

FATHER PLANCARTE

Eminent Figure of the Catholic Church in Mexico

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The life of every baptized is a strong calling to Christian Sanctity. It is a wish and an imperative that Christ gives his disciples: “Be saints, as Saint is your Father God who is in the heavens”.

Every saint, in its own way, has reached the summit of love; each one is carrier of a specific mission that can be perceived in the way in which he has lived his Christian virtues and, consequently, the fruits they have given; all this fruits are known by God and only some can be visible and discovered for their external brightness.

Sanctity is the fullness of humanity. The saints represent the living face of Christ, they are also those who guarantee to us that it is possible to live the Word of Christ and put it to practice; sanctity consists in the full union with Christ.

Men are called to not only be *alter Christus*, another Christ, but *Ipsa Christus*, Christ himself. And Christ is the perfect man because He is the same holiness of God incarnated, made time and history. The divine configuration of the saints always has the ingredient of pain, of misunderstanding, of the cross. As incense, it is burnt but it elevates in a soft holocaust that gives glory to his Lord.

Father Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida, Apostle of the Blessed Sacrament, is a spiritual figure who deeply tasted the cross. Is a priest without whom, the critical era of the history of the Catholic Church in Mexico, would not be understood. Time of crisis is time of saints.

Priest, parson, youth educator, initiator of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Mexico, builder of the Expiatory Temple of Saint Felipe de Jesus in this Archdiocese of Mexico, founder the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe, restorer and Abbot of the Collegiate of Guadalupe, promoter of the Pontifical Coronation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, elected Bishop without receiving the consecration; Father Plancarte is still present in our Church in Mexico.

I’m very happy about the publication of this work of disclosure, “*Father Plancarte, Eminent figure of the Catholic Church in Mexico*”, written by Father Pedro Garcia Hernandez, Claretian Missionary, about this illustrious son of Saint Mary of Guadalupe. I yearn that those who read this written work feel a desire of living the Christian ideal of holiness and that the Church takes this exemplary Priest to the honor of the Altars soon.

Your brother and server who blesses you,

+Norberto Card. Rivera Carrera
Primate Archbishop of Mexico

Mexico, D.F., February 2nd of 2007

PRESENTATION

Having, the Congregation of Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe, reached 129 years of life, I'm pleased to present this written work that was embodied in an interesting, simple and pleasant way by the skills for writing that were granted by our Lord to Father Pedro Garcia H., Claretian Missionary, which clearly illustrate the eminent figure of the Servant of God Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida.

Father Pedro, for what he has discovered of our Founding Father, calls him "giant", yes, for all that the Lord did through Him in and for his Church. I can see that this book will be accepted very well, because of the sensibility that, in all his missionary works of health and in the Guadalupan-Plancartino schools, has awakened. In the process of accreditation, the environment of the mystics and spirituality of our Founding Father is impregnated.

We thank God for this great opportunity and we hope that this books helps, everyone who reads it, to get to know more of this great man; the servant of God Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida, to encounter themselves with our Lord Jesus Christ and to live their Christian beings in fullness.

**Ma. de Lourdes Marquinez Moraza, DIMG
Mother Superior**

INTRODUCTION

The International Eucharistic Congress of Guadalajara was coming up. And I asked myself: Is the adventure of Mister Jose Antonio Plancarte as an apostle of the Sacrament known? I had to give myself a negative answer.

The one who was Abbot of the Basilica of Guadalupe had built the Expiatory Temple of Saint Felipe de Jesus in Mexico City and founded, in it, the Perpetual Adoration and the Nightly of the Blessed Sacrament, which counts with more than three million worshipers in the entire nation. If this was the fact, then we had to take advantage of the Congress to promote the possible canonization of such an apostle of the Eucharist. Let's make the name of Plancarte more known in the route to his glorification by the Church.

Because we are in front of a figure I dare to call "giant". When I saw the bags of the documents that arrived to Rome with the intention of initiating his path towards the altars, I said to myself: Good gracious awaits the promoters of the cause of beatification!... And, analyzed one by one the ventures of that Priest, there is no other choice but to surrender to his Holiness, the breadth of his views, his intense ministry and his heroism.

On the other hand, besides including Jose Antonio Plancarte among the great apostles of the Eucharist, there is his florescent Congregation of the *Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe*, who develop such and intense ministry in the education of children and the youth. The "Religious Guadalupans", as we familiarly call them, have to disseminate the awareness of the one who founded them, because the recognition of the Father is the best recommendation of the daughters. And maybe the small book I place in your hands could help you in this their filial task.

The lives of the Saints have always been nutritional and flavorful food for the Christian people, which makes the gift of mercy, the love towards Jesus Christ and the desire for eternal life grow. And the life of Jose Antonio Plancarte won't be an exception; the man of God who is placed before us. When admiring him, he will secretly repeat to our hearts that which Paul told his followers: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"...

Writing of simple disclosure; all the information was taken from the now classical works of Monsignor Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete and from Father Aureliano Tapia Mendez, in addition to those provided by the Postulation that lives in Rome. Will we contribute to something with this, and hopefully it is a lot, for the glorification of Father Plancarte, a great saint that Mexico will be able to offer to the universal Church?...

Pedro Garcia Cmf

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I. THE YOUNG MAN WHO BECAME A PRIEST

Let's begin by the roots and the first development of the tree. Proceeding from a select seed, planted in a very fertile field. This was the Plancarte y Labastida family, who will configure the personality of our Antonio, from his childhood until he climbs the steps of the Altar. With his humane and spiritual qualities so rich, we won't be amazed afterwards by neither his ventures nor his holy life.

CONFUSING OMENS

-What do you think of your nephew Jose Antonio?... Another Parson of high rank fledgling amongst the lineage of the levitical families Plancarte y Labastida. Isn't it like that? And isn't this what you dream about?... Because the thing is clear. They have excused him from the Latin final this year, privilege granted only to those who had passed in May with a superlative grade. What does this mean?

Labastida, recently named Bishop of Puebla, prudently stayed quiet. And the other one kept on with arrant malice:

-Though, we should see how Jose Antonio looked and greeted Guadalupita Gomez, Maria Vallejo and Teresa Gomez, who played a "not wanting", but wanting a lot role!... The way he received Chelita's scarf... And how he answered to Rosa Solorzano when she dedicated a special and warm "Goodbye!" from afar with her hand...

This conversation unfolded in Morelia, a day of the year 1855. He was Rector of the Tridentine Seminary Don Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Davalos, who would be Mexico's most prominent Bishop in the entire second half of the nineteenth century. The Seminary, despite its name, wasn't precisely a campus of candidates for priesthood, although abundant and magnificent priests came out of there; on the other hand, Latin was studied as an important subject for the best formation in Classics. Seminaries were, back then, the only grounds of superior teachings, and for that reason, three of the Plancarte brothers were there, among them Jose Antonio who demonstrated an exceptional calling for studying.

Nevertheless, in spite of the family tradition for two centuries, both from the father and the mother's sides, Jose Antonio didn't think of being a priest. He moved to Puebla with his uncle the Bishop Labastida, continued his studies in the new seminary and, short after, finished them in England. But, he explained to disabuse those who dreamt of seeing him as a priest:

-I don't want to pursue the literary career. The majority of those who study here are Priests, Graduates or Doctors. I don't want to be a priest! Lawyer? Neither, because there are many of good talents who have nothing. Doctor, no way; because if the patient recovers, they will come up saying that Saint Antonio cured him! And if he dies; curse upon the doctor! They won't call again... I don't want to pursue the literary career, but to dedicate myself to commerce.

Like that, without mincing his written or spoken words, that young man of 15 years of age, expressed himself. How are things going to change! Soon, we will see the student of Puebla and of England turned into a student of the Roman Collegiate and resident of the Ecclesiastical Academy for Aristocrats in Rome; the Priest full of apostolic zeal; the enterprising Parson of Jacona; the efficient youth educator; the settler of the Pius Latin American Collegiate with young men chosen for priesthood and episcopacy; the initiator of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Mexico; the builder of the Expiatory Temple of Saint Felipe de Jesus in the Capital; the founder of the Religious Guadalupanas; restorer and Abbot of the Collegiate of Guadalupe, at the same time as promoter of the Pontifical Coronation of the Virgin from the Tepeyac, and, shortly before dying, a praised Bishop, though he didn't reach the consecration. A full eminent figure of the Church of God in Mexico, who is now missing nothing but the yearned glory in the altars.

AT A GLANCE

To place ourselves well since the beginning, let's look at the main ventures of the life of Jose Antonio.

- 1840.** Born in Mexico, the Capital, this son of the city of Zamora.
- 1852-1862.** Student in Morelia, Puebla, and later in Oscott in England.
- 1862-1865.** In Rome. The ecclesiastical career. Priest.
- 1866-1867.** Beginnings as priest in Zamora.
- 1867-1882.** The Parson of Jacona, maker of great deeds.
- 1873.** Founding of the School of San Luis. Students going towards Rome.
- 1876.** Founding of the Asylum of San Antonio for poor girls.
- 1878.** The Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe are born in February 2nd.
- 1879.** Builds the traction railroad Zamora-Jacona.
- 1882.** Moves permanently to Mexico.
- 1885.** Director of the Clerical School.
- 1886-1897.** The National Expiatory Temple of Saint Felipe de Jesus.
- 1886-1895.** The restoration of the Collegiate.
- 1895-1898.** Sixteenth Abbot of Guadalupe. Canonical Coronation of the Virgin. Praised Titular Bishop and permanent resignation to Bishopric.
- 1896-1897.** Between the Collegiate and the Expiatory Temple.
- 1898.** This blessed Mexican Priest died.

A "ZAMORAN" OF STRAIN

"Zamoran", though born, let's say unintendedly, in Mexico, City, to where he had to move due to an illness of his mother Mrs. Gertrudis. On December 23rd of 1840, came to the world a baby who was baptized as an emergency by his godmother, because they feared for his life, and named Jose Antonio, who, the next day, received the sacred Charism with the celebration of the whole baptismal liturgy in the Church of San Miguel.



Just a few days later, with the mother recovered, everyone returned to Zamora, where the new stem would pass the first seven years of his life, under the care of a mother embellished with a spirit as tender as it was vigorous. The father, Mr. Francisco, keen trader and charro style, would take care of the family estates during the entire week, always riding his horse with verve, on which he would proudly make his entrance to the patio in the family house on a daily basis.

A lot of sweetness, togetherness, religiosity, and a lot of seriousness as well, were what one could breathe in the exemplary Plancarte y Labastida's house. Jose Antonio, just like his ten other brothers, was deeply marked in his childhood with the seal of these domestic virtues, which decorated the majority of the Zamorano homes then, though the child recognized his innate rebelliousness; well "my mother with a thousand efforts made me pray the rosary".

During his brief stays in Morelia and Guadalajara, Jose Antonio was a schoolboy who studied with tenacity, to the extent of deserving a letter from his mother with these words: "The satisfaction that I have, that the dearest of my children knows how to fulfill his responsibilities, fills me up with glory and an auspicious hope for the future". Mrs. Gertrudis accurately guessed what her second to last child could become.

The closeness of the eleven children with the fortunate parents wasn't going to be very long-lasting. Mr. Francisco died in 1854, and on Jose Maria, the oldest son, landed the responsibilities of the entire family, to which he came to be a second father, until he died in 1874. The mother, Mrs. Gertrudis, died in 1859, with the sorrows of having her dearest son in faraway Europe, whom she had dismissed four years back placing a rosary around his neck "to recognize him in the valley of Jehoshaphat"...

EMINENT PRIESTLY TRADITION

Jose Antonio's brothers started getting married and the family multiplied abundantly as a blessing from God. Among the nephews he had, and to not break the trisecular tradition of the Plancarte-Labastida's, six embraced priesthood, all of them noted for their knowledge and virtue, parsons, canons, professors and eminent teachers: **Miguel Plancarte y Garibay; Rafael Plancarte Igartua; Gabriel Mendez Plancarte; Alfonso Mendez**

Plancarte; Jose Villaseñor Plancarte; and the priest **Jose Plancarte Igartua**, Rector of the Seminary of Zamora and deceased as a Jesuit saint. But, among all of the nephews, the prestigious author of great works of writing and Archbishop **Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete** excelled.

Recalling swiftly like this, the direct descendants of Mr. Francisco and Mrs. Gertrudis who embraced priesthood, it is necessary to go further back to the Plancarte ascendants as well as Labastida's and Davalos' who honored greatly the Church of God in Mexico.

Let's begin with the father's side. Guillermo Plancarte, a Spaniard, Navarra native, who arrived to Spain in the year 1526. From his illustrious bloodline, leaving aside the stems who excelled in science or in arts, to look only in his priestly glories.

Fray Cristobal Plancarte, benefited from Aranza, and specially his brother **Pedro**, from whom the Jesuit priest, Father Ramirez, swore before the Bishop, "with more than twenty witnesses on the way to his canonization". Another, **Cristobal Plancarte**, religious Augustinian, also with the fame of saint, gave up becoming a Bishop three times, "because I value this dust and this black robe more than the purples and miters". The Franciscan Jose Antonio Plancarte De Mota Padilla, known as **Fray Jose de la Trinidad**, indefatigable missionary, "who left wonderful memories in all the places with his fervent preaching and the example of his virtues". Was, also, one of the most renowned first order wordsmiths and poets in Mexico during the eighteenth century. And more Plancarte's followed, like the Priests **Mr. Pedro**, **Mr. Anastasio** or **Fray Nicolas**, the prominent Augustin from Michoacan.

And if from the Plancarte's, Jose Antonio's father's side, we move onto the Labastida y Davalos', the mother's side? We come across the same ecclesiastic glories, starting from the eighteenth century. And let us begin with the wise and exemplary Zamorano **Mr. Juan Benito Diaz Gamarra y Davalos**. Another, the famous Doctor **Jose Maria Cabadas y Davalos**, initiator of the current Cathedral from Zamora. One more, **Mr. Jose Maria de Jesus Diez De Sollano y Davalos**, great thinker and writer. As well as the Bishop of Sonora and Antequera, **Mr. Agen Mariano Morales de Jasso y Davalos**. There were still others, like **Mr. Manuel Labastida** and **Mr. Francisco de Paula Labastida**.

AN UNCLE AND A NEPHEW

But, because of the enormous influence that they had in the life of our biographed, two Archbishops deserve to be mentioned separately: Uncle Mr. Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Davalos, Mrs. Gertrudis' brother, mother of our Jose Antonio, and her nephew Mr. Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete.

Mr. Pelagio was unquestionably the most illustrious Bishop of Mexico in the second half of the nineteenth century. He was Puebla's first Bishop in 1855 and later Archbishop of Mexico in 1863. Banished from his country several times, but always shined as an out-

standing figure of the Mexican Church, the same in Europe as well as in the United States, but especially in Rome as Father of the First Vatican Council. Without falling into nepotism, Mr. Pelagio educated his godson Jose Antonio as a valuable man and as a saintly priest.

Mr. Francisco, previously cited, son of his brother Jesus, was the most endearing pupil for Antonio. We would say that he educated him expressly for Bishop and, as a matter of fact, he was the first Bishop of Campeche, then from Cuernavaca and finally Archbishop of Linares-Monterrey. This very illustrious nephew was the most valued jewel from which Padre Plancarte could glorify himself. With his uncle deceased, he turned into the first and authorized biographer.

Though this biography of our Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida is very brief, making a short retelling of these sacerdotal glories was imperative, from the Plancarte's as well as Labastida y Davalos'. "I won't be a Priest!", we heard young Jose Antonio say with true conviction. But there was a family tradition in the Plancarte's, which God was determined not to break, but on the contrary, make it reach, precisely with Jose Antonio, to its highest summit.

SIX YEARS WITH THE ENGLISH

His uncle the Bishop, Monsignor Labastida, had been expelled from Puebla gun-pointedly, while hearing the officer say:

-Mr. Bishop, your two hour deadline has ended. Either you come out or I will use my guns.

Mr. Pelagio was a visionary, and wanted a broader culture for his beloved godson. Now that he was being exiled, there was nothing better than getting the boy and taking him to Europe. The older brother and caretaker, Jose Maria, thought the same way:

-If you aren't happy in Puebla, let me know so you can go to Europe with your brother Luis. I am willing to take you myself.

The Seminaries of Puebla and Morelia had taught Jose Antonio the fundamentals of the humanistic formation. Now it was England's and Rome's turn to prepare him in science and in virtue for the great endeavors that God had reserved for him.

The trip was planned quickly from Veracruz to Habana, then to Galicia in Spain, and finally to Southampton in England. In London, his uncle Monsignor Labastida introduced his two nephews to the renowned Archbishop and Cardinal Wiseman, and asked him to recommend a good school.

-A good school? Go to Oscott, where I was a Rector. It's right next to the Birmingham Theological Seminary.

Oscott was the home of the renaissance of English Catholicism! The Oratory of Saint Philip Neri was there, from where the famous converters Newman, Manning and Faber graduated; they started the catholic movement of Oxford. Saint Mary's College, recommended by Wiseman wasn't precisely a seminary for clergymen, though their norms, discipline and ways of mercy overcame in solemnity any other campuses for priests. The English catholic Aristocracy was educated there, and especially the children of those who converted to Catholicism, to serve later in Parliament, the Army, the Marines, Diplomacy and in the Forum. Monsignor Labastida was amazed by what the Providence of God placed on his hands for his nephews.

While arriving, on August 25th of 1856, Jose Antonio found a Mexican student who would become a dear friend for life: Ignacio Montes de Oca y Obregon. They were both born on the same year; Ignacio would later become Bishop of Tamaulipas, Archbishop of Monterrey and of San Luis Potosi. This promising young man in Oscott, said many years later, talking about Jose Antonio:

-From the moment I met him, he lured me like an irresistible magnet. My long stay in England and the superior courses I was taking moved Prelate Monsignor Labastida to commend me his nephew and to take care of him as a mentor. But the teacher had a lot to learn from his disciple. Since then I admired, in Jose Antonio, his gift of mercy which had to distinguish him until his death. It was him who taught me to repeat during my troubles and needs: *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!*

This is what Ignacio would say about Jose Antonio. And about Ignacio, Jose Antonio would say:

-Montes de Oca treated me as if he was my brother and he insisted in comforting and serving me. There I was commended to his cares; there he lavished me with truly paternal services; there he built me with his religious and civil virtues. I certainly owe him many favors to which I can only correspond with my gratitude and sincere appreciation.

In these words we note something serious. That "comforting me" says it all. It was only natural that the beginnings resulted harsh. Far away from his homeland, from his mother, with a language that he suddenly didn't understand and with customs that were very different from those of Mexico..., Jose Antonio nostalgically writes:

-I can't see the time of going back and I will do it when my uncle returns, which I hope in God is soon. We wrote a letter to my uncle who had gone to Paris, and we told him about all the rules of the Collegiate and about the coarseness of the Englishmen. He told us to not get ahead of ourselves and speak ill about the Collegiate and to learn from Ignacio Montes de Oca who had been out of Mexico for four years, and he will be even be there more time for his own sake. This letter comforted us very much.

