



Memorial

- 6 June

Profile

One of eleven children born to Prudenzio Guizar and Natividad Valencia, wealthy and pious land owners. Ordained in 1901. Conducted missions throughout Mexico. Founded the Congregation of Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope in 1903. Apostolic missionary in 1905. Spiritual director in the major seminary of Zamora, Mexico. Used his family's money to found a school for poor girls. Founded two colleges for boys.

In 1911 a state persecution of the Church began. His Congregation was dissolved and his missionary work was prohibited, so Father Raphael continued his work illegally. He founded a Catholic magazine in Mexico City, which the government quickly shut down. Raphael went on the road, disguised as a travelling merchant or musician, ministering to the poor and preaching when he could. He was shot at several times by soldiers, and condemned to death in absentia. In 1916 the authorities were so close on his trail that Raphael fled Mexico, first to the United States and then to Guatemala where he spent a year preaching missions. Preached in Cuba from 1917 to 1919. Named bishop of Veracruz-Jalapa, Mexico on 1 August 1919; he received word of the appointment while preaching in Havana. He continued his missionary work in Colombia, but finally returned to Veracruz, Mexico on 4 January 1920.

The government persecution of the Church escalated. The diocesan seminary was shut down; Bishop Raphael transferred his students to Mexico City and continued their training covertly. In 1931 Governor Tejada of Veracruz decreed that there could only be one priest per 100,000 Catholics; Raphael shut all his churches in protest. Tejada ordered that Raphael be shot on sight; Raphael went straight to the governor's palace and walked into his office. Tejada feared the uprising that killing such a man would cause, and revoked the death sentence; Raphael spent the rest of his days fighting to continue the work of the Church in the face of government opposition.

Born

- 26 April 1877 at Cotija, Michoacan, Mexico

Died

- 6 June 1938 in Mexico City, Mexico of natural causes

Venerated

- 27 November 1981 by Pope John Paul II (decree of heroic virtues)

Beatified

- 29 January 1995 by Pope John Paul II

Canonized

- 15 October 2006 by Pope Benedict XVI