mary of Guadalupe!" After pulling on the rope and lifting him into the air, they lowered him and asked, "Who lives?" "Christ the King and Holy Mary of Guadalupe!" he responded. Again, he was raised and lowered. "Who lives?" they asked, with crude taunts. In agony, he said firmly, "Christ the King and Holy Mary of Guadalupe!" Once again he was raised up, this time to heaven.



### **St. Pedro de Jesús Maldonado Lucero, Priest and Martyr**

Father Pedro de Jesús Maldonado Lucero was a member of Council 2419 in the city of Chihuahua. In 1918, he was ordained a priest in El Paso, Texas. In 1924, he was named parish priest for the village of Santa Isabel in Chihuahua. He was able to exercise his ministry until 1934, the year in which he was exiled to El Paso. Despite fearing for his life, he returned to Santa Isabel. Heedless of his own precarious health, he

unceasingly celebrated the sacraments. Persecuted for being a priest, he had to leave Santa Isabel and stay in a nearby town, Boquilla del Río. On Feb. 10, 1937, Ash Wednesday, he was detained and taken to Santa Isabel's town hall, where he was brutally beaten. According to witnesses, he had a broken skull and his entire body was covered in lacerations. When the bishop learned of this, he interceded on his behalf before the governor. The governor ordered the priest to be brought to the city of Chihuahua, where he died on Feb. 11 as a result of his injuries. His headstone describes the martyr in four words: "You are a priest."



### **Blessed Andrés Solá y Molist, Priest and Martyr**

Father Andrés Solá y Molist, a member of Council 1962, was a Claretian priest from Spain who was serving as a missionary in León. While ministering in León, the Mexican authorities found him after he had said Mass in someone's house. They suspected that he was a priest and had him arrested. He was falsely accused and found guilty of derailing a train on nearby tracks by the Mexican authorities, along with Father José

Trinidad Rangel Montaña and Leonardo Pérez Larios. The three of them were shot and killed together at the location where the train was derailed. Father Solá died at the age of 31 on Apr. 25, 1927.



### **Blessed José Trinidad Rangel Montaña, Priest and Martyr**

Father José Trinidad Rangel Montaña, a member of Council 2484 in San Felipe, Guanajuato, was a diocesan priest from León. His superior offered him the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Week liturgies in the nearby town of San Francisco del Rincón. Father Rangel accepted this offer despite the persecution Catholics were facing in Mexico at that time. He was discovered by the authorities on Apr. 22, the Friday of

Easter Week. After being brought back to León, he was interrogated and tortured before being shot and killed with Father Andrés Solá y Molist and Leonardo Pérez Larios. He died at the age of 39 on Apr. 25, 1927.



### **Blessed Leonardo Pérez Larios, *Martyr***

Leonardo Pérez Larios, a member of Council 1962, was a devout layman. He wanted to become a priest, but he was unable to because he had to take care of his family members (much like how Blessed Michael McGivney was temporarily unable to enter seminary because he had to help his family financially). Though he was not a priest, the Mexican authorities mistakenly thought he was a member of the clergy because he was caught with Father Andrés Solá y Molist after he had celebrated Mass. He truthfully told them that he was not a priest, but still confessed to being a Catholic. He was then arrested along with Father Solá and martyred with him and Father José Trinidad Rangel Montaña at the age of 43.



### **St. Rafael Guízar y Valencia, *Bishop***

Bishop Rafael Guízar y Valencia, a member of Council 2311, while not a part of the group of saints commonly known as the Mexican Martyrs, lived through the Mexican revolution in 1910 and the government's persecution of Catholics in the 1920s. Known as the "bishop of the poor," he went underground, disguised as a junk dealer to continue his ministry. Valencia went on to serve in Guatemala and Cuba. As bishop, he founded a clandestine seminary to train future priests and escaped death several times.



Painting on display at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.  
Photo by Tamino Petelinsek.

### **Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**

Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, and a member of Council 2033, Rodríguez was a Knight of deep spiritual insight who was largely self-taught in matters of the faith. At the University of Puerto Rico's Catholic Center, he was committed to young people, sponsoring days of fellowship and prayer called "Christian Living Days." He was extremely passionate about the liturgy and spent his time studying and writing about it, helping others understand it and advocating for liturgical renewal. He had a particular devotion to the Easter Vigil, which is why he is pictured here with a paschal candle used during the Easter Vigil liturgy. He was beatified by St. John Paul II on Apr. 29, 2001, after a miracle was approved in which Rodríguez interceded in curing a case of non-Hodgkins malignant lymphoma.

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Some of the historical and biographical content in this work is derived from Stephen Singular's book *By Their Works* and Msgr. Ramiro Valdés' work *Tuyo es el Reino*.