This state of mind was provisional and temporary. Jose Antonio remained for almost six years in the Collegiate of Oscott and came out of there with an excellent human and spiritual formation.

-At the end of the year, I was very happy and resolved to not come back to Mexico until I finished.

SOMETHING FROM THOSE DAYS

Only “something”, just because a lot could be said. The least important things were that he would rub shoulders with very important people. Because he received the visit of Cardinal Wiseman in his own room, and on another day he meets and talks to the great converted of Oxford, the future and sacred Cardinal Newman. Jose Antonio represents a very strong personality, with which he gracefully wrote: “everyone says that I’m twenty-five years old when I just turned seventeen six days ago”. Something was hiding in such young dreamer, who didn’t think of becoming a priest but to consecrate to trading, mining or to become an engineer, he even made a proposal to his brother Jose Maria of what he later did with the first railroad in Michoacan between Zamora and Jacona:

-It would be great if, between all our brothers and the other traders, we start a company with the Railroad Company of England, to make a railroad that would go, for example, from Guadalajara to San Juan de los Lagos, to San Blas or to Mexico. What do you think? You love your homeland and the civilization, so do I, and I hope that you join me in my projects. After I have been with you for a while, and master trading, we will open two stores, and then when my pockets are full, I will come to England to buy a knitting machine... To Jesus and Gabriel, who are farmers, I will recommend buying a threshing machine. With such machine, two men can thresh all the wheat from Tamandaro and La Saucedo in two days, and, furthermore use it in the estate; we could rent it to all our neighbors.

He fantasized, and we won’t say that he wasn’t a young man with vision, in whom the future educator of youngsters was foreseen, especially now that he was seriously taking his formation. Starting with sports:

-The whole field was full of snow, and I played in a competition of snowballs... I played cricket; I made thirteen runs and I was the one who accomplished the most... I will start with fencing after the break and I will try to only draw the sword... skating, basketball... Target practice is not in trend here and gunpowder isn’t even seen and is what the School prohibits the most.

But more than sports, Jose Antonio cared about his studies, from which he gives us important news:

-We were examined in classics and I was the one who passed better in class... I do exercises particularly about Arithmetic, since it's the most interesting for Commerce... I got first place in Physics, Math and Accounting, and second place in other subjects... I have advanced quite enough in the Flute and I now know how to play twenty different pieces... Tough dance and painting haven't interested me yet...

He can be seen now: a serious young man, worthy, and with a great eagerness of excelling. Without forgetting what's most important, how was his mercy and spiritual formation:

-The Spiritual Exercises, the functions of Holy Week, the Month of Mary meant a lot to me, and I would be embarrassed if I went back to Mexico the same way I left from there.

Mrs. Gertrudis has news from her children, and proudly writes to them:

-It fills me with pleasure, and I congratulate myself for having two sons of short age but with great judgment. The Providence is giving you all the elements with which you can be happy in this life and in the afterlife. I pray to God that you take advantage of that moral education that you are receiving. Your conduct is good and because of that listen to the advice they give you. I say goodbye with the gentlest expressions of love of a mother who only wishes happiness upon her children. Farewell, children of mine, until next time.

And she had told them in a prior missive:

-When I see, in the hearts of my dear children, feelings so religious like not finding solace anywhere but in the premises of the church, reborn, it feels my heart with such pleasure that I would need Saint Peter's pen to explain it and let them know what I feel, how and why.



Though Mrs. Gertrudis wasn't going to savor the biggest joy that Jose Antonio could've given her if she would've seen him as a consecrated priest... That child, in his eighteen years of age, was walking on the streets of London one day meanwhile his mother was dying from a suffered illness with the courage of a martyr. He confessed upon getting the news:

-I have the burden of not giving my beloved mother one last glance. This heart will awaken when I return to Mexico and the death blow of not finding the dearest being that God gave me in this world turns it into pieces.

Because his mother, as we all know, passed away on October of 1859.

GOD BEGINS TO INTERFERE

God was interfering, on what? One could figure. That “I won’t be a Priest” of Jose Antonio started to have little consistency. About those days in Oscott, he, himself, confesses:

-That Jose Antonio so courteous, so elegant, such a visitor, so giving, so conceited and fan of looking good in front of women... had started to know the world and its deceits and the past is tickling him. I was disgusted by the temper I had, and everything about the love affairs in Morelia was now ridiculous to me... In 1859, the Spiritual Exercises and the Holy Week exited in my heart, firm objectives of living a very organized life to live well... and with my mother’s passing I realized about the short period that the pleasures of this world last.

It was the beginning of a radical trip in life. On the other hand, his unconditional friend Ignacio Montes de Oca was returning from Mexico to Europe once again y was heading to Rome to join the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, study in the Roman Collegiate and to start his career as Priest. This mean, for Jose Antonio, a silent invitation from God: -What if I did the same?...

We have memories of the conversations between the two friends. The anguish of Jose Antonio in his conversations with Ignacio, came, especially, from his bias of the calling for priesthood:

-You, Ignacio, have no doubts. But I think I won’t be able to become a priest, because I’m very wealthy and coveted.

-Precisely, Jose Antonio, with that wealth and passion properly lived, you should defeat those that look like obstacles to you and later become a great priest of the Catholic Church.

Thea idea continues inserting in our Jose Antonio a little deeper each time:

-I started examining the different stages in which men live, and my own desires; and this exam gave as result that the ecclesiastic life was the safest for me.

In prayer, he decidedly told God:

-Dear God, call me to the condition in which you want me to serve you.

Doubt and temptation presented themselves, since the enemy won’t sleep. What will Jose Antonio do during the days of retreat in which he will enter? He, himself, communicates his feelings to us:

-With the help of God and the obedience to which the Exercises give me, I will decide with determination by the end of the Holy Week, and I will send out the devil with all my doubts and fears.

Doubts and fears emerged in the Director of the Exercises, Father Aylward, who said:

-I think God wants you in matrimony...

But the Exercises continued; Jose Antonio does the general confession and gets a very different answer from the priest.

-Yes; I believe that God is calling you to priesthood. Your calling is true.

Father Groswenor thinks the same way, and gives him advice with decision:

-Leave Oscott and go study in Rome.

Cardinal Wiseman himself, who highly appreciated Monsignor Pelagio Antonio Labastida's nephew, says with decision and affection:

-In Rome, go study in Rome; enter the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, and take classes in the Roman Collegiate.

WHAT ABOUT THE FAMILY?

Monsignor Pelagio was very prudent; he would remain quiet, but had the same thoughts for a long time. Until the first secret, from Jose Antonio to the best of his uncles, was revealed:

-My leaning towards priesthood increases and is very probable that I won't change my mind, but let's not say anything to the family.

Because now an acute question arose:

-And what will my brother Jose Maria say? I've always told him that I will choose the career that he tells me to. When he finds out...

He found out, and a furious answer came:

-Priest, no! You're the hope of the family... This resolution isn't from now, you had it already made before, and, for that, you are hypocrite, you assured that we would select your profession and that you would willingly give it to us as a gift ... furthermore, you are fooling yourself. You won't be happy. You will have temptations in your priesthood, what if you don't know how to overcome them?...

But Jose Antonio knew how to answer:

-The same temptations that you think will come when I become a Priest, could come to



you as a married man. A priest marries the Church and a husband marries his woman, both have to be faithful to their wives, and the ties that link them only death can unlink.

Moreover, he adds a reason that would reach Jose Maria's heart:

-What a great joy to be a minister of Jesus Christ and offer his Body and precious Blood for the eternal peace of our parents and departed brothers!

The memories of the loved ones softened all reluctance, and Jose Maria, who was an excellent catholic, accepted, as the decision of Jose Antonio couldn't be diminished. In fact, when he became a priest, Jose Maria was a patron and an effective helper in the apostolic deeds of his brother, to what he wrote as a result of the passing of Jose Maria in 1874:

-When I tried to get ordained, Jose Maria was the test of my calling. But when I returned to my country I lived as a son of his and he treated me as if I were his father; when they made me priest of Jacona, he was my solace in everything; when I founded my schools, he declared himself the protector and he loved them more or as much as I did. When he thought he would die, all his will was to die in my arms. Could I ever forget so much love, so much delicacy? Will I find comfort when in him I lost a brother, a father, a son, a protector, a friend?...

EVEN IF DIFFICULTIES BECOME GREATER

Let us begin!... The ideals and objectives were serious. Momentarily he had to continue in Oscott, but his eye was on Rome, where his uncle Pelagio aimed. That's the reason for his persistence in the study of Latin, because he no longer remembered what he had learned in Morelia and in Puebla. Then he studied Philosophy and Theology, because the Collegiate of Oscott had turned into the Main Seminary for the English aspirants to Priesthood. Jose Antonio takes his decision to heart and assures resolvedly:

-God and the Holy Virgin will grant me the necessary grace to start and finish!

He performs as sacristan in the school, and he does it with such commitment, he beautifies the Church in such a way; and the celebrations resulted so splendid that Jose Antonio, himself, assures:

-My Superiors applauded greatly to my talent at this point... and to myself, these encounters with the sacred things, as well as the Exercises, reaffirmed me in my ideas more than ever.

The path is well traced, and it's a matter of only remembering it with fortitude. His objectives are firm and he expressed them with sharpness in regards to his future priesthood:

-Step on my pride and avoid all praise and honor.

-Neither sensuality nor attachment to the good life.

-I don't want dignities and I will accept humiliations.

All of this was true. But temptation and doubt sometimes brought him down in a way that they filled him with atrocious anguish:

-Even death would be pleasant with the aim of not having to take sides.

Let's not be amazed. The enemy roamed him just like he did to Jesus in the desert. But the Holy Spirit, which was preparing him for great deeds in his Church, was also attentive.

In order to understand Jose Antonio's mood during those days, it's enough to only read a few paragraphs from his diary.

-It seems like while more days pass, I'm less resolved. The fear of repenting, the temptations and other difficulties mess with my head. The terrible idea that if I get ordained and repent later, never leaves my mind; I won't be able to go back and I will be lost forever: this thought intimidates and frightens me. But, at the end of the day, the link of marriage is nearly the same thing: if a man chooses a woman and blunders in his choice, he becomes unhappy and probably loses his soul.

He finished a paragraph like this one with airs of glory:

-I place my faith on God and in the Holy Virgen!

The secret lies here. The things Jose Antonio is going to do in his life, will be with the grace of God and the motherly protection of the Virgin, especially under the advocacy of Guadalupe!...

ROME

Now, Jose Antonio is marching towards the Eternal City for the first time, and several other times will follow like a happy omen from the blessing and support from the Pope, which will always pursue him.

He left from Oscott in May of 1862, to where he returned in August to pick up his belongings, and then on the first of June, he was received by Pope Pius IX:

-And you. That you will be my son?

-I want to be a priest.

-A priest? Say this prayer: "Lord, teach me to comply with your will, because you are my God".

Eight days later, the Pope declared all the Japanese Martyrs Saints in a canonization without precedents, with the presence of all the Cardinals and over three hundred Bishops, among which all those who were banished from Mexico by Benito Juarez were present, proud for the glory of Saint Felipe de Jesus the first Mexican martyr. Jose Antonio remained amongst the crowd full of astonishment.

-I can't describe my excitement of seeing the face of Pius the Ninth, so sweet, so sacred, so tender, so touching... That moment was when I clearly saw what Catholicism was.

Engrossed in this thought, he didn't pay attention to anything else, and, from his lips, a silent prayer came out:

-Saint Felipe de Jesus, pray that the grace of making it to priesthood be granted upon me.

In the luminous morning of June 8th, an idea that will have big consequences, cracked in Jose Antonio's mind:

-I wonder if Mexico will do something about their first Martyr Saint Felipe de Jesus?...

We have to think about that later on.

Now, on July 19th, in another hearing with the Pope, Jose Antonio thanked him for granting, together with his friend Montes de Oca, now sub-deacon, the entrance to the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, for which he had been recommended by Cardinal Wiseman, the Archbishop of Birmingham, and his uncle Pelagio.

Returning to Oscott gave him another serious blow in regards of his calling. The ingratitude of men!... Let's let him tell the story himself:

-The president of the Collegiate helped me out and said farewell with a simple "Good by"! I walked out discouraged by such a cold farewell, without a signal of gratitude for everything that I had done for the school... Nobody came to see me or keep me company and it seemed like no one knew I was leaving, only the maids... I had never seen anyone walk out of Oscott without his Superior or a friend accompanying him all the way to the wagon; I just walked out as if no one knew me or as if I had been a curse from the Collegiate.

God kept on purifying the ideal of Jose Antonio. The world's vanity is like this. It's not worth serving it. God is the only one who never disappoints.

PROFILING THE IDEAL

Before starting the academic course, Jose Antonio does a peregrination to the Holy Land. Nothing of curiosity. Entirely spiritual. Not a waste of time. His notes almost excite. It is a peregrination that recalls the peregrination of an Ignacio de Loyola recently converted, and from which he came back with a passionate love for the divine Master.

Great envy and more provocation invaded his soul when his intimate friend Ignacio Montes de Oca was ordained priest and celebrated his first Mass in the Gesù, over the altar of his Patron San Ignacio, helped, as altar server, by Plancarte himself:

-Will it be my turn some day?

From the Ecclesiastical Academy where he lived, he went to Theology classes to the Roman Collegiate daily, now Gregorian University, the most prestigious center of knowledge of the Company of Jesus, where, during three centuries, a whole legion of wise men and saints had passed. In the days of Jose Antonio, there were figures like Franzelin and Perrone; in addition, he had the prestigious priest and future Cardinal Serafin Vannutelli as a private instructor. Shortly after starting the course, he had a new hearing with the Pope Pius IX, who told him with his usual wit:

-Well, and now that you have disciplined yourself a lot and sanctified with the austere peregrination to Holy Land, study hard!

His uncle Pelagio had a few doubts:

-Nothing could separate him from his calling and from the career he had started.

And his calling is reaffirmed when his uncle is designated as no less than Archbishop of Mexico by the Pope... Because Jose Antonio a very clear idea: Priest, to work for the children and the youth and especially for my country's Seminaries. It's not a hopeless illusion. He didn't pretend dignities nor honors with that, just as many of the phrases of his writings testify now a days.

-I propose to not seek riches, honors or distinctions... I will make an effort to imitate my Lord Jesus Christ in everything... Divine Master! My greatest satisfaction is imagining myself given in all ways to your service and to the salvation of souls, living poorly and helping the poor; preaching, doing Exercises, catechizing, and, anyway, spending my days and nights in your sacred service.

THE LAST TWO LURCHES

It seemed like everything was resolved in the calling of Jose Antonio. But not really; he had to solve a doubt and overcome the most dangerous temptation.

A Priest? Yes, that is clear. But, where and how? Under a religious life or at the service of a diocese; at the orders of the Bishop? This matter was taken, with all seriousness, by Antonio and his spiritual directors. He practiced a special retreat. Jose Antonio leaned towards being a diocesan priest; Father Ciscolini, the Jesuit, thought that being in an order would be better, due to the way things were; it would've been in the Company of Jesus. With great loyalty for both parts, and looking only at God's glory and the good of the Church, the Director finally leaned towards Jose Antonio's opinion:

-You're right. If you will to turn yourself in with all your passion to the reformation of the Seminaries in your country, and give your all, in them, to the formation of the future priests, I have no doubts: stay a diocesan priest.

Jose Antonio absolutely calmed down:

-I am satisfied in everything and I resolved not to think in anything other than to get ordained and go back to Mexico, then talk to my uncle there. No one could imagine the release, comfort and tranquility I experimented after I saw my calling being entirely decided and sealed by me.

Was everything solved?... It looked that way. But before he made it to the Subdeaconate, when the commitment of celibacy for life followed, the enemy planted upon our Jose Antonio a decisive battle, taking advantage of a moreover innocent occasion. Mr. Domingo Llamas with his wife Maria Antonia and their children Manuel and Rosarito arrived to Rome from Mexico. Jose Antonio visited them in their hotel. Everyone was joyful, and mostly because of the friendship that his brother Jose Maria had with them in Guadalajara. Jose Antonio confessed without fear:



-I hadn't spoken to Mexican women since seven years ago. Now, I would go and visit them every day and had a great time in their company. Rosarito asked me to buy her some paintings, this kept me quite busy and made our relationships more intimate, so much that I couldn't be without them and they couldn't be without me... During the eve of the celebration of San Pedro, I went with them to the illumination of the Dome and the fireworks. Everything was really nice.

Of course!, everything was very nice because of the love that he was gushing for Rosarito, so lovely, so nice; a love very different from the ravings with the girls from Morelia at the age of fifteen... Oh, this Rosarito!

Jose Antonio accepted the truth:

-The friendship and intimacy with the Llamas' family made me feel the eminent virtues and good qualities of a young woman who I admired for her mercy, good temper y much more; in her I saw the type of woman who would make my happiness in marriage. The mutual sympathies assured me that her correspondence would be easy. This affection towards the virtuous young woman took roots in my heart and increased my hesitation and confusion...

The fondness that had been born in his heart, wouldn't easily leave:

-The Llamas' left from Roma on July 15th, and I, who had gotten used to them so much, was left extremely sad.

"I place my faith on God and in the Holy Virgin!", we heard Jose Antonio say before. And God and the Virgin came to him in these decisive moments, in which he could ask himself: Should I get ordained or not?... and peace finally came to his heart:

- Though I was very sad first couple of days and I felt the unrest of the lovebird a little, and because I didn't allow myself to be dominated by my passion and I didn't lose the sight of my objective, little by little, I regained my serenity; because I already had proof that, with the grace of God, I could resist to the natural love from men to women.

After the clouds, the sun shone splendorous.

Before making it to the final moment, Jose Antonio underwent therapy in the Austrian Silesia, now Czechoslovakia, on a very rigorous hydropathic treatment based of thermal waters, to cure the stomach illness that was affecting him, about which he wrote to his friend Montes de Oca:

-If the hope of getting ordained as priest hadn't encouraged me, I would've never undergone such an atrocious suffering.

Recovered in his health, he found himself willing to climb the steps of the Altar.

AT THE DREAMT SUMMIT

March of 1865. Not everyone knew in the Ecclesiastical Academy for Aristocrats that Jose Antonio was getting ready for priesthood, since many of their students are educated only for diplomacy and high positions at the service of the Church. Now, Jose Antonio was going to Tivoli a neighbor city to get the Sacred Orders. Before anything, he requested another hearing, the sixth, to Pope Pius IX, who pleased blessed him:

-My son, work with commitment and consistency for the glory of God and learn to not fear persecutions and assignments.

That immortal Pope, so full of God, couldn't he guess there was something special about this young Mexican, whom he distinguished with such singular affection?...

On March 21st, Jose Antonio received the Minor Orders, and starts to wear a robe, from which he says:

-Upon waking up in the morning, I would hug and kiss my robe, repeating the beautiful verses of the psalmist: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup, I love my inheritance"... Lord, give me death before dishonoring this robe!...

