



FR. ANDRÉS SOLÁ

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Solá Molist, the third of eleven children, was born in the town of Taradell, near the city of Vic, Spain on October 7, 1895. The preaching of some Claretians in his parish helped him discover his missionary vocation. He joined the Congregation of Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1909. He made his profession of vows on August 15, 1914 in Cervera, Spain and was ordained priest in Segovia, Spain on September 23, 1922.

At 27 years of age, on August 28, 1923, he was assigned to Mexico with five other Claretian missionaries. The day after his arrival, in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he placed all his apostolic ideals and works under the protection of Mary.

The first year of his stay in Mexico he combined teaching in the Claretian Seminary of Toluca with preaching, which was his dream. During Christmas of 1924 he was transferred to the city of Leon. Father Solá carried out an intense evangelization activity: he preached many sermons, he gave missions in different towns and spiritual exercises to all types of people, he took charge of the catechesis and the worship activities in the Temple of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Father Andrew exercised his ministry for only a short time. In August of 1925 the anticlerical dispositions of the Mexican Constitution were applied with all rigor. The same Fr. Solá wrote that "the religious persecution has reached its height in these last days, beginning with the expulsion of the Catholic foreign priests..., followed soon by the expulsion of non-Mexican Sisters, and then to continue soon with the control of worship activities and the priests". Indeed on August 1 all public worship was suspended and priests had to leave the country or hide. In this situation Father Solá in a letter to one of his formators expressed "his desire to work and his determination not to leave his ministry as a Father of Families".

Faithful to this decision, Fr. Solá took refuge in house of the Alba sisters, but he continued clandestinely exercising the ministry, preaching and administering the sacraments. Talking about him, one of his superiors describes him as "a very young missionary, but with great daring for work". His actions are motivated by his missionary vocation, but with the prudence required by the circumstances, and in prudence he was moved to Mexico City. With the permission of his Superiors, he returned to Leon, conscious of the danger that this supposed for him, remembering that during the time of his formation, "he had a great desire to be a martyr". And he writes: "Who knows if now the Lord will grant this grace to me! If this be so, may my blood be accepted for the triumph of the Catholic Church in Mexico."

Again in Leon, at the Alba sisters' house, he met Fr. Trinidad Rangel, who was also in hiding. They established an intimate friendship in the brief period of their acquaintance, as Fr. Rangel, was sent by his Superiors to celebrate the Easter services in San Francisco del Rincon, where he was arrested, taken back to Leon and jailed.

When some women went to the Commandant to see about Fr. Rangel, they inadvertently made reference to Fr. Solá. Upon leaving the station, they were followed by the police to the house of the Alba sisters, where they discovered Mr. Leonard Perez, praying in the oratory before the Blessed Sacrament, and Fr. Solá, on whom they found incriminating photographs and objects. They were arrested and taken to the Seminary that served at times as the military commandant's office. It was about noon on April 24.

The military accused the three detainees of having derailed a train, two days before, between the stations of Mira and Los Salas, in the ranch called San Joaquin. After a mock process they were condemned to death, but the only and true reason of their execution was that they were priests, true for Frs. Rangel and Solá, and supposed in the case of Leonard Perez.

The prisoners, at 8 p.m. of the same day of the 24th, they were taken by train to the place of the derailment of which they were accused. In prison and during the trip to the place of martyrdom, between the uncertainty of what was going to happen to them and their faith in the Lord, they prepared themselves for the death.

It was 8:45 in the morning of the 25th when the three condemned received the rifle fire. With a *coup de grâce*, Trinidad Rangel and Leonard Perez. Fr. Andrés Solá, still alive, bathed in his own blood in the middle of a petroleum pool, was found by those who worked in the repair of the rails, once the soldiers had left. He was able say that he was a priest and that he and his companions "die for Jesus, die for God" and he requested that they advise his mother of his death but "that her son is a martyr". After two hours of terrible agony in which he repeated "Jesus mercy, Jesus forgive me! Jesus I die for your cause," his surrender to the Lord ended.