It was an echo from what he had written before:

-Don't allow, God and Savior of mine, that I dishonor your sacred ministry. I implore, I beg, I ask this for your five most sacred wounds and for the love of that Holy Mother who accompanied you through your last agony.

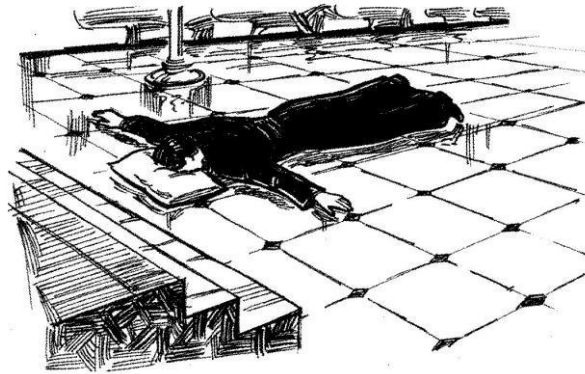
On the first of April, having defeated the lasts and terrible scruples and fears, he came before the Bishop to receive the Subdeaconate. That "you are still free" from the ordaining Bishop, shivered him, but Jose Antonio added:

-I was firmly convinced that if I was faithful to the Lord, He would be faithful to his promises.

And he added:

-When they saw me dressed with a robe in the Eucharist in the Academy, everyone was surprised, since, without them knowing, I came out of there a secular and went back in ordained as subdeacon.

The Deacon received him on May 28th. And on June 11th, Sunday of the Holy Trinity, at last!, In the Seminary of Tivoli's Chapel, he laid himself on the ground facing down during the hymn to the Holy Spirit and the Litanies:



-Then, I couldn't resist any more and blew up in sobs and abundant tears. Afterwards, while they anointed my hands, my tears were mixing up with the holy oil. With my consecrated hands, I touched the chalice and the paten and I was, forever, made priest... Trying to describe my feelings, would turn off their entire splendor.



He spent the next day in a spiritual retreat.

Because on the 13th, celebration of his Patron San Antonio de Padua, the celebration of his first Mass would happen in the church of San Ignacio, over the altar of the chapel of San Luis Gonzaga. An entire luxury of assistance: deacons and acolytes, two future Cardinals; Bishops, Diplomats, Ambassadors, Mexican and Spanish Soldiers, State Ministers, members of the Roman Aristocracy, many priests, the students of the Latin American Col-

legiate and those of the Academy for Aristocrats. Jose Antonio remained seated on the president's chair, while his feelings were the most sublime:

-In those moments I felt and touched the high dignity of a priest. I thought my mother was looking at me from the heavens, and my heart became full of fear and tenderness. If anyone could've entered my heart, he would've noticed that I was thinking more about the future thorns than about the present roses. I figured out that this triumph and glory were the beginning of the Passion.

Only a sacred priest thinks that way. United to the priesthood of God, the luck of the priest, in this world, must be because of the power of the Cross, with which he hugs himself generously. He wanted to finish the day in the retreat, during which he wrote:

-I hope that, in the middle of my sorrows and hardships, I look back to this day and regain the sacred enthusiasm with which I have consecrated and offered myself to God.



FAREWELLS TO ROME AND OSCOTT

There were still four months left to return to the beloved homeland. Masses in the temples of more devotion: Saint Mary Major, Saint Stanislaus Kostka and Saint John Berchmans' bedrooms, Saint Cross of Jerusalem, and the last one, on October 11th, in the tomb of Saint Peter.

A couple of days before, on September 30th, he had a new hearing with the beloved Pope Blessed Pius IX, which manifested the hopes that the noble priest offered him, and to which he responded:

-Holy Father, I promise to join the Holy See in thought, word and deed my whole life, and I protest against everything that separates me from it. Bless, your Holiness, my promises, so I never fail in them, and that I die before breaking them, so I can be a good priest and persevere in the job that I'm trying to begin in the Seminary of Mexico.

The Pope enjoyed hearing him, and in a very Italian way he said:

-Bravo son of mine! Bravo, bravo!

Jose Antonio commented later.

-I walked out of the hearing with the Pope full of courage to start the most arduous deed of an apostle, and even to take on the suffering in the defense of faith and of the Holy See.

On this, his last day in Roma, he swore an unbreakable fidelity to the Pope and to the Holy See inside the Vatican. On a sheet of paper, which he hung from his chest during the Mass, he had written a solemn profession of faith and prayed to the Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul during the celebration:

-Give me the grace of dying before failing on the least of what this sheet of paper contains and to what I'm feeling right now.

Once the Mass finished, he kissed the bronze statue of Saint Peter and looked, once more, at the marbles of the Basilica, which inspired a beautiful prayer, composed right in front of Bernini's baldachin:

-Give me, Lord, the consistency of this bronze in my Catholic beginnings; the coldness of this marble in the temptations of the flesh; the firmness of this pillars in my good plans, and the perfection of this church in my deeds, in my actions and in my ministries.

With the heart fluffed and full of joy as well as with sweet nostalgia, Jose Antonio got on the train that took him to Civitavecchia, in which he embarked towards England, where he had the time to visit Oscott; many memories, some bitter, but now surpassed by deeper emotions:

-What a joy and devotion with which I celebrated the community Mass in the chapel that received my first tears in England; where I had cried for my mother and where I offered my first sufferings for her soul; where God had chosen me to be his ministry; where Holy Mary had heard my prayers, where she liberated me from perdition and conducted me towards that unforgettable altar in which I now have the bliss of celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice!

Father Bottler ironically commented:

-Remember when you would decorate the altars of the Virgin in the month of May?... I was the first one to tell you that you were mistaking your calling: Commerce, Mining... you were made for this, for being a priest.

Jose Antonio smiled. And so will we before the funny prophecy of the young boy: "I won't be a Priest". He turned out to be a bad prophet, for our glory... All of Mexico, where he would arrive in a couple of days, will soon find out.

II. THE PARISH PRIEST OF JACONA

Jose Antonio's dream was clear: Priest and children and youth educator, masculine as well as feminine. Now, in a Church, he finds the most appropriate field to dedicate himself fully to souls. Here, he will found institutions that will perpetuate long after, multiplying his

sacred ministry to an unmentionable extent. We have fifteen years of great priestly fruitfulness ahead.

THE FIRST SUCCESSES

Father Plancarte was very realistic in a way and very detached in another as man of God; he wasn't very hopeful with those first days and months in his beloved homeland. Hugs, kisses, crying, good wishes, affectionate welcomes from everyone, starting with the recently launched first Bishop of Zamora, ... and cherished memories that filled his soul.

He wanted to celebrate his first Mass in the temple of Los Dolores where the remains of his parents rested. He couldn't handle the joy. He cried vividly. And then he wrote:

- This were my thoughts ten years ago when I saw my mother for the last time. My mother was a saint! My mother was a martyr! My mother is full of glory in heaven! If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here coated with the dignity of priesthood, preparing myself to offer the Holy Sacrifice for her. Blessed be the sweats of my father, which gave me so many commodities! Blessed be my uncle Pelagio, for having served as a true father and guide! Blessed be my brother Jose Maria for having inspired, in me, the idea of going to Europe and for having taken care of the expenses of my education!

The grace and detachment, that God asked, hadn't killed nature's most sweet regards. He loved his people endearingly and he had them present in the Altar every day from then on.

Uncle Pelagio Labastida, Archbishop of Mexico, had him incardinated to his diocese, but he gladly gave him up to Monsignor Jose Antonio de la Peña y Navarrete, Bishop of the newly created diocese of Zamora. And in Zamora, our Priest Jose Antonio starts his priestly ministry in an incandescent way. Lent of the year 1866 arrived, but before that, there was the carnival. The Priest preached and took the Passion of the Lord as a topic. A lot of excitement. A lot of anointment. And hours and hours of confessions: from nine in the morning until one in the afternoon, and from six to eight at night. His first preaching turned out to be a deadly punch to the carnival-like enjoyments, until deserving the sweet nickname of "*El Padre Matamáscaras*" or The Party-killing Priest.

Nothing but successes, which got mixed up with bittersweet galls at times. It was one in the afternoon, and the noble Parson was still fasting. He was called to confess a leper moribund who laid over a puddle of rottenness and exhaled an unbearable odor. Jose Antonio knew how to control himself and dominated his repugnancy, and then he wrote:

-The Lord gave me strength, and I gladly reconciled that poor soul with God.

In this case, Jose Antonio overcame a horrible repulsion. On another day he had to confess two very special penitents and, this time, he did it overcoming of his fear of losing his life.

The liberal republicans got on their way towards Zamora on February 2nd of 1867; they surrounded it, and made it to Los Dolores church and were rejected after six hours of tre-

mendous fights. Colonel Garrido, chief of the imperialist defenders was wounded and called Father Jose Antonio to confess him. The brave priest didn't doubt his fulfilment of his duties. He crossed the line of fire, a bullet impacted his foot without consequences and, while he was confessing the Colonel, whom they had placed inside a house, he could hear the infernal rumbling of the street:

-The liberals have taken over the city and are coming to finish the Chief of defense!

But it was the opposite. Conquered, the republicans left defeated. And our Priest Jose Antonio left for the headquarters and to the hospital to help the wounded without taking sides. The imperialists, however, abandoned the city at night and backed down. Everything ended in peace.

But, at dawn, the priest saw the town square empty and thought:

-What will the prisoners do now? They will certainly escape and will start looting.

To prevent it, with the cold blood of a soldier, Jose Antonio, himself, commanded that two pieces of abandoned artillery were placed on the prison's doors, and demanded that it was guarded until the republican forces came.

The Priest's adventure hadn't finished. The new owners of the city called him up to confess a soldier who was going to be executed for deserting. Once he was confessed, the priest had the audacity of requesting forgiveness for the condemned:

-What will you gain by executing him? Isn't it better that you keep him alive for the site in Queretaro?

That's how a soldier was saved for his Country, meanwhile a Parson learned to ever be fearless.

After the serious happenings with the unbearable leper and the two soldiers, Jose Antonio, young and divinely daring, when lent had ended, started with tons of Spiritual Exercises for men, women, girls, educators...

As if it weren't enough, the Parish Priest of Jacona became ill; Father Plancarte gave his services in the local church, which he saw with astonishment as the morning Mass, to which only two or three people attended, started getting full during the month of May, and crowded at night; from the atrium all the way to the old cemetery. The month of the Virgin ended with a Communion of over a thousand people and a procession with the "*Virgen de la Raíz*" or Virgin of the Root, which triumphantly paraded around the city's streets that had been turned into gardens full of flowers.

Everyone heard the news in Zamora and the sympathies grew for the young Priest, son of the City and member of a very respectable family:

-This little parson will give things to talk about...

While people were saying those things, the Bishop anxiously asked himself:

-Who should I place in Jacona, now that their Parish Priest has passed away?...

When Jose Antonio found out, he rejected the offer:

-No Monsignor! Think of someone else. I am aware of my insufficiencies for this position.

But the kind Prelate was very firm:

-Go, I tell you! I will take responsibility of all of your actions.

There, we now had the brilliant student of Oscott, the Pontifical Ecclesiastic Academy and the Roman Collegiate, turned into a rural Parson, without human contentions, but with his zeal and enterprising spirit, will turn Jacona into the stage of social and apostolic deeds of imperishable memory.

JACONA

Small but important community, located a little over three kilometers away from Zamora, and that, back then, didn't exceed twenty five hundred residents. We have fifteen years ahead to contemplate a passionate, visionary and saint, more than anything, a preacher. Now that he wasn't a starting priest and simple helper, but rather a Parish Priest, he introduced himself humbly to the people that God entrusted him with:

-Here you have me to serve you and not to be served.



On July 13th, San Antonio de Padua's, his saint's celebration, people dedicated some tributes and offered him gifts that confused him: music, dances, fireworks; gifts that made him cry in every step. The new Parish Priest thought: what does all of this mean?... he went into retreat until the night had started, and once everything had passed, he wrote:

-The field that God has prepared for me to do good deeds is very vast. Trusting in his grace, I hugged my cross, I kissed it and I decided to consecrate to the happiness of this community that had received my preaching and who proved, with many things, their love and gratitude.

He wasted no time since the beginning. The famous month of May had just finished, when a difficult situation arose. The native people celebrated the two celebrations of Saint John and Saint Peter with some untouchable rituals. When the two processions had finished, the Parish Priest celebrated a ridiculous and almost sacrilegious ceremony.

The cemetery, adjacent to the church, was a filthy lot in which all kinds of animals could enter. But, well; the celebration ended over this lot and the Priest had to start the dance dressed with the best cope. Then the rest would follow, mixing religion with sayings of idolatrous cults. The new Parish Priest rejected such ceremony firmly. But did it with utmost tact, and said:

-Have you noticed how the cemetery is? Your dead, your ancestors, are resting here waiting for their resurrection. Because of that, this is a sacred place. Why don't we fix it, starting with the walls and doors for its security and give it the beauty that it should have because it contains the remains of your most beloved?...

A miracle! The natives, who were very difficult and dangerous when their inveterate customs were touched, gave up their grotesque dance, were enthused, placed themselves to the orders of the parson and worked with courage with the creole; they turned the weeds into a garden. The crypts and tombs were then visible to all and that was a joy.

This happened with the double celebration of the natives. The other celebrations of the Parish Church were made the most of by the priest. They were preceded by a novena with preaching; the solemnity was celebrated and then it was followed by an octave with religious instruction. The environment in Jacona, with the fame of being very cold, was transforming little by little and in way that was as efficient as it was safe.

Stabilized in Jacona, Jose Antonio had the right to sigh: If only my mother lived with me!... Because, even though one of his sisters lived in the community, the priest wasn't going to live in a family's house; then a present, that he didn't know how to thank God for, came: Matilde! A young yet mature woman who deserved the most enlightening commendations:

-Matilde is one of those women that God sends the world to serve as support for the orphan priests. This woman was a true mother to me, a sister and a firm hand that has helped me in all my endeavors in a very notorious way. She loves me dearly and works without rest; she has no other ambition than to serve God and keep me company. We know each other's temper as we do the palm of our hands; we mutually withstand our weaknesses and impertinences; anyway, we are true siblings and she is a true mother to me.

Matilde came from the righteous people of Zamora. And when the priest saw her, from the very first moment, he thought in what he had nailed like a wedge in his heart since long before his ordination:

-The children! The girls! The youth!... I held onto my calling because of them. Let's educate them. The same way Matilde was educated. We need a school. That can't wait. Let's do it soon! The sooner, the better.

The first year of being in Jacona didn't go by without having the dream starting to turn into a modest but promising reality.

THE FIRST GUADALUPANO SCHOOL

A lady with visions of a prophet, and without pretensions, made this adventurous promise:



-If you introduce me to fourteen kids who can pay one peso every month, I'll dare to start up a school.

The Parish Priest, who didn't have deaf ears, captured the idea:

-With fourteen pesos Rita Navarrete will dare to open up a school? I will start working on it. Then she will come and I won't let her go.

There was a worthless building almost in ruins, right next to the Sanctuary of the "*Vir- gen de la Raíz*" or Virgin of the Root, they said it used to be a House for Spiritual Retreats. On September 8th of this first year of ministry, Father Plancarte started demolishing bricks, fixing classrooms and making the place look decent; on November 12th classes started. - More speed with more modesty, impossible!... and began on a work that would be big someday.

With her usual energy, there was Rita in front of seventeen young girls who started their education with a solemn Mass in honor of the Virgin and a passionate Communion, prepared with the sacramental Confession of the previous day. The Priest gave them the blessing and read with seriousness and affection the outline of rules to them:

-Every morning, study the books; in the afternoons, chores; and spiritual readings and prayers always.

The La Purisima Concepción School had born; being the first Guadalupan School. And from it, with the first callings, the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe will sprout.

Rita sewed and stitched with great skill. Her spiritual knowledge came down to the Catechism of Ripalda, which was intensely translated into her daily life. She read and wrote well, but nothing else. Before the responsibility she had taken that day, she began to study with tenacity under the guide of the competent Priest and of Maria de Jesus Sandoval, who turned her into an exemplary teacher.

Plancarte's dreams went just as far as his happiness:
-I'm very enthused with the progress of my little school.

Dreams and joy that soon turned into sharp thorns. To educate the girls, to raise some necessary funds and to make his project grow and known, he used the theater, organized literary soirees, displayed paintings, did a presentation of the play "Fabiola", the famous novel of his beloved Cardinal Wiseman, and did a delivery of prizes... and so the severe critics arose:

-That European Priest! What is it with those novelties?

ENDING UP IN JAIL...

As if the gossip about the project of the School wasn't enough, problems with the civil authorities happened unexpectedly. Zamora's chief of police Mr. Vargas, furious Jacobin, was against the Parish Priest of Jacona and found the perfect occasion to get rid of him. The gossip about the foreign methods of the School came in handy, and the Holy Week gave him the best moment to do it; Father Plancarte preached on the streets, during the procession, the classic sermon of "The three falls", and the chief fined him with fifty pesos for doing processions without his express consent. Later, he invented an act of rebelliousness from the Priest, because he had protested for an unfair act against the Church, he sent a message to the President of the city council of Jacona:

-I sent the Priest to jail. Captain Rubio will be in charge of arresting and bringing him.

Mr. Filomeno Guerra, City President of Jacona, advised the priest confidentially, whom he regarded dearly, so he could take measures and hide. Let us allow the Priest to tell us the adventure himself.

-Detained, they showed me the order of arrest, adding a thousand apologies and asking me to distract myself a little while my brothers took care of everything so I wouldn't go to jail. I strictly objected, and, at that moment, I commanded my horse to be prepared and got on it as if I were going on a trip. It was raining tremendously and so we arrived to jail soaking wet. Captain Rubio asked the Mayor to not place me inside the cell but I strongly objected and demanded that the order of arrest be fulfilled accordingly. The poor prisoners were astonished and moved by seeing me among them, and they started cleaning and

sweeping everything rapidly. For disposition of the judge, they started a trial which was a sham; it had to happen in my sister's house, where I would have to live under arrest on bail. The result was that I was arrested for two months and at the end they absolved me and took away Vargas from being chief on the same exact day I returned to Jacona, where they received me with great demonstrations of affection, even though the authorities intervened to avoid all kinds of demonstrations of affection towards myself.

It's nice to find a Father Plancarte like that: courageous, energetic, tested in the good and in the bad and always trusting God. He was prepared for the greater ventures.

A VERY SPECIAL BIENNIUM

The years 1869-1870 marked the life of the Parish Priest of Jacona because of a particular couple of happenings, as small as they were simple, but of great consequences.

Father Plancarte loved his Parish Church, he felt the responsibility of the position, he didn't want to leave, but the Prelate gave the orders... and now he ordered him something of his very own liking: Go on missions! Father Plancarte had always felt the missionary spirit and wanted to be a missionary. Though, these tests with the Bishop sporadically satisfied a very deep hope in his soul. Monsignor Jose Antonio de la Peña acted very accurately. He wanted that the Pastoral Visits to the churches of the Diocese didn't end up being established by protocol, but of great spiritual benefit. For that, he prepared the faithful with several days of mission in order: preaching, catechesis, long hours in the confessional, prayer...

And he commended such task to the zealous Father Plancarte, who was periodically absent from the Parish Church for such an apostolic ministry and a ministry of his liking. The parishioners of Jacona walked long hours to visit their Parish Priest in the places where he missioned. And once the priest returned to his position, they received him in a very Mexican way; very proud of their preacher: arches of branches, flower tapestries, dances, fireworks, music and joyful chiming of the bells...

Monsignor Pelagio, Archbishop of Mexico, was in Europe for the preparation and development of the Vatican Council I. And while Antonio was eagerly dedicated of the missioning task, he received a pressing errand from his uncle:

-Select and prepare several young boys to come and study in Rome. They are waiting for them at the Pius Latin American Collegiate.

The uncle and the nephew had the same idea and cherished the same hopes about the formation of future priests. Soon, we will see where everything ended. From now on, let's get on to work.

The cemetery, the headache with the natives, was going to be finished this year and it was transforming into a decent home for the dead of Jacona. Father Plancarte gloried of it as if it were a religious and social task of his very own, which filled him with legitimate

satisfaction. With all his projects finished, the Priest happily wrote: “The cemetery looked so decent, that it could even be displayed in Mexico”.

The Parish Church needed some radical remodeling, and urgently. The Priest never became discouraged; he started the restoration in spite of the other project he had in his hands, and on the day of Corpus Christy of the following year, he solemnly placed the Blessed Sacrament in his Tabernacle.

And yet another important social project. Everyone regretted the same thing:

-The streets of the community are really bad, with nothing other than potholes, dust or sludge, depending on the weather. Let's cobblestone them! We had laborers since many men had no jobs, and that way they had an opportunity to make some money.

Laziness of the “*Jaconenses*” or Jacona natives, critiques from some of the interested people, contradictions as always, but the point is that the streets were fixed, starting with Real Street, which on September 8th, with the procession of the “*Virgen de la Raíz*” or Virgin of the Root, was inaugurated and solemnly blessed.

But above all the projects, the main one: La Purísima Concepción School was finished, with an elegant building, Norman style, cozy, with patios and halls. However, soon they had to expand the construction that they thought they had finished. When Cabinda, a girl who had no place to stay in Jacona, the idea of the dorms arose, dorms on which the students who came from other communities would live as they would in paradise.

CANON?... NO, PLEASE

Such deeds, made by Father Plancarte in his Parish Church didn't go on unnoticed in the high spheres of the Diocese. And then, the most natural of world came: Canon of the Cathedral of Zamora, of course.

Jacona's Priest didn't want to disobey his Bishop, whom he dearly regarded, nor the Chapter who sincerely offered him such an honor. Before answering, he went on a retreat, in which he reflected, prayed and consulted:

-Since the Ecclesiastic Academy in Rome, I renounced to all title that would finally take me to a prelacy... The La Purísima School, will crumble like I said... and the one planned from San Luis for the boys, won't be made... The started deed, beginning with the reconstruction of the unraveled Parish church will not happen because there is nobody who would dare to take over... the parishioners, who were so needy before the formation, and whom I have been winning over little by little, will forget about it all... No; I see that it's not convenient for me to accept. Let's see what my uncle Pelagio, whom I consulted with, will say.

And uncle Pelagio, returned to Mexico after his banishment, wrote a letter to Bishop Monsignor Peña, full of affection, as it wouldn't be any less among two great friends, in which he supported the negative answer of his nephew who was only at the orders of Zamora's Diocese:

-I can't do anything other than supporting the decision of not accepting any position that will compromise, in a way, to accept some dignities, what he considers dangerous for the peace of his soul, the spirit of his calling and the degree of greater perfection that he aspires. What I mentioned is enough to convince you and your Chapter that, for now, it's convenient to leave my nephew in the curate of Jacona, while I determine, according to God, to bring him by my side. We shall look at the use of the Church, the inclination and decision of my nephew to not take over positions that could distract him from his calling, *as it is the education of children and youth*, and the liberty of calling him to my Diocese.

Everyone proceeded with great loyalty and upright intention: the holy Bishop, the Chapter, Monsignor Pelagio and Jose Antonio himself:

-No, Mr. Bishop; not a canon. Leave me as a simple Parson in Jacona so that the projects we've started there can go on.

All those deeds were very important, recognized by the Bishop and the Chapter from Zamora, and so by a somewhat sinister character who became present in the community. The visit of Michoacan's Governor Mr. Justo Mendoza arrived, he was known for his anti-religious ideas. Father Plancarte, very respectful towards the authorities, organized a magnificent reception, though he reluctantly refused to assist to the soiree and participate in the attentions to the illustrious guest. But the Governor imposed himself:

-Do the favor of coming to the banquet, even if it's dressed with a cassock, even if the law prohibits it.

Plancarte obeyed, and once the food was finished, Mr. Justo offered a toast:

-If all clergymen were like the Parson of Jacona, I'd reconcile with the Church.

To what the priest replied:

-A couple of days ago, your newspaper portrayed me of gold and of blue, even though you thought I was a scoundrel. Now that you know me, your opinion has changed. The same will happen if you knew the other priests... Mr. Governor, please excuse me, I'll leave because the bells are chiming calling me to the Month of Mary.

THE SCHOOL OF SAN LUIS

Unescapable, in the mind of our Antonio, the most dreamt deed: a school for boys, just like La Purisima for girls, which was functioning splendidly now;

When, where and how?...

Right away, of course.

And right here, next to the Parish Church, in the old house of the Augustinians.

But, above all, with the Jesuit Priests which God had placed at our disposal.

What had happened?

A day of June in 1873, uncle Pelagio called him to the Capital. Father Plancarte arrived and stunned, he listened:

-My dear nephew: what you've never accomplished. I want you to take Priests Serra and Wild to Jacona, because they will banish all foreign priests here.

What a news flash! And he took the first measure. So they wouldn't recognize them as foreigners, he changed their names:

-You, Father Serra, will be called Tolentino; and you, Father Wild, will take the name of Leon.

He arrived to Jacona with a joy that escaped from all the pores of his body, in the middle of a cheerful gathering of the people from the community that welcomed the three priests in a triumphant manifestation. Without wasting time, he started the paperwork to buy the crumbling convent of the Augustinians. The workers labored speedily and the inauguration was on September 8th. In a celebration of the Virgin, by all means! And precisely during the celebration of the "*Virgen de la Raíz*" or Virgin of the Root, Jacona's Patron, to whom Father Plancarte directed a passionate plead:

-Lady, I place my school under your protection. As tokens, here are these medals that my boys in Rome have earned as prizes.

The Priest added to his diary:

-This was the beginning of my little school... Only God knows the ending!

Was he sensing something? The beginning couldn't have been any more modest. The teachers? Only two Jesuit foreigners. The student body? Only two students as well: his nephews Miguel Plancarte Garibay, from Zamora, and Adrian Plancarte Alvarez, from Jacona, to whom numerous classmates will join.

As expected, it was natural that the usual contradictions would present themselves, but this time they came from where they expected them the least.

The two teachers, used to the big schools from the Jesuits in Europe, couldn't get used to such modesty and to the educational methods that Plancarte wanted to implant, methods he learned in Oscott during his years in England.

They started the conversation with seriousness, according the words of the Priest:

-All the attempts we've made so that the school functioned properly, have been in vain and even harmful. We have no other remedy but to separate. Either you keep everything and I leave or I stay and you quit the management.

They talked, consulting one another, both parts ended up in good terms, but they agreed that separation was better, though the two Jesuits stayed as simple teachers a little longer; Tuesday of Easter was marked for their departure.

The point was that the Priest moved from his residency; he went to live in the School, terraced right next to the Parish Church, and constituted himself as Rector of the teaching center. Together, both buildings, School and Church, the Priest served the parishioners just as he never lost sight, for a moment, of his emerging School, in which he had a young theologian seminarian, Jose Dolores Mora, "Of a brilliant career; virtuous, circumspect, humble, without pretensions and hardworking" as a helper.

Because of the School of San Luis, and for a simple incident in the distribution of prizes in the School of girls, a true persecution against the Priest had awakened. They took the accusations to the Bishop, who, even though he dearly loved the Parson and in whom he had deposited all his trust, found himself in the need of calling him to clarify things:

-They told me that you made an older girl march as head of the group in a not so decorous angel costume... That all of your kids are very unhappy... That you have very incompetent teachers... That the students, after three years, are so behind that they don't even know how to decline... That you don't return the money that is paid in advance to those that leave... Well, that everything is bad, that all from you is nothing but charlatanry and that the kids are advanced only in music and in choir.

The priest remained quiet and withstood such downpour fearlessly. But, he also knew how to reply to a Bishop who loved him dearly:

-It's all false, Monsignor. Though I'm determined to get rid of the rich people I have in my school and dedicate myself to the education of the poor of both genders, because these people that are more accommodated financially speaking furl to old systems and act, most of the time, more because of envy than because of conviction. I will start by separating five poor kids from the doctrine, who will be the founders of an arts and trades school.

Jose Antonio Plancarte started crying before the ungratefulness he suffered and so did the Bishop once he realized that it was nothing but pure envy:

-I'm telling you so you can change certain attitudes and avoid, that way, that your enemies come towards you, and so that you can continue working on more results in your church of Jacona.

The priest had enemies who discredited him in the Diocesan Curia and also enemies in the civil authorities, though at the end his will would impose. For example, when the La Purisima School was visited, with his committee, by the famous General Escobedo, who ended the inspection with these words:

-Mr. Parson, you have many enemies, but in me you'll find a friend who will help you in all I can and whenever you need it.

When returning from Holy Week break, some students had news that were comforting for the Priest:

-Our families had placed us in your hands and now they are very happy that you are our Rector.

The Priest smiled with satisfaction, but anxiously asked himself as well:

-What can be done with this boys and with a school with no future?...

On June 13th, celebration of San Antonio, his saint, the Priest made them plant a cedar tree in the cemetery as a remembrance of their stay in the School of San Luis, which wasn't going to subsist as it did until then, and on August 31st of 1876, it shut down after three years of functioning.

To close it, he celebrated a very passionate Communion. Then, in the lookout tower of the La Purisima School to where they moved, the students, surrounded by the girls and their teachers, played eight songs in honor of the Virgin.

The priest felt his heart pressed, but he wrote without discouragements:

-The work I had started with great enthusiasm ended like this. I say “ended” because it seems that way, not because I think so; well this must be called the day of its translation to Rome and the day of its true foundation. The moral element that will shape and make it grow has been assured today. I thank those who think they did me wrong...

We are on the year 1876. There were still many projects to do on the Parish church and the Priest didn't want unhelpful delays. But, he placed a forced stop momentarily: the Asylum, the railroad, the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary, dream of dreams... Now, the most proximate.

BOYS TOWARDS ROME

Dreamer Plancarte to the divine, this time he will dream more than ever. He had seen the idea peak before:

-And why not taking the entire group of students to Rome, to the Pius Latin American Collegiate, where they will train unsurpassably? I have sent five boys already, and the results are yet to be seen. One of them returned because he didn't feel the calling for priesthood, but works in the School very well. Another left to the heavens, very soon, to plead for his mates, and the remaining three are everyone's admiration because of their studiousness and conduct. Why don't I take them all to Rome?... Money; it will come!

He continued writing on his diary:

-I would never endanger this arduous but glorious venture unless it was to save these boys, who will grow under the shadow of the Supreme Pontiff and who will soon become



men that will shower with glory and will brighten the faces of those who see them part to-day.

Rumors about this madness start to run, from which an interested asked:

-Hey, Jose Antonio, what will you make of these boys?

-Bishops!...

He didn't say it as a joke. Very serene, he exposed his thoughts:

-They will return graduated. They will be competent teachers of the School of San Luis. With professionals graduated from the University of Rome, we could even think of a Cler-

ical School. And if we have good and educated priests, the church will have excellent candidates for Bishops.

Even though the first five who were sent to Rome in the almost distant 1870's were giving good results, he now prepared an expedition of seventeen young boys. Thirteen were his; the other four were commended by their families.

When the Priest proposed his plan in the School of San Luis, before its closing, the majority of the students said they wanted to go to Rome. Very brave, these boys who learned to risk everything for Jesus in the School! And the generosity of their Christian families, in the midst of the pain of the separation, due to the fact that their children were too young to take on such a huge risk.

Bishop Monsignor Peña, so good and prudent, had clearly told Jose Antonio:

-What are you going to do, Father?

-I'm thinking of taking them to Rome. Will you allow me to make this trip, Monsignor?

-I think it's necessary. For the safety of the boys, go personally with them until you have left all thirteen in the Pius Latin American Collegiate and the other four in their respective Schools.

Once the farewell act that we know from the lookout tower of the La Purisima School had ended, he sent the boys to their families with the instructions of gathering in the neighbor town of Chilchota on September 25th.

On that day, the Priest of rigorous incognito and with the soul full of hard omens, left:

-I spent the night full of sleeplessness and lethargy; between phantoms and dreams, fears and hopes of dread and of resolution.

On horses, they started their departure towards Mexico, which, with lads and family members, they made a caravan of thirty-nine people. The days alternated; some days were splendid and others full of rain, as well as with harsh and beautiful sceneries. On October 7th, they arrived to the Capital, where they made their obliged visit to the Virgin of Guadalupe, toured around the streets of the city and received the most generous blessing from the Archbishop Monsignor Labastida y Davalos.

Here, the other three boys that were missing joined them, the numerous groups of family members who had accompanied them all the way from Jacona left, and they disposed to start their trip across the sea.

They left on the railroad towards Veracruz on the 15th of October of 1876, and there they embarked to France on the 18th, where they would arrive on November 13th. A trip, pleasant at times and other times with insufferable heat and a storm that almost left them shipwrecked. From France they would travel by train to Rome where their trip ended on the 19th of the same November.

Father Plancarte had made the trip being full of anguish before the responsibility that he took on with those boys, as the notes of his diary demonstrate, while the ship was leaving from the Mexican coast:

-A sigh came out of my chest and a tear rolled down from my eyes. It seems as if I left banished and depressed, but it's not like that. This ship will come back full of wise men, capable of making my motherland jubilant, and then my tears turned into joy. I not only forgive with the heart, but I will live acknowledging eternally those who forced this long and dangerous trip; the most heroic and beneficial trip of my life. Heroic because I have constituted myself as father of sixteen boys, on a trip full of dangers, and I made myself responsible of their education and expenses in Europe. Beneficial because they will be the pride of their families and the bliss of our towns.

What a man of faith was this Parson of Jacona! Give time to time, because God won't fail!

Once they made it to Rome, the Priest found, in the Pius Latin American School, those boys he had sent on the first trip, turned into magnificent young men now.

One, Jose Maria Mendez, who would one day, become Canon of the Cathedral of Mexico. Another, the most spoiled nephew of Father Antonio, Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete, who would end his days as Archbishop of Linares-Monterrey, after being Bishop of Campeche and Cuernavaca.

From the ones he brought now, the only adult, who was 22 years old, whom he had as a teacher, will be Bishop of Tehuantepec, from Leon and finally Archbishop of Mexico.

Francisco Orozco y Jimenez, who said he didn't aspire being a priest, would one day turn into a brave Bishop of Chiapas, then Archbishop of Guadalajara, and he is now in the cause of Beatification.

Miguel Plancarte Garibay will die being canon in the Basilica of Guadalupe, after having achieved the Coronation of the "*Virgen de la Raíz*" or Virgin of the Root from Jacona, the first image canonically crowned in America.

Juan Herrera, the youngest of them all, of only eleven years of age, described by the priest as "the funniest and friendliest of all because of his physiognomy, size, good manners and temper", is a boy who would one day be Bishop of Tulancingo, Archbishop of Linares-Monterrey and founder of a religious Congregation.

Once, ending that trip in which he left thirteen boys in the Pius Latin American and placed the other four in their respective destinations, the priest wrote on his diary:

-Now that that I think about what I've done and to what I've exposed myself to, I declare myself mad. I won't do it again...

Well he did repeat the venture! Until the ending of his life, pupils of his would embark towards Rome, such as Antonio Paredes, Rafael Cagiga, Matias Montoya, Jose Betancour, Manuel Fulcheri and Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, (elected Abbot of the Collegiate after the death of Father Plancarte and then Bishop of Leon and of Monterrey).

Yes, Father Plancarte! When everyone criticized and you died of anguish at sea, you, yourself, with visions of a prophet, wrote it in your notes:

-Dear homeland! My beloved Country, for which I have sacrificed all of what I've had! He, who loved his motherland, will one day be known.

The two visits that he made to Rome and Jerusalem had a special meaning in the life of Plancarte. The visit to Jerusalem, because he did it with the specific intention of commending the longed foundation of his Religious Sisters to Jesus. And the visit to Rome because he would seal, with the last visit to the beloved Pope Pius IX, his unbreakable fidelity to the Vicar of Christ and to the Church.

IN THE HOLY LAND

Even if the order is a little inverted, let's start with Jerusalem. Father Plancarte felt love for peregrinations. This is undoubted. But the harsh sentence of the Kempis in the Imitation of Christ didn't apply to him: "Those that peregrinate a lot are rarely sanctified". For our Jose Antonio, peregrination wasn't a tour and neither a dissipated life, but it was mercy, love, abnegation, sacrifice, meditation and a lot of prayer. And so, in this one that he now started, he began with a lot of work, because of all the time he had available, he spent it, with great discomfort at times, in the study of rules and constitutions of other Religious Sisters, to start tracing what the Rules of his Daughters of Immaculate Mary would be.

He embarked in Naples on February 18th and the journey at sea would almost be same as that of Paul when the waves threw the ship onto the island of Malta. Bad nights continuously happened, and on the 22nd day, it was so horrible that "I prepared myself to die and thanked God for sending me to die going on my way towards the Holy Places of our Redemption".

In the middle of this downfall, "well I've had never suffered so much on a trip", the Rules of his Daughters were being created, which he, with enchanting infantile mercy, wanted to place on Bethlehem's crib, on top of the rock of the Cavalry and over the crypt of the Holy Sepulcher. He finished writing them on the 24th day in the convent of the Franciscan Priests of Alexandria, where they had docked and stayed for a day to switch ships. Though, each day the finished version would just be a rough draft of another rough draft, for more that he placed it in the most sacred places, we can see, because of his notes, that he kept profiling it incessantly until he turned it in to Archbishop Labastida as something definite in Mexico, once the trip was over, as well as to the Bishop of Zamora for the approval of the Congregation and of the Constitutions.

Now in Holy Land, emotions happened, one after another, just like during the Mass in Gethsemane, "during which the Rules were finished and my cross was placed under the Altar and over the place where Christ shed his Blood".

He celebrated the Mass in the place of the "Ecce Homo", contemporarily taken onto the light by the tireless Priest Maria Alfonso Ratisbona. Father Plancarte had the joy of estab-

lishing such a friendly conversation with the converted Jew by the apparition of the Miraculous Virgin in Rome and founder of the Religious Order of Zion:

-What a tidiness, cleanliness, silence; how beautiful and devoted had the Sisters all of it! Father Ratisbona celebrated the Mass as well, and it figured to me that I was similar to him in the way of life he carried. Hopefully it were in his virtues!

And what can we say about his visit to the Valley of Jehoshaphat? Nothing. Any biographer would leave it aside, because it isn't worth it. But we are going to bring it here because of the magnificent pedagogy about the prayer based on the Gospel. Sitting over a rock from the east side of Jerusalem, Jose Antonio contemplated the creek that lead all the way to the "Gehenna", where the Christian tradition had placed the scenery for the Final Judgement. What does our pilgrim think about himself? Here we copied his words:

-Sitting at the bottom of the Sepulcher of Absalom, facing the Aurea door and the Cavalry, I did a long meditation. When will I return to this Valley? The day of the universal judgement... when the world is destroyed..., when all men and their deeds have perished..., when all betrayals have been discovered..., when all illnesses have no remedy..., when everything is full of good wishes, pointlessly... How will I find this Valley? Lonely like right now? Without a soul perturbing the silence? Without signs of life?... No; here I will find all nations gathered... A royal throne will arise right there, and a Supreme Judge, who cannot be fooled, will sit over it, who will sentence without appeal, who will sentence for all eternity!

Up to here, nothing special: is what we all think and say. But Jose Antonio will go deep inside his own conscience, and will do an implacable meditation:

-Around that throne, there will be Holy Virgin, the Apostles and the Saints, and I before the Judge, not alone, but surrounded by my parents, brothers, relatives, teachers, superiors, inferiors, parishioners, penitents, the boys and girls of my schools..., and I will be judged in front of everyone and my most embarrassing sins will be revealed in front of them. What will my mother say about the son that she dearly loved? My brothers, about the brother to whom they trusted the education of their children?... My superiors about the subject who they honored with so much trust?... The Conceptionists about the father in whom they deposited all of their happiness?... The schoolboys from the San Luis School, from their beloved superior, who they had judged as virtuous and proposed themselves to imitate?... My parishioners, about that model Parson, who they boasted for having him in their town and that others envied?... What will they say, anyway; all the admirers of my deeds?... Poor me, poor me! They will all find out that I'm an ingrate who hadn't responded to the divine benefits; a wolf who had destroyed the herd; a mercenary who had served for his own gain; an unfaithful depositary; a hypocrite, a sacrilege, a criminal... How will I stand so much shame? My God! What will I do when all of those, who my heart loves dearly, turn against me? And will I be sentenced? To what?... To the eternal flames! To never see God! To eternally suffer? And will I have to separate from my mother who will hate and curse me forever!... And will, all of those who love me, do the same?...

Blessed be the humbleness of Father Plancarte! It's good that he, who during all of his life, was an uncommon educator, had given us such a lesson about self-knowledge and

prayer. We all know that if the fearsome Judge had dictated to us what he would tell the Priest from Jacona, Abbot of Guadalupe and preconized Bishop: “Well-done, good and faithful servant, enter the joyous banquet of your Lord!... Come and take over the reign that I have prepared for you!”...

BACK IN ROME

The Priest had arrived to Rome on November of 1876, and before getting on his way to Holy Land on February 17th, he'd already had three hearings with the Pope Pius IX. On the third one, he was accompanied by the boys from the Pius Latin American who had been brought from Mexico. As a proper introduction, the Priest had placed a letter on the hands of the Pope, in which he reminded him:

-Your Holiness blessed me with these words: “Go ahead, son of mine, work as much as you can in the reform of the schools, since, from them, the afflictions of your homeland are born. Make sure that young men come for an education in the one I've founded here for Latin America. The Lord will bless and coronate the deeds that you plan on beginning in benefit of the youth”.

This is what the Priest reminded the Pope about. And the Pope answered the Priest with another letter:

-Your obsequious letter from the 10th of this month has pleased me a lot, with which you express to us, the caution you've had with the education of the youth and the fruits you have harvested in your apostolic zeal... The presence and words of the young men that you brought to the Collegiate, which had been established in this city of Rome for the youth from Latin America, increased our happiness. I've hugged them with fatherly love, and we hope that, one day, solidly instructed, they will go back to their homeland and follow your steps, working with the same ardor and results in the salvation of souls.

These expressions from Pius IX weren't empty words. In the hearing, he really enjoyed, with the thirteen boys from Father Plancarte, to whom he asked with such humor:

-Thirteen! And how did selecting such a bad number occur to you?

-Blessed Father, I did it in honor of my Patron San Antonio de Padua.

-Well, I don't mess with San Antonio...

When anyone leaned to kiss his foot, the Pope threatened him with his cane. In addition to that, he guessed something in the hands of the youngest, the eleven year old, and he asked with malicious affection:

-What does that little scamp want?

He yanked the Zucchetto, which the boy was holding, from his hands, and placed it over his head dropping his own. The Priest, who had started the ruse, rapidly took hold of the coveted Zucchetto; it is kept today in the Congregation as a relic from the Blessed Pius IX.

Another detail from this hearing. Father Plancarte presented the stamp of the “*Virgen the La Raíz*” or the Virgin of the Root, the most valued jewel of Jacona, and told him the story from the apparition.

-Beautiful, beautiful! But, why don't you change the name of “*Virgen de la Raíz*” to “*Virgen de la Esperanza*” or Virgin of Hope, a more comforting title?

After the parenthesis from Holy Land, the Priest was now in Rome on March 28th. On April 13th, at seven at night, there was a private fourth hearing with the Pope; with the intention of talking about the planned founding of the Religious Sisters. But there was something else:

-Blessed Father, this is the last time I will see you in your land, but I will pledge on being a saint to see you again in heaven.

The excitement was very strong, and Antonio broke in tears. And also the kind Pius IX was moved and elevated some prayers for the faithful disciple who was kissing his feet in tears:

-I bless you, and with you, your family, relatives and friends, the Daughters of the Congregation, your parishioners, the boys and their relatives, and all the Mexicans.

This emotional scene had been preceded from another not any less moving. The Priest gave the Pope a diamond ring:

-Here, Holy Father, this jewel was my mother's, the person who I've loved the most here on earth and to whose heroic virtues I owe who I am. And in exchange, you give me a ring of yours, to be kept by the Daughters of Immaculate Mary as a reminder that the Pope of the Immaculate Conception blesses them and approves of their works.

The Pope saw the ring:

-What a magnificent solitary! This ring that I have on has many memories of mine and I won't give it to you because of that; but tomorrow I will send you another that I have worn and which I wear in the morning to celebrate the Holy Mass.

It was here when the Priest broke in tears and the scene previously described developed. The love towards the Pope, how deep he carried it in his heart and the way he knew how to transmit it to the Congregation of his dreams!...

The next day a secret steward of the Holiness went to the Latin American Collegiate carrying a ring with a beautiful amethyst, very well mounted with two crosses on the sides, engraved in gold. The two rings, Plancarte's and the Pope's, were an expression of what the Priest had written a few days before in an innocent sonnet: “To Pius Ninth I will say: Oh Father of mine!, enchain a Mexican with you”.

Two more peregrinations before heading back to Mexico: to the sepulcher of his Patron San Antonio in Padua and to the Immaculate Virgin in Lourdes; both with the same mercy, the same devotion, the same meditation, and with the same intention: to present the Saint and the Virgin the Rules that soon will embrace his Daughters. When he arrived to Mexico, he finally presented them to the Archbishop, his uncle Pelagio Labastida, who approved

them in all their parts. He then took it to the Bishop from Zamora for his diocesan approval. It was the fruit of so much study, work and prayer..., and from the wise counseling received in Rome from very competent people, including the Pope in one of his hearings, all with the same opinion:

-Stop trying to join your Teachers to another order or Congregation already established. Think about a truly Mexican Religious Institute that could resist the civil laws of the country and adapt to them. Specifically about the so brought up issue of the habit, because modesty is worth more by touch, and, as shield, the blessed fear of God, than all of the closing norms.

CREPES AMONG FLOWERS

Once again in Jacona. And as always, after an absence, his parishioners received him with their classic noise and triumphant arches, but this once, everything was covered with sad news, which he guessed because of the black crepes linked among the flowers: the Bishop of Zamora, Mr. Jose Antonio Peña y Navarro, dearly loved by the Priest, had passed away. Father Plancarte wrote his first impression.

-This fatal news sourly took my happiness and completely deranged my head. Afternoons like this one, I've lived a few in my life.

"With God's will!" as our good people say. But, humanely speaking, the news were really bad. We will be able to see it soon, almost when the new Bishop Monsignor Jose Maria Cazares y Martinez arrives, who proceeded from Morelia and who Zamora received with happiness, flamed with the welcoming speech that had been commended to the eloquence of the Parson of Jacona.

THE RAILROAD

The modern Father Plancarte wanted the latest inventions in methods that would make his beloved town progress socially. And he had the idea of a railroad deep in his head since his era of being a student in Oscott. Now in the parish destiny that God assigned him, he thought: Let us join, with the train, the two communities of Jacona and Zamora!...

Anyone would say that the idea would be taken with enthusiasm, but it all went into difficulties. The coldness of the capitalists: we wouldn't dare!... the indifference of both city councils from Zamora and Jacona: what is that about?... and the apathy of the people: no, because the wagons will derail and will ruin the cobblestone of the streets!... All of this madness made any attempt of construction practically impossible. But Father Plancarte was tenacious and determined and accepted being part of the Commission formed as a result, from which his brother Luis was the head.

Before anything, he got permission from the Head of State, since that section would proudly be the beginning of the railroad in Michoacan.

Uncle Monsignor Pelagio Labastida gave him seven thousand pesos for the project; with which he ordered the first rails from England.

In February of 1878, the decree that authorized the construction of the traction railroad was published.

With the students from the La Purisima School, and with the neighbors of the town whom he had enthused with the plan, he started to remove the rocks from the streets, even though the Priest knew that the new Bishop saw the project of the railroad at the hands of the Parson with bad eyes ...

At last, everything was done. And since the Prelate hadn't visited Jacona yet, Father Plancarte had the gesture of inviting him, so he could see the La Purisima School and to bless the brand-new railroad. He set December 6th for such a great event. One can only imagine what took place in Jacona on that day. The Prelate climbed up and got on the great carriage, installed at the entrance of the town, he was dressed as a pontifical, and, the carriage was pulled by men; among music and a rain of flowers which fell from all the balconies, the start of the railroad came to be, which was blessed in such an impressive way. After the visit to the School, in which the girls stood out with their chants and speeches, when the night came, accompanied always by music, they placed the Bishop on a brand new wagon, and, on it, he returned to Zamora leaving behind the streets illuminated with red flares.

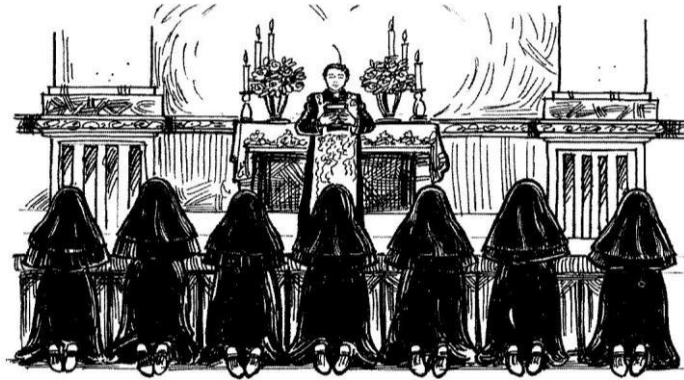
The social milestone of the railroad in the town was very noticeable. For the "*Jaconenses*" or Jacona natives who continuously traveled to Zamora, to do their shopping and many other businesses, traveling by foot, on donkeys those who could, and on horses those who were more fortunate, had ended. Those three and a half kilometers traveled by train meant to them back then the same as what traveling on the tramway or on the trolley in modern cities means to us now.

THE CONGREGATION IS BORN

Father Plancarte had many projects on his hands. But the main one, the one that would leave a perennial mark on the Church, was the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe.

The idea came from afar, from when he wanted to open up an Asylum for orphan girls in 1870. The Priest, in agreement with the Bishop, presented the project to the Sisters of Charity in Mexico, offering the School of the girls and the Asylum. But the Sisters imposed certain conditions which worried Monsignor Peña to rethink about their notorious good will.

Solution?... We should better think about a new Congregation, completely ours. For now, neither the Daughters of Mary, that he had founded in the year 1871 and who were added to the Primary of Rome, nor the teachers and students of the School, are prepared to take care of an Asylum nor to found the Religious Congregation. But, all of it will come...



Father Plancarte was so sure about his objectives, which we already saw that resulted from his trip to Holy Land, to Rome, in Padua and in Lourdes: Rules, the Rules of his Religious Daughters! They hadn't been born yet, but the Rules were hidden underneath the altar of the Gethsemane's Garden anyway, just like one would lie on the flagstone of the Sacred Sepulcher. The Pope had blessed it and uncle Pelagio, Archbishop of Mexico, had approved it entirely. That's what it is to have faith!...

Founded in 1867, the La Purisima School, which we would call the first Guadalupe School, and with the rejection of the Sisters of Charity of taking it over with the possible Asylum in the year 1870, the Priest placed his hope on the teachers and girls of the building:

-Who are the best, the most merciful, the smartest, the most responsible, the ones who are worth it?...

Without rush, and silently, he started educating a select group. Keep calm, because all of it will come!... It was the seed that had started to grow.

In 1873, the Priest had already selected several young girls along with some teachers and he encouraged them to look out for the best:

-Would you like to practice poverty, chastity and obedience, which are the backbone of religious vows? You could one day profess as religious.

It was the first clique of candidates of the new Congregation, which was brewing at the shadow of the Virgin and under the prudent guidance of the Parish Priest.

In 1877, Father Plancarte had returned from his trip, which we know very well. Pope Pius IX had told him:

-A new Congregation, truly Mexican!

Uncle Pelagio Labastida, Archbishop of Mexico, encouraged him:

-The Rules are very well done! Go ahead!

The candidates gave signs of great fidelity and of excellent conduct. Why wait any longer?

And that way, on February 2nd of 1878, celebration of the Presentation of Jesus to the Church, a clique of generous young women emitted their religious profession: Rafaela Tapia, Soledad Hurtado, Genoveva Garcia, Concepcion Calderon, Antonia and Luz Samudio and Matilde Martinez, whom Rita Navarrete, the first teacher and founder of the La Purisima School, joined a month later. The Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe had been born.

A year later, on April of 1870, the Institute got the approval of the Diocesan Bishop and, so, it was officially born in the Church.

The Asylum of San Antonio was founded on June 13th; the Priest commended it to the Congregation. That way, with the La Purisima School and with the Asylum, the Guadalupeans, as we will fondly call them in the future, started their path as educators of children and of youth, cherished dream of their Founding Father since the beginnings of his Priesthood in Rome.

THE ASYLUM OF SAN ANTONIO

Before the harsh reality that he suspected was coming upon him, there was no time to waste with the cherished Asylum of San Antonio, whose beginnings go back to 1870. The initial funds had come unexpected and providentially. Monsignor Clemente de Jesus Munguia, first Archbishop of Michoacan, died in Rome and left an inheritance for a charity case. In charge? All of it was left in charge of Father Plancarte, who, to succeed, wrote a letter to his uncle Monsignor Labastida begging that he asked Pope Pius IX for the power to use money and profits in an Asylum for poor girls. The Pope and Monsignor, both, applauded the project and gave him an extensive blessing, along with his Bishop Monsignor Peña.

The Priest and the Bishop, in mutual agreement, used the inheritance of Monsignor Munguia in momentarily buying a house for the projected Asylum.

The year of 1876 came. On February 8th, before parting to Rome with the group of the seventeen boys, the Asylum of San Antonio had opened with poor girls from the community in quality of outsiders. Do we want to know how it was received? Well, that same afternoon, over one hundred and fifty girls had signed up. And do we care to know what Father Plancarte thought? Very simple:

-I like this a lot. But I'm not entirely happy. Let's think about a boarding school, and that the most abandoned girls get an education, so that they can do well in life and be productive in society.

When will that Asylum see the light of day?... He had promised it to his Patron, and he accomplished it on the exact date: June 13th of 1879. He put two expert Daughters of Immaculate Mary in charge, and with thirteen orphan girls, the boarding school of the Asylum

of San Antonio de Padua, started. How far can such girls make it well-educated? One of these first thirteen, Antonia Mayllen, will later join the Congregation of her educators to become nothing other than the Mother Superior!...

Everything was going smoothly. The new Bishop, Monsignor Cazares was very complaisant: confessions, Masses, Prizes in the celebrations of the School. Though, soon the cross presented itself, all because of a misunderstanding, because of Munguia's will, who left 6,000 pesos to young Jose Antonio, which he used to buy the house for the Asylum, all in agreement with the Bishop Monsignor Peña and according to the will of Mr. Pelagio and of Pope Pius IX.

Because suspicions of the use of the money arose; suspicions that caused the Priest to suffer deeply after seeing his honesty being questioned. He was so downhearted, that he resolved to abandon everything, by joining a religious order or leaving to the United States forever. But he finally reacted, just like a saint knows how to. With extreme delicacy, he didn't want to accuse anyone and blamed himself saying that the most probable thing was that he didn't remember details about the administration of such amount.

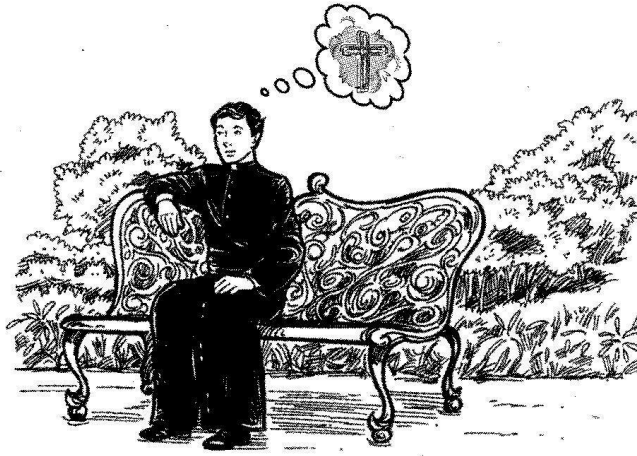


To compensate such "theft", well, the money would stop being his if someone claimed it; the Priest compromised himself to return the full amount, and he did it, even when he was turning in the original documentation of it. Everything was cleared, the moral integrity of Plancarte was demonstrated, and the originals as well as the money, of which he loyally had detached, were returned

CONTRADICTIONS CONTINUED

Thinking about the life of a saint without having the cross appear everywhere, is nothing but a dream. And our Priest Plancarte knew what it was to be nailed in in the wood with Jesus Christ very well.

In Jacona and in Zamora, a riot happened with two of the Daughters of the Immaculate; Concepcion Calderon and Guadalupe del Rio, were kidnapped by their parents and obliged to leave the Congregation. One and the other, firm in their calling, starred in an adventure, as tragic as it was humorous, in which their families, the Bishop, priests, judges, the police, the Chief of Zamora and even the Governor of Michoacan were involved. There was a moment in which Father Plancarte wrote with a broken heart:



-This has been one of the worst days of my life. I hold on to the belief that immense commodities, which we don't know about yet, will come to the Congregation and to the captives. I kiss the hand of the superior who has cruelly wounded me and I forgive him with all my heart! And to those who started judging, I forgive all you've done and said about me.

Not forgetting the name of Concepcion Calderon will be worthwhile (she will stay with the name of Maria instead of Concepcion) for what's coming ahead, when it's all about consecrating Antonio Plancarte as a Bishop...

These two stupendous daughters of his, to whom they even denied the sacramental absolution, hadn't committed a crime but wanted to remain faithful to God in their consecrated lives. Magnificent example for their sisters, and for the candidates who came later, of courageous fidelity to the received calling!

Without dropping the topic of the Congregation, another test came soon, simple but annoying after all. It was about uniting the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary with the Josephines, also of recent founding. We aren't going to describe the story, which had the best outcome. The Josephine Sisters of Father Vilaseca continued their path, and the Congregation from Father Plancarte, open to new currents and with great discernment of the signs of the times, began on theirs, which is going to be very far in its development as well as in its prosperity.

Three of the first boys, who were sent to Rome, came back now ordained as priests, and the Priests Jose Mora and Jose Mendez came with the tassel of their brilliant doctorates. Jacona received these doctors, with whom the Parson was thinking of reopening the closed School of San Luis, joyfully. Unexpected and painful difficulties proceeded. But they really succeeded, now the two doctors who had arrived from Rome, who were put in charge of the School, made abundant students, from Zamora and other towns, start to flow.

GOOD BYE JACONA!

How was the Parson of Jacona going to do; elegant European-made priest, with the English mentality learned in Oscott, the distinguished ways of the Ecclesiastic Academy for Aristocrats and with the broadmindedness of the Roman Collegiate?... In the midst of his unquestionable successes and, as counterpoise, misunderstandings and even shameless at-



tacks arose. Plancarte's enemies could've numerically been a few as opposed to his many admirers and to the community that loved him so much. But those, his adversaries, were very cultured and knew quite well how to win over the Prelate. Accusations that were simply groundless and even ludicrous came; the kind that reminded about the foreboding and accurate saying "if you throw enough mud, some sticks".

As a consequence of such yarns, on the 24th of April of 1882, the Priest received a letter from the Bishopric, in which they said:

-The Bishop has had the disposition that you turn in your Curate in Jacona onto Mr. Jose Mora. Thank you for the time and circumstances in which you performed it when the church had the need of your services.

Father Mora refused to accept:

-That is nothing other than wanting to alienate the Priest who has transformed the town!

The "envy and lie", sung or lamented by the poet and Master of Salamanca, sadly had heirs in the city of Zamora, Michoacan.

Before the formal and decisive resignation from Father Mora, the Bishop named Parson Father Salcedo, a Priest that had received many benefits from Padre Plancarte. As soon as he found out about the designation, he was moved and cried like no one before. Sincere? Maybe yes. But as soon as he felt himself as Parson of Jacona, he paid his benefactor in the most unfair way.

As soon as Father Plancarte read the letter and felt such decision as a betrayal, and then after seeing the farewells of the people, he wrote:

-I'm used to suffering. Each letter is a deceit to me. My conscience is calm. The community is grieving because of my removal. I left everyone there and I came home; but little by little, the townspeople made their presence and were screaming but couldn't enunciate a word. Everyone loved me more than when I took possession of the Parish Church fifteen years ago. May God comfort Jacona and I be thankful for his love and sympathy!

Anguishes were great, but deep satisfactions couldn't be absent. Like the day in which Mr. Pudenciano Dorantes, State Governor of Michoacan, after visiting both of the Schools from Father Plancarte, left written, in the book of visitors, this immortal page for the Congregation:

-In the historical town of Jacona, stood out, elegant and smiling, the Asylum of San Antonio and the Schools of La Purisima and of San Luis Gonzaga, whose existence is owed to the illustrious genius, the perseverant zeal, the evangelical activity of the worthy Parish Priest, Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida. This worthy Priest, who fought against great difficulties, had raised a temple to wisdom and to the truth, aiming its doors to the children, without distinction of social strata or conditions. He had set the base that soon would be one of the firm pillars of the brilliant and cheerful future from which Michoacan, crib of so many illustrious men, whose names are kept in the most brilliant pages of our history, is worthy.

I LEAVE A VIRGIN FOR YOU

Jose Antonio had made many notable works in Jacona, with a vision of a great man and of a zealous Priest. That's why we wish not to say farewell to him from his Parish Church without the most beautiful of his memories: The *Virgin of hope* or "*Virgen de la Esperanza*"!...

The community kept, with regard, since the seventeenth century, the miraculous and appeared image of *Our Lady of the Root*. But her church-sanctuary, almost in ruins, was a real shame. Father Plancarte, all-loving of the Virgin Mary, took with commitment and with his classic energy, the restoration of the dwelling place of the Patron Virgin. And, during the same year in which he opened up the Asylum of San Antonio, he offered the finished and embellished temple to the community; with two more mainline crossings, new pavement, two towers with a clock expressly brought from France, an atrium modified with arches, gardens and a statue of the Virgin carved in marble from Carrara. The Parson himself was the one who blessed the restored temple, though it was the Bishop who celebrated the Mass, and, on that very same day, the Daughters of Immaculate Mary renewed their vows to God in front of the Virgin and each one received a gold ring as a token.

We already saw how the Priest presented a stamp of the Image to Pope Pius IX, and the Pontifice suggested changing her name of *Our Lady of the Root* to the most significant to our days "*Our Lady of Hope*".

A couple of years passed, when our Priest Plancarte was in Mexico, for the Image to be canonically crowned; the first Image of Mary that was going to receive this honor in America. The initiative came from one of the boys that were taken to Rome by the Priest: his nephew Father Miguel Plancarte y Garibay. Student of the Pius Latin American, attended the Pontifical Coronation of the Virgin of La Strada in the Church of Gesù. The vivacious young man asked himself:

-And why not crowning the Virgin of my town that way?

There isn't a good seed that won't germinate. And the beloved "Father Miguelito", as everyone called him, proposed the idea, which was fully supported by his cousin the Priest and Doctor Francisco Plancarte, accepted by his uncle Antonio and his uncle Monsignor

Labastida; and on February 14th of 1886, the revered Image was crowned in a ceremony without precedents, with a crown of gold and gemstones, blessed personally by Pope Leo XIII. As Pontifical Legacy, the Archbishop of Mexico Monsignor Labastida attended. One of the lectures of the preparatory Triduum was preached by the old Parish Priest Father Jose Antonio Plancarte, to whom uncle Monsignor Labastida wrote about a month later, talking about the emotional celebration:

-Everything was transformed into a garden, a shrine, a sanctuary and into an enclosure in which the most demanding European would've been satisfied! All of it was the work of my nephew Jose Antonio, who I sent to Zamora with Bishop Mr. Peña so that he could do the righteous, that because of my banishment, I couldn't do in my country! There's nothing sweeter than to do what's good, but to do it all for God, so that it isn't spoiled by the envious!...

Father Jose Antonio Plancarte, very good that you have done it all in Jacona!...

III. THE APOSTLE IN MEXICO

Jacona, in the diocese of Zamora, had been something temporary in the life of Jose Antonio, even though his ministry was extended for fifteen years there. God in his providence assigned him the final field then: the Archdiocese of Mexico, where he continued with his usual dreams. The Virgin of Guadalupe wanted him that way, and, along with that, the Basilica of Tepeyac crowned his life as a Sacred Priest.

IN THE BEST OF FIELDS

Due to the many accusations and contradictions that arose against Plancarte in the diocese of Zamora, and, even though the Schools of La Purisima and of San Luis and, above all, the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary, would be left in Jacona, everyone considered that the most appropriate decision was that the Priest be transferred to his own diocese, that of Mexico, governed to perfection by the Archbishop Monsignor Labastida.

And what was Jose Antonio going to do in the Capital City? Since the first couple of days he started to manifest abilities that no one thought about before. Let's hear his friend Monsignor Montes de Oca:

-Just as he swapped the reduced theater of Jacona for the one of the Republic's Capital, his eloquence left everyone astonished. He wasn't limited to giving one or another circumstantial speech. He preached every day and to every kind of audience. He liked the churches in the neighborhoods just as much as he did the cathedrals, and displayed the same enthusiasm in the oratory of the tycoon as he did in the church of religious sisters, among the convicts in jail and among children in schools, in front of seminarians and face to face with worldly men..., to the degree of giving from ten to fifteen lectures in one day.

His friend and Bishop of San Luis Potosi described him that way, while Plancarte said about himself with good humor:

-I play the role of a newbie and everyone wants to try me out. I'm glad because I do something good, and I have no time to think about bad things.

What did this apostolic activity mean? The energy of the missionary, about the towns of Michoacan that belonged to the diocese of Zamora, revived again with Monsignor Peña. The zeal for the salvation of his brothers was consuming him. He worked with an admirable supernatural spirit. And God authorized his humble servant for the deeds that He was going to commend him in the core of the Mexican Church.

The year of 1882 was going by. With things cleared up in Zamora, with the accusations swept away and without the nonsense persecutions, his uncle Monsignor Labastida, knowledgeable of the abilities and integrity of the nephew, suggested the first of it all:

-Jose Antonio, go to Europe once more. In Rome, address the situation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary and of the Josephine's, to merge them into one Congregation. Do the same thing with the Missionaries that you are thinking of founding and those that Father Vilaseca already has. After that, look for and see about bringing other Missionaries to Mexico.

Three very concrete errands from the Archbishop, and a deep longing was felt in the soul of Plancarte again: visiting Holy Land for the third time, even if it was with a lot of sacrifice.

THROUGH EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

How will the three objectives of the trip be achieved? On Jose Antonio's part, he began with prayer, with lots of prayer. It is what he was chasing after with his new peregrination to Holy Land and other apostolic places in Minor Asia, with the intention of getting the signals of God in regards of his Congregation. He had promised his beloved nephew from the Latin American, Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete, the one who would become Archbishop of Linares-Monterrey, to bring him along as a prize for his second doctorate.

We already know what a peregrination from our Jose Antonio is: mercy, devotion, penitence. Peregrinating in its purest essence. A single writing of his diary, about this third time, says it all. He wrote over the flagstone of the Holy Sepulcher:

-“The adorable body of my Savior was buried here! From here, He awakened glorious and triumphant to never die again! The angels sat here! Many Saints have been here! Death died here and was enchained with the Devil! Our Religion was confirmed here! Could I walk out of here heart-broken?... Could I refuse my cross?... Will I complain about my illnesses?... Will I complain without making it to the Cavalry?... No, my God; don't ever allow it! Send crosses, afflictions and as you please, but accompanied by power, since at the sight of this Sepulcher, glorious and triumphant, bitterness is sweetened, fear and sorrow go away, and the soul craves the Cavalry. Courage and Confidence! If we died crucified with

Christ, with Christ we will awaken glorious and triumphant. Make, Lord, that I and my people carry our crosses with pleasure until death; that we love penitence and the work, the contempt and the humiliations, so that in the last day, we rise to Heaven triumphantly”.

This wasn't vain literature. Uncle and nephew made the peregrination with serious difficulties, since there weren't any of the commodities that the organized tourism offers nowadays. Just a sample of it is necessary:

-We spent ten days with many discomforts because of the heat, the food and the horrendous places in which we had to sleep. Once, we had to stay in a cave that served as shelter for the sheep of the Bedouins, in which, because of some coins, the owner allowed us to stay; another in a miserable cabin that made us long the cleanliness of the previous cave. Our food was hard eggs from two or three days, dry meat and bread that we brought from Judea and from Samaria.

In this peregrination he had the satisfaction of meeting again with the Sacred Father Maria Alfonso Ratisbona, from whom he assures “he comforted me with his own sufferings”.

WHAT ABOUT THE JOINING OF THE CONGREGATIONS?

We shall go back to the beginning of the trip. Both founders, Father Vilaseca and Father Plancarte, had embarked in Veracruz. Both went with the sincere intention of joining their Congregations, masculine and feminine, into one: Why multiply energies if they all chased after the same goal?...

During the entire trip, both, talked, argued, discerned, wrote, visited, consulted a lot in Rome..., but it all finally ended in nothing, meaning that each one would continue their own path and that the joining would not come to consummation. In Rome, the situation went to Pope Leo XIII in person, who impatiently said, once he saw that who he had been awaiting in a hearing that he had consented, and that supposedly was very interested in, wasn't there:

-Plancarte didn't come? Where is Plancarte?

The Priest was there, of course. He, who was as devoted to Leo XIII as he was to Pius IX, wasn't going to miss the appointment.

The Religious Josephines stayed with their own Rules and formed an independent Congregation. And the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe did the same: definitely, a separate Congregation. After a failed joining experience, they both formed two different religious families, each following the spirit that formed them since their beginnings.

What about the Missionaries? When Father Plancarte finally moved to Mexico in the year 1883, Father Vilaseca had formed his group inside the Clerical Collegiate. Plancarte had nothing but a sketchy plan of masculine foundation, which never came to be. As a matter of fact, during the trip, he discarded the idea of founding a Congregation of Missionaries, while in November of the same year, the first twelve disciples of Father Vilaseca professed in the Institute of Josephine Missionaries.

IN SEARCH OF MISSIONARIES

But, as we already know, Father Plancarte traveled with another very concrete errand from the Archbishop: looking for missionaries for Mexico. “Where God of mine?”, he told himself. Because all doors were closing on him.

The Oblates of Immaculate Mary, though they were in the United States next to the very same border of Mexico, decided on a no..., since the General Priest, personally told the priest in Paris that they didn’t have personnel.

“Maybe the English Oblates of Cardinal Manning!”, he said to himself hopeful ... But this time his English friends didn’t help, since nothing could be achieved.

Plancarte looked for Mister Bosco; he didn’t reach him in Chambery, he wrote him to Turin, and Father Cagliero answered that it wasn’t possible to count on the Salesians for Mexico, because they were headed towards Argentina towards Patagonia and they weren’t enough for another mission...

The Priest will have better luck in Barcelona. What took him to the city of Condal? Banished and ill, Monsignor Lazaro de la Garza y Ballesteros, Archbishop of Mexico had arrived to Barcelona in 1860, and was received with love by Bishop Antonio Palau, who hosted him in his palace and took care of him with true pamper until he died in March 11th of 1862. They made sumptuous funerals as if it were the Bishop of Barcelona himself, and he was buried in the Cathedral; everything was paid for by the Prelate and the Canons. His remains rested there until they were transported to his homeland years later.

Twenty years had passed, and the Archbishopric hadn’t given any particular show of gratitude to the Barcelonan Curia yet. Monsignor Labastida wanted to amend such omission and trusted Father Plancarte with a gold Chalice of antique Mexican craft, a true filigree. The main seat of Barcelona was vacant, and the Priest officially gave the precise chalice to the Capitulate Vicar in the presence of the Chapter.

Everyone was very excited. Afterwards, in a friendly chat with the Vicar:

-So, what happened with the good Bishop, Monsignor Antonio Palau, in whose hands Monsignor de la Garza Ballesteros died?

-God paid him well. Just four months after the death the Archbishop of Mexico, Monsignor Palau died in the hands of his great friend, Archbishop Maria Claret, who had left Cuba, and was living in Madrid as the Confessor of Queen Isabel II, who from the 7th to the 14th of July of the same 1862, casually found himself in Barcelona presiding a meeting of his Missionaries.

Our Priest Jose Antonio opened his eyes immensely:

-The sons of Mr. Claret? I thought they had died right after they were born!

-No! They are flourishing. And they have their main house here in Grace, in the old house of Exercises that Bishop Palau gave them himself, which they use as a Seminary.

Let’s now allow Father Plancarte to continue telling the story in his letter to uncle Monsignor Labastida:

-The Capitate Vicar told me that they were men of God and highly useful. He didn't say that to a deaf person. I went straight to their house and I found the priest who substituted the General Superior. What a difference in the welcome I received here and from others!... The house is huge, but very small for so many people: sixty-something priests, eighty-something students, one-hundred-and-something novices! Young, strong, educated, and virtuous people who are full of love towards God and of zeal for the salvation of souls... The Head Priest is a serious, dry, gruff and holy man... I will go see Father Clotet, who is the Subdirector and an angel in human flesh... I have tried getting to know them deeply, and I assure you that we have found a mine.

How fast do Saints understand and know one another! The Head Priest, the immense Father Xifre, "is a saint"..., and the venerable Father Clotet is "an angel in human flesh", "the angelic Father Clotet", as they have always called him in the Congregation... very accurate eye, the one demonstrated by Father Plancarte.

We have no testimony of what the reaction of Monsignor Labastida, towards the letter from the Priest written in Barcelona, was. But we can easily imagine it, without fear of making a mistake. During the days of the Vatican Council I, Saint Anthony Mary Claret wrote to Father Xifre, a letter that became famous:

"There is a very big and rich field in America, and with time, more souls will come out from America than from Europe. This part of the world is like an old vineyard. And America is a young vineyard. The bishops who have come from there, whom I have visited and known with pleasure, are well instructed and virtuous, and they inspire a lot hope in me. I'm already old and with broken health; if it wasn't because of this, I would fly over there. Since I didn't go there, I went to the Collegiate for American seminarians located here in Rome. Some have ordained Priests and some Bishops. I have preached to them, and they educate themselves in virtue and in science."

Is it hard to guess that among those American Bishops, "well instructed and virtuous", was Monsignor Labastida? In another letter of the same days, about a possible foundation of his Missionaries in Mexico, Claret wrote: "I have spoken with the Archbishop of Mexico, *who is a friend of mine*". Claret and Labastida knew one another; they had met; they were friends. Then, What did the illustrious Archbishop felt upon receiving those news from his nephew in Barcelona?...

After writing that famous letter, with the Council suspended, Claret was leaving Rome towards the end of July of 1870, and the first boys of Father Plancarte arrived to the Pius Latin American in the middle of August. For just a bit, the Saint wasn't able to meet them, in those visits that filled his soul with so many hopes and dreams, when he was about to die.

God plays with human destiny very well. As they headed to Mexico, the Children of the Heart of Mary, memories of people and of very endearing institutions are interlaced: Claret, Labastida, Plancarte, Pius Latina American Collegiate, Garza Ballesteros, Palau...

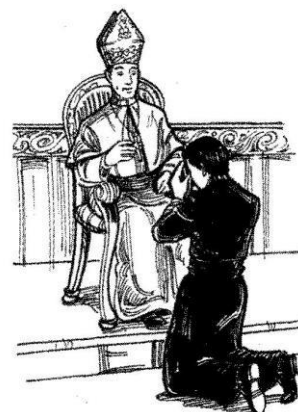
Upon returning to Mexico in October of 1883, Father Plancarte took the first vein of the mine with him, the distinguished Priest Domingo Sola, who went with the full powers of the Head Priest. Both of them became intimate friends forever. So that, in 1884, for disposal of Monsignor Labastida and constantly accompanied by Father Plancarte, the Missionaries of the Heart of Mary were established in Toluca and, a little later, inside of Mexico, in the Churches of Jesus Maria and San Hipolito. As soon as their extension towards all the Mexican Republic started, they made a decisive jump towards the United States of America.

Father Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida, along with his uncle Pelagio, figure with honor among the great benefactors of the Claretian Congregation.

THE CLERICAL SCHOOL

When Father Plancarte arrived to Mexico, the first important activity, and very important! Was that of making his greatest dream come true: the formation of Priests. But a serious problem existed. Father Vilaseca had founded the Clerical School, which functioned in the building of the Conception for the formation of pledges to diocesan priests, and another School for Josephine Priests. Furthermore, there was another one, the one of *Mascarones*, ran by Pauline Priests. Three Schools for pledges dispersed strength immensely.

Naturally, justified complaints from the Professors of the Clerical School came, expressed in an extensive document, in which with respect, but firmly, they asked the Archbishop, and then to Father Plancarte as Visitor of the Schools and Catholic Collegiates, the separation of the two Collegiates. The different campuses had to separate.



Father Plancarte, though he agreed with the separation, had a bold idea. He recalled the promise he made to Pope Pius IX and the commandment of the same Pontiff, of fully dedicating himself to the formation of the Priests. With this noble obsession, he proposed it to the Archbishop, as well as to his great friend Mr. Ignacio Montes de Oca:

-Why not founding a great Diocesan Seminary in Tepozotlan, in the old building of the Jesuit Priests, for priests from all over Mexico?

It would've been a decisive blow, but very serious difficulties came up, and the project couldn't be done.

At that point, Archbishop Monsignor Labastida, always kind but firm, and after much prayer and many consultations, had decided on the separation of the Clerical and Josephine Schools.

With this last decision, as it was natural, Father Vilaseca stayed, while the Clerical was commended to Father Jose Antonio Plancarte, of known ability and embellished of a very singular zeal for the formation of Priests, as Rector. Time demonstrated the success of the plan, for the Archdiocese as well as for the Josephine Priests.

The new Rector put a magnificent faculty of Professors in charge of the Clerical of San Joaquin, and, soon, results were seen. In addition to that, Father Plancarte made a firm and much needed decision. He wanted to merge both Collegiates into one, since long ago; the School of San Luis from Jacona and the Clerical of San Joaquin from Mexico. Said and done; in January of 1888 he wrote:

-I arrived to Zamora yesterday, to where I went to shake my sandals, bringing my establishments to Mexico.

He closed down the School of San Luis in Jacona, in which many young boys were magnificently instructed, among them one that would become famous, Amado Nervo, and he brought the Professors and many of the students with him. Why?... He certainly wasn't selfish. To elevate the Clerical to the height in which it shall be, he needed Doctors and he couldn't count on Doctors taken out of his churches and from his work posts. That would've been fatal. So then?... San Luis had some magnificent Professors, those he had arrived from Rome after having achieved their brilliant titles. The Clerical of San Joaquin, in the Capital, was their best option, and there they went.

Father Plancarte, Rector of the Collegiate, started by making the place look decent, turning it into a comfortable and clean house; a true estate for the Professors and students; suitable for the study and the harmonious development of the young men. The cooking, so deficient, was commended to his Religious, his Daughters the Guadalupans, who carried it with joy and competency; they were happy to collaborate in the formation of the new priests.

During the six years he had left of life, the Collegiate reached the highest point and was the best campus of the Diocesan Seminary. His most competent Professors were those young boys who had gone to Rome and now were presented as exemplary priests, successful in science as well as in virtue; three future Archbishops amongst them. One was from Mexico, Doctor Jose Mora; the other two from Linares-Monterrey, the Doctors Francisco Plancarte and Juan Herrera Piña, the "little scoundrel" of eleven years of age who had stolen the Zucchetto from Pope Pius IX and who now had three brand-new doctorates. One of these Professors wrote with legitimate satisfaction:

-We hoped for more backup from Rome, and we could've, within three or four more years, made of San Joaquin a small University, to the style of the Roman Collegiate.

Enough about Doctor Francisco! But, doesn't the thing about the "six years" that we've heard before sound a little weird and also about the "three or four more" that we heard now? Something very hurtful happened, but it happened that way.

We got chronologically ahead with the facts, leaving other activities from the Priest, done during the years 1875 to 1882, for later. In 1891 Monsignor Labastida died, and an-

other Archbishop came to Mexico; Monsignor Prospero Maria Alarcon. What did he think about the Clerical Collegiate? We don't know. And, so, we will just abide to the facts.

Momentarily, Father Plancarte's charge as Rector of the Collegiate was confirmed. But soon, the worst rumors began:

-It seems like the Archbishop looks at the Clerical with suspicion. He allowed the students to be transferred to the Diocesan Seminary, without prior knowledge of their Rector. Why was that?...

He left the subjects of Philosophy, Dogma and Morals vacant; he removed the Professors and sent them to the Diocesan Seminary. The situation with the students of Theology was just as weird; he ordered their transfer to the Seminary as well.

What was Plancarte's reaction? While still being the Rector, he wrote two letters to the Prelate:

-Since nothing has officially been said to me, I beg that your illustrious Lordship sent your orders in writing; regarding what I have to do with the priests, students, furniture, etc., in case that the situation has already been resolved as I suspect, which is the closing of the Collegiate, since I can't continue without professors.

The Priest projected himself as tough, but with dignity. Even though the answer of the Curia was tougher and unexplainable:

-The Archbishop has seen the need of shutting down the School of San Joaquin to recast it in the Seminary.

As much as he added the familiar formula, a little sincere at times:

-But he commended that I tell you, on his behalf, that he is thankful for the efficacy and zeal that you displayed while being the Rector of the removed School, and that he intends to seize the performance and rare aptitude of yours.

A few words, written by the Priest before coming to the Capital, full of bitterness, resulted, with the Archbishop of Mexico, as current now as they were then:

-What a terrible disappointment took over my troubled soul! I, who in my bottles and troubles, felt strong counting on my Prelate; I, who accounted him as my support, have discovered today... the entire opposite.

Father Plancarte, you weren't really expecting this cross were you?... Where will the mission, that Pope Pius IX entrusted you with, be left; the mission of consecrating yourself to the formation of Priests, which you swore to fulfil?...

HIS DAUGHTERS THE GUDALUPANS

We'll leave chronology aside as well, and we will focus on everything about the beloved Congregation; Father Plancarte's work that will last forever.

We already saw how Zamora's Bishop approved the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary. Of Diocesan rights only, but they had, with that, their own personality in the Church. When the Founding Father came to establish himself in Mexico, some of them were already in the Capital City, and so, while the Congregation was solidifying there, a posterior approval came, also from the diocesan, granted on September of 1885 by the Curia of Mexico, and since then, the Institute would be called: *The Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe*.

Upon shutting down the School of San Luis in Jacona, the Priest did the same with the School of La Purisima and brought all of his Religious Daughters, professes, novices and aspirants, who had been in charge of the Asylum of orphans, the Asylum of La Soledad, the kitchen of the Clerical of San Joaquin and of the parochial School of Tacuba since the beginning. An expansion of the Guadalupan Congregation would spread from the Capital City to every corner of the Mexican Republic.

But, will the Priest see his Congregation approved by the Pope, in a way that is it a pontifical right, receiving, that way, the accolade to permanently survive in the Church?

Odd, but when all the paperwork was being done in Rome, in the year of 1896, a serious challenge arose:

-Nonetheless, the great challenge jumped up to sight, in a way that the recently consecrated Bishop, Monsignor Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete, got some advice:

-Go directly to the Pope.

And once Pope Leo XIII heard everything, he rapidly replied:

-Let Cardinal Verga, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulators, know that he can go on with everything related to the Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe, and that he speaks of it to me in our first hearing.

The problem ended, thank God, and in what a way! The Priest, before going to heaven, was able to see his Congregation with the security of the Pontifical Right, blessed in the beginnings by Pius IX and on May 22nd of 1896, it was personally acknowledged by the great Pope, Leo XIII.

The Founder, when the time came, could peacefully leave the world.

THE TEMPLE OF SAINT FELIPE DE JESUS

Shall we start with some of the words that Father Plancarte directed to his Daughters the Guadalupans? He wrote to them:

-I cannot find how to thank God for the undeserved grace of choosing me to build, in the Republic, the first temple to the first Mexican Saint and to the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.



Where did the story begin? The passionate English priest Kenel Vanham came to Mexico and traveled around the Republic accompanied, sometimes, by Father Plancarte as missionary, collecting alms to erect an expiatory temple with universal nature in London, where the Blessed Sacrament would be exposed day and night, asking God for merci for the sins of the world. The spark started here. But for subtlety, and to not disturb in anything in his mission, Father Plancarte didn't say a word while the English Priest remained in Mexico. And once he left to his homeland, he expressed his idea and decision to his uncle Pelagio, truly saint Archbishop:

-Why don't we do the same thing in Mexico? Is it because sins aren't committed in our country? And why can't it be a temple consecrated to God in honor of San Felipe de Jesus, our first Saint and who does not have a temple in the Republic yet? In it, the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will function as well.

Monsignor Labastida didn't overthink it; he told his nephew about the most appropriate place for the construction. He resolutely told him:

-Start the project. Of all the gifts they give me for my Golden Priestly Jubilee, I will give you half for this temple, and the other half for the restauration of the Basilica of Guadalupe.

Everything was said there. There wasn't anything else but to start the construction.

The chosen place was the old convent of the Franciscans, crib of the Mexican Cristian civilization where Moctezuma, Hernan Cortes y Zumarraga, the Archbishop of Juan Diego and the Virgin of Guadalupe lived. The temple would be of a Roman-Byzantine style, with three naves; one of them dedicated to San Antonio de Padua, Franciscan just like San Felipe de Jesus.

Great obstacles had to be defeated, like the tear-down of the really strong old walls and diverting the water from the shaky ground. But they went on, and on August 2nd of 1886, in a celebration as Franciscan as Our Lady Santa Maria *degli Angeli* or of the Porziuncola, Archbishop Labastida blessed the first stone. Furthermore, one of the sponsors was Mrs. Carmen Rubio de Diaz, wife of the President, Chief Mr. Porfirio.

And how did Father Jose Antonio Plancarte manage to make the necessary money, which was going to be a lot? Let us leave the implemented methods aside, which were many, and let's indicate one: his preaching. Doing good to souls, and asking them for a donation as a compensation, not for himself, since he rejected all types of payments, but for the Expiatory Temple; he asked for one peso, just one, not given but borrowed:

-Give me one peso, and, once the project is finished, it will be decent and religiously returned.

People got excited. Once the preaching had ended during each day, in an authentically missionary plan, the collection followed. Monsignor Francisco Plancarte's testimony couldn't be wasted:

-As soon as Father Jose Antonio came down from the pulpit to personally do the collection, the bonnet or the bag in which he collected the oblations, would get full, not only with

money, but also with watches, rings, bracelets, earrings, pins and other jewels made of silver, gold and of gemstones, which the people happily gave up.

And then Father Plancarte would add:

-I asked to borrow a peso, but everyone has given it to me. My wish is that all the Mexicans contribute in the Expiatory Temple. Once they get tired here, I will travel around the Republic if it's necessary.

The challenges were very big, and the expenses too pricy. But, as a work of God and started by a saint, an inevitable contradiction came, and the newspapers launched tree funny accusations: that Father Plancarte was a Jesuit and a foreigner, but, that above all and nothing less, the money went to the poor, "because they no longer did charity", and that what they give the Archbishop for the poor, he was keeping it for the Temple. Just like Judas in the Gospel with the perfume of Mary of Bethany... The Priest responded to the three accusations with grace:

-A Jesuit?... Is the only title that I've ambitioned, but I discard it with emotion, in honor and glory of that Company of saints and wise men that I never get tired of admiring.

-A foreigner?... I reject this title with indignation, since I'm more Mexican and patriot than all of you together. I've consecrated my life, my money and my desires to the good of my homeland, without ever receiving a cent from the treasury.

-The poor?... These funds did not come out from the Church, but from the patriotism and generosity of the Mexicans, and I consider this an outrage to my compatriots, because you are denying that they are "*the independent Mexico!*", the ones who built the first temple consecrated to God in honor of a Mexican Saint.

The Priest finished his sympathetic defense:

-With a single one of these three lies that you demonstrate, I will send you a sack of pesos so you can divide it among the poor that you help daily. And if you do not prove anything, will you give me another sack for the Temple?...

The Temple was finished. February 5th of 1897 was near, it was the third centennial of San Felipe de Jesus' martyrdom. Two days before, on the 3rd, Archbishop Monsignor Alarcon consecrated the Temple, and Father Plancarte celebrated the Mass, about which he wrote:

-My Mass in Zamora along with the sepulcher of my mother and that of the 3rd, have been the things that have moved me to the extent of not being able to articulate a single word. With that one, I felt like I had paid my debt with filial gratitude; with this one, I felt in the paten, the weight of the temple extinguishing the weight of my sins.

And the Priest continued giving us the final details:

-The Pontifical Mass with the lecture from Mr. Montes de Oca was celebrated on the 5th. At ten in the evening the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and we watched over it until five in the morning. The visitors exceeded half a million.

That event constituted the first Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Expiatory Temple with national nature. The over half a million visitors was the advance of the three million Worshipers with which the Perpetual Adoration and the Nightly count with in Mex-

ico today... If we recall the first root of the Plancarte's in Mexico, that Spaniard Guillermo Plancarte, established in Morelia, was one of the founders of the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Which is what his descendant Jose Antonio did afterwards!...

THE VERVE OF A MISSIONARY

We will, soon, see Father Plancarte as the restaurateur of the Collegiate of Guadalupe, and, because of that, he will also be the ambitious searcher of funds to carry out the huge venture that was bestowed upon him. When it regarded the Temple of San Felipe de Jesus, we heard him say: *-If it's necessary, I will travel around the Republic.* And so, for the Guadalupean Collegiate, he started the missionary campaign in which money was the least of the issues; the big thing was the apostolic zeal that this holy man, full hunger for the salvation of his brothers, spread throughout the Northern States. God, in this manner, fulfilled the missionary cravings that always consumed him.

On April 9th of 1889, he started with San Luis Potosi. It coincided with the days of Holy week and Easter. Apart from other preachings, he directed a batch of Exercises for Gentlemen with around two hundred and seventy attendants.

On the 24th, he arrived to Matehuala at four in the afternoon, and at six, he started on a mission. Simultaneously with it, from the 27th up to the 1st of May, he directed some Spiritual Exercises in retreat for thirty of the most selected men of the city. He continued his mission, which made him urgently call the Curia of San Luis:

-The crowd is immense and it increases each day. Confessors come urgently, because the ones available aren't resting and are not enough to confess such mass.

Even the Bishop went and stayed there for several days, since they were responding to God's calling, as the biographer says; from the Political Chief and the soldiers all the way to the unhappiest of the townspeople.

He took the train to Monterrey. Train in which the poor Priest was roasting with the heat, and so he says:

-I preached for three days in the Cathedral, crowded to the fullest, and only of "good" people. I will never have such a uniform audience. The "*reineros*" (Nuevo Leon's locals) are very nice, and the men are educated and pious.

From Monterrey, he parted to Saltillo, to Torreon, to Durango, where he stayed from the 1st to the 30th of June, preaching lectures in several churches twice a day, Exercises, Retreats..., "I've passed a month, he told us, of a lot of work with these fine people, and a lot of spiritual outcome". The chronicler added:

-The enthusiasm that he caused with his preaching was so big that any church would've been too small to fit the crowd that followed him everywhere.

The Priest continued saying:

-I see a miracle from the Virgin of Guadalupe on this trip. The masons have tried to overshadow me, but their game has come to be crazy and counterproductive. With their

slandorous libels that I was coming to flay the Durango natives, to “*Plancartiate*” etc. etc., I decided to not ask for a thing, and I said it like that on the pulpit and to the families, and it resulted in a storm of alms, as it did nowhere else.

During the Month of July, in Catorce, the same thing; he had gone with the Bishop to preach a mission that would prepare the Pastoral Visit. Once the mission ended, he said:

-To bluff, we left from Chiton to Socabon, but it didn’t work because the mountains got crowded with people; they came out of rocks and out of the abyss, and within half an hour I was surrounded by crying people, who didn’t even let me walk and made me, with all my repugnance and fear, get on a horse.

And something interesting: do we know in which state of well-being he did all of this? The news of his broken strength made it to Mexico, and he wrote to his Daughters the Guadalupans a truly malicious letter, so they would make the news arrive to the Archbishop:

-If I were sick, would I be able to work the way I do, could I write? I haven’t had a single headache since I left Mexico.

Naturally! He wasn’t lying, because what hurt wasn’t his head, but rather his stomach and liver... The doctor prescribed five days of absolute rest. He took care of himself for three extra days and, on August 29th, he was already in Zacatecas, to start, on that very same day, then he did the Patron’s novena on September 8th.

Here, another move from the enemy resulted badly. The Priest had already started the projects from the Collegiate, and in protest of those, on the previous year, they had burnt his portrait in public since they personally didn’t have him on their hands. Now, news spread as well: as soon as he returns to the Capital City, he will be placed in jail to be deported immediately.

This happening and such news gave him an unsuspected fame, in a way that, with the Novena just started, the Cathedral, got completely crowded and the preaching had to be extended for four more days after the celebration. On Sunday they had to return the tickets from the theater because there weren’t any people, and on Thursday they did the same with the concert.

Another very interesting incident happened in Zacatecas, which Father Plancarte will tell us about himself.

-My task of preaching has been really difficult due to the countless number of Protestants, masons and free-thinkers that have gone to the lectures, and to whom I had to receive at home to answer their doubts and questions afterwards, luckily I have had an exam of fifteen days, but God got me out if it pretty well. Fifteen of them showed up at once, the majority were lawyers, employees of the Government, I looked like at rabbit that was being harassed by dogs. The triumph had been complete, thanks to God and to your prayers.

After Zacatecas, he traveled to Jerez, with the same results:

-My first lecture was last night and the three naves of the Parish church got full of people. The unbelievers have talked a lot about me on these lands that everyone wishes to know me, luckily I do not need bells for churches to get full, for as big and spacious as they might be. Look at how God uses the bad people to do the righteous!

Another preaching in Aguascalientes, and on October 8th of that 1889, he returned to Tacuba in Mexico, he was urgently called to prepare the Golden Priestly Jubilee for the Archbishop, Monsignor Labastida.

Upon seeing what this missionary campaign has been, one wonders: What would've been of Father Plancarte if he had dedicated himself, as his main task, to the ministry of missions?... It isn't hard to answer: today he would appear amongst the legendary missionaries, like Pablo de la Cruz, Diego Cadiz, Francisco de Jeronimo, Leonardo de Puerto Mauricio or Antonio Maria Claret...

And with all of this, what happened to the collection for the Basilica of Guadalupe? We expressly left it aside without mentioning the details of it. It's enough to say that the donations of the people, who honored their catholic faith and the pure love they had towards their Mother and Patron the Virgin of Guadalupe, were abundant.

A MAN ALL ABOUT GOD

We are used to seeing great things from our Priest Jose Antonio. But, where would he get so much humane strength and so much spiritual energy from? There is nothing but one answer: he was a priest who was full of God. His autobiographical writings demonstrate it to obviousness.

God commends the big ventures only to the humble ones who won't take over his glory. And so, the humbleness of Father Plancarte was very conspicuous. No one knew about the titles that were granted to him: Member of *The Productive Classes* of Guadalajara, of the *Jalisciense Agrarian Society*, of the *Society of Engineers of Jalisco*, of the *Geography and Statistics Society of Mexico*, Member of the *Society of Lawyers of Saint Peter* of Rome. He would receive the title, gave thanks for it, rolled it up and no one would ever see it again. None decorated his bedroom or his office. He rejected the appointment of Canon of Zamora and of Guadalupe and he didn't accept the times in which they included him in the lists of Bishops. And upon accepting, for superior reasons, the title of Titular Bishop of Constancy, with the resounding failure of later, he confessed: "God, you have punished me for failing to my promise of not accepting any dignities". Though, without causing a snub, neither the President of the Ecclesiastical Academy for Aristocrats, nor Pope Pius IX himself, achieved that he received a title with rights of "Monsignor" treatment. He always stayed with the simple "Father Plancarte".

He was very demanding with his personal dignity, that's for sure, though he always rejected all honors. His modest attitude and his humble life emerged from a deep self-knowledge: "My sins have multiplied over the hairs of my head, and my arrogance is more

atrocious and groundless than that of Luzbel. What shall I do?... Should I run to your site, Lord, should I hug your holy feet and cry out my sins there until I hear, just like her: You sinned a lot, but you've also loved a lot. Go in peace"...

The devil can't fight against the humble and nothing could ever fight against this hero of humbleness, in him, lies and slander, failed in such a shameless way.

Can anything be done without prayer?... Jose Antonio knew it quite well. And apart from the Divine Duty, which was very long back then, he intended:

"To never stop doing, besides the meditation in ordinary, half an hour of private meditation every day, a quarter of an hour of spiritual reading, particular and general examination, and never leaving the rosary".

Where and how would the apostle work? Only wherever and however God wanted him to. Father Plancarte knew it very well, and he took his obedience to heroism with some of his Prelate. And that's how he came up with his objective:

"My wishes of always complying with the Lord's will are very ardent; without ever asking: why? I will punctually obey with pleasure and without asking for reasons, even if things are against my wishes, as long as I know they are God's will".

Without crazy exaggerations, Father Plancarte seriously practiced penitence with a balance that was all soundness alongside severe austerity. He wrote it like this:

"I wish to vividly get used to mortifying my body and spirit"... For that, "three hours of cilice on Friday and Saturday, and discipline"... That way I could "come to acquire the great ease of depriving myself from all of what the appetite could desire, and to receive, with pleasure and joy, the illnesses and crosses that God decides to send me".

An apostle, who grounds himself to earth, won't give testimony that he comes from God. Father Jose Antonio embraced his vows, who made them privately, and lived them as the most perfect of the clergy. The one of poverty, in particular. All the extensive possessions that he inherited from his family ended up in the projects of the Schools, the Temple of San Felipe, the Collegiate and in works of charity. That was his objective:

"I have the great desire of being poor like Baby Jesus, and of depriving myself, little by little, of the same commodities that poverty allows to imitate my Jesus, who didn't even want to be born in his own home".

An apostle without zeal, without love, is not an apostle. Father Jose Antonio looked at Jesus and learned the lesson well:

"What a zeal! Jesus preached everywhere, in the temple, in the town squares, in the desert, on the mountains, in a boat, during day and night. With the same zeal he taught Nicodemus in his house as he did three and five thousand men in the desert. If I look for the conversion of souls, the glory of God, and not my own glorification in preaching, it's clear that, with the same pleasure that I preach in front of one, I will preach in front of a thousand; in front of the poor as well as the rich; in front of the worded as well as in front of the ignorant".

Poor, austere, obedient, humble, penitent, passionate, embraced in apostolic zeal... That's how Jose Antonio was and God could do, with such an instrument, all of what his divine will desired.

RESTAURATEUR OF THE COLLEGIATE OF GUADALUPE

Didn't Jose Antonio have enough with what he carried in his hands, to know: Schools, construction of the Expiatory Temple of San Felipe de Jesus, lectures, hours of confessionary..., for them to come and commend another very difficult deed, though full of glory, and to which he couldn't say no?...

This was the commission that he officially received: that he prepared everything necessary for the Pontifical or Canonical Coronation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which meant, before all and above all, the remodeling of the Collegiate and the manufacturing of the splendid crown; things that demanded huge amounts of money.

The Priest obeyed very happily, but suspecting on why would, in that way, an enormously heavy cross come over him:

-For the Virgin of Guadalupe, bring it and go ahead!

The venture, carried in the eighteenth century by the Italian Gentleman Boturini and his failure when he had everything ready for the Coronation of the Virgin from the Tepeyac, was famous. He has only had the reward for his efforts and sacrifices in Heaven.

The idea of the coronation, that we are discussing now, was born in Jacona, let's say that by coincidence. After dinner, that day in which the Coronation of the Virgin of Hope, Monsignor Labastida told, those who surrounded him, this textual words: "This has been the rehearsal for the Coronation of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe".

A sealed applause from the illustrious men hosted the proposal of the Archbishop. And the interesting part is that, as soon as they arrived to Mexico, they started moving so that the idea came true without any delay.

The three Archbishops, from back then, the ones from Mexico, Michoacan and Guadalajara with their assistant Bishops, came to an agreement. They sent the prayers to Rome and Pope Leo XIII, as a gift of his Golden Priestly Jubilee in the year of 1887, designated the month of December for such a fortunate happening.

Furthermore, because of the difficulty of incrusting the crown over the head of the Virgin on the canvas of Juan Diego, the Pope allowed that it were held on the air by hands of angels. So precious. Because, that way, this unique work of goldsmithing, made in Paris would come: a height of a meter and thirty centimeters, with a diameter of fifty-four. The superior frame is decorated with engraved leaves of solid gold and curded in rubies and sapphires. Over it, the globe is set in glaze, from which the heraldry eagle of Mexico with

its wings spread out comes up boldly, topped with a cross in which fourteen diamonds of great value are entrenched.

If we advanced here with the description of the crown, it was to value what the decision of the Priest Jose Antonio would later mean: the Collegiate must be entirely remodeled, let's build a new altar with its own canopy, and, the most difficult of all, he was set to move the choir, for as artistic as it might've been, from the middle of the temple to the apse and surrounding the altar.

Another issue came up: it was impossible to do this project in the year of 1887, indicated by the Pope. Once informed, he allowed the Coronation for whenever the audacious renovation, "owed", said Archbishop Labastida towards so many critiques, "to this, your humble servant", and commended to the extremely capable Father Plancarte, along with the collection of the substantial funds that would be needed. Therefore, we have to wait for several years. Now, let's get to work!

Following the chronology of the eight years that were left for the long-awaited coronation, step by step, would be wordy. A couple of brushstrokes will be enough to situate ourselves pretty well.

Let us say, with satisfaction and saintly pride, that regardless of the many contradictions that we saw since the beginning, a huge clamor of approval upon reading the collective letter of the three Archbishops arose in all of Mexico, and so, the enthusiasm never failed for a moment. At the get-go of the funds collection plan, Father Plancarte was very clear:

-It has to be the work of all the Mexicans, because everyone has to contribute; even the poor and most miserable, with a single cent.

The first proposition came: A print of the Virgin of Guadalupe sealed by the Bishopric and the Parish Church of each place. With twelve lines for twelve names of contributors, of a peso each; in commemoration of the twelve stars on the Virgin's crown and the 12th; date of her appearance and celebration. What if it's from wealthy people? The stamp of the twelve lines turns into an individual for each of the children or for friends to whom they can offer it or get it to. The factory workers, the craftsmen of the shops, the laborers of the estates, the students of the schools and colleges, charity associations and other entities, got the stamp dividing the contributors in twelve. When the twelve lines filled up, they would get a print of the Virgin afterwards, so they could place it on any of their chapels as a memory of the Coronation, which had been the work of all Mexicans.

What was the result of this ingenious idea? It was the main means of collection of funds, which gave magnificent results; and the alms started to arrive.

But, as expected and nothing less, the most staunch critiques, launched by the anti-Catholic newspapers, came upon the Priest. The Chapter itself was divided into two on their opinions about the works, and they would publically say:

-Mr. Plancarte doesn't have any support. He only counts with the influences of his uncle Monsignor Labastida, who's old and ailing. Why doesn't he look for the support of the clergy and of the community? Wouldn't it result better if he earned the will of the people,

rather than forcing it with the danger of ending up alone? He's trusting on time and on the substantial alms he thinks he'll receive. But, does Mr. Plancarte know if he'll have the time to finish the project, and if he will truly collect the money that he is asking for?...

Mr. Archbishop jumped onto the arena with very harsh words, and ordered that the plan of restoration carried on. There was a public calling to all the architects of Mexico to present a project of an altar and a canopy, in accordance to Roman Classics. Answers came quickly, and the diverse projects, owed to Architects Calvo, Pina and Agea, were soon approved. The projects had started before the ending of the year of 1886, though they didn't come to a happy ending until 1895.

THIS PERIOD OF NINE YEARS

What will happen to Father Plancarte in this long wait?... That which happens to all the great saints: work for God and for the Virgin and you shall receive the gift of the cross.

As it couldn't be any less. Shouting and slander arose about any incident. Like when the blessed canvas of the Virgin had to necessarily be transferred to the church of the Capuchins' convent:

-Who dared to think of such nonsense?...

But the Priest answered:

-The transfer will happen in a blink of an eye and with great satisfaction from everyone when they see it placed better and experiment greater solace upon seeing the peaceful and moving face of the miraculous Virgin.

There was another test, though it was prepared by the loving hand of God. On February 4th of 1891, the uncle, the godfather, the protector, the saint Archbishop and great Monsignor Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Davalos flew to Heaven, when there were just three hours left for the celebration of Saint Felipe de Jesus, which is celebrated on the 5th in Mexico, one day before than the rest of the Church. The news came to Jose Antonio when he was coming down from the Pulpit, after preaching the lecture of the Saint. It was a very hard blow, that he knew how to overcome with great acceptance and a lot of faith on God, towards what he felt was coming.

First and foremost, he took care of everything regarding the funeral, which constituted an impressive and never seen manifestation of grief. There they were, making a line in all the streets of the Capital City; from the head of state, President Mr. Porfirio Diaz, to the poorest of citizens. And for this reason, Archbishop Labastida is maybe, and without maybe, the biggest figure of the Church of Mexico of the nineteenth century. His name will never be forgotten.

Father Plancarte had to go to Europe for many affairs, and stayed in London, Rome and, above all, in Paris for something very important. He took advantage of the occasion, and went to the jeweler of most fame in France and worldwide renowned, Edgar Morgan. There, they set everything regarding the crown that the Queen of the Tepeyac, Sovereign of all Mexicans, had to wear over her head.

During the trip, he received the news about the election of the new Archbishop of Mexico, the Dean and Capitulate Vicar, Mr. Prospero Alarcon y Sanchez de La Barquera. Our Jose Antonio, most loyal and obedient son of the Church, and man full of faith, accepted him unconditionally. But, what was going to happen?...

Let's jump back slightly and let's remember vividly what had happened with the Clerical School of San Joaquin, maybe the most painful blow that our Priest Jose Antonio suffered in his life, though more severe humiliations would come later. Why did the newly appointed Archbishop act that way? He was neither bad nor tough, on the contrary: good, humble, well-intentioned and approachable to all. But he was surrounded by a circle of so called Conservatives, enemies of Plancarte, the advanced European with his pedagogical methods and education, and everything ended there. Envy and closed-mindedness of criteria got from the new Archbishop what they couldn't achieve from Monsignor Labastida.

The enemies knew how to act quickly. Father Plancarte was already back in Mexico on October, and the Archbishop confirmed him in all of his responsibilities. But on February 9th of 1892 he removed the Professors from the Clerical, and, on the 27th of the same month, the final bumper came with which everything was eliminated.

Was this failure from Father Jose Antonio going to be final? Here, we shall raise our hands to the heavens and bless God, who does not easily abandon his people, who only trusted him.

In a few days, let's say weeks at most, the Archbishop made a 180-degree turn in the way he treated Father Plancarte. He had almost never talked him before, and now, he had to do it by obligation because of the matters that Monsignor Labastida left pending. And what did he discover in Jose Antonio? Monsignor Plancarte y Navarrete won't skip a detail:

-He started knowing him better and all of the biases, which the Conservatives had infiltrated in his will, started to disappear one after another. What an activity and justification of the assets that Monsignor Labastida had left! What a tact in businesses, what a delicacy of conscience! And in the annoying closing of the Clerical, what a chivalry, humbleness, abnegation, selflessness, obedience and extreme prudence with which Plancarte, and everyone who depended on him, proceeded! This was a man of solid and heroic virtues!...

Anyway, the fussy Conservatives were losing on the eyes of the Archbishop, while Plancarte was escalating many degrees until conquering his greater trust. Alarcon started by entrusting him with important matters of the diocese, and, about the projects of the Collegiate, he granted him with extensive powers and commended, through a letter, to all the Bishops of Mexico so that they helped him with donations in the arduous venture that he had undertaken.

The Priest wasted no time, and went on a mission, just like the previous one on the Northern States, for the collection of alms. But, how different was the tour now, from the

previous one! A note from the excursion to Pachuca was enough, of which the Priest wrote with pain:

-The city is a messy agglomeration of estates of benefit, where you can see, in the form of rotten mud, the coveted money that we are all after. The population is numerous, but you can't even tell because they are all working on the insides of the land or inside the estates. The church is horribly ugly, filthy, and guiltily neglected. Without exaggeration, the tablecloths and gala strips of the altar are dirtier than my handkerchiefs. There are merciful people, and a true swarm of glorious souls offer flowers and pray as they wish, while I am preaching and exercising the virtue of the meekness as I never used to do before.

Nevertheless, this wasn't the biggest pain that the Priest had to suffer during that time. A small group of "Conservative" canons, instigated by the new element that joined among them, and who was rated as "the enemy man", came, in their envy and resentment, to the extent of achieving that, on the first few days of August, the projects be suspended.

Despite the substantial expenses; altar, canopy, choir..., everything went back to their primitive state, leaving tons of debts to be paid and for which the Priest could respond naturally, since he had foreseen everything. By Monday, Father Plancarte gave the order to the Architect and workers: "*Do not return, my mission has ended*".

And, with his heart full of bitterness, he gave his reasons to the Archbishop:

-I'm aware of the plotting, since those who forge them are very indiscreet, and talk about them to any stranger, even in the wagons, as I can prove it with reliable people... The perfidy and bad intentions, with which those Gentlemen have acted, are unknown to your Illustrious Highness, the day in which you realize what they've done to physically and morally kill me will come, without further cause I've given my life and money to regally fix "their house" of those men..., carrying the project almost to completion at the cost of honor, sweat and own money, in not a small part.

And he added the most powerful reason:

-Fighting against these people without having the support of my Archbishop is a lost and scandalous fight. I probably haven't figured out how to respond to the graces that our Holy Mother has done to me, and that's why she has discarded me from my service on her project.

The Archbishop and the Priest had a friendly conversation and they both got teary-eyed more than once. With his honorable and tender writing, the Prelate gave all his trust to Father Plancarte and sent him to continue the projects until the end.

ABBOT OF GUADALUPE AND PRAISED BISHOP

What an honor, the one that was coming over the Priest, Jose Antonio Plancarte y Labastida! And what a cross awaited him!...

His nephew, Doctor Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete had been appointed as Bishop of the new diocese of Campeche in Yucatan and he hesitated to accept the episcopal dignity. But, what about God's will?... He consulted it with his uncle Jose Antonio, who talked to him clearly:

-If Campeche were an old diocese, rich, of good weather, of easy communications, with abundant clergy, seminaries, catholic schools and all kinds of commodities, I wouldn't doubt for a moment and advice you to stay firm with your decision and to not accept. But if you will find poverty there, almost misery, in a tropical and bad weather, without clergy and even lacking the essentials, with extensive lands and very little population, with rebel natives in the rural areas and bad Christians in the cities, accept, and go. In Campeche you will find an extensive field in which you can exercise your missionary zeal.

The nephew accepted courageously. But saved, quite well, the words that his uncle directed to him and words which the one who pronounced them would need them soon ...

The issue of the approval of the liturgical Office of the Virgin of Guadalupe arrived from the Holy See. The Bishops, the Chapter of the Collegiate and all the Priests from Mexico sighed for it, and Father Antonio Plancarte, as always, was a paladin of the cause. However, the approval of the so yearned Office almost failed. Rome had to go slowly, since they had to clear out all slander that had been cooked up about the story of Guadalupe. But Doctor Plancarte y Navarrete handled the entire issue in an admirable way, and, after a whole bunch of obstacles, sent a telegram to his uncle:

-Halleluia! Although we are in Holy Week, I take the freedom of singing the halleluia. I have the decree and the approved Office in my hands.

It was a great victory. All the Bishops and priests of Mexico joyfully celebrated this, so longed approval of the Office of the Virgin, our Mother and Patron, because it answered to the faith of the Mexican people of the veracity of the apparitions. The Holy See, through the Congregation of Rites, had requested the opinions of the 22 Bishops of Mexico, who drafted, each, a writing in which they unanimously agreed to the appearances of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Legal Information of 1666, manuscript document, requested by the Congregation of Rites and sent by Father Plancarte, as borrowed, was the most important document to get the new office.

But one of the last harassments to the deeds of the Collegiate was missing, which, at the time, relished everyone because the end was at sight. A letter of several "good Catholics" appeared in the newspapers, that's how they called themselves but without a signature, all against Father Plancarte. The "enemy man", the "bad seed", hadn't died, and everyone pointed him with their fingers. No one paid attention to the brave anonymous, and specially the recipient, who limited himself to directing an answer, as a joke, which *El Tiempo* published:

-I found the letter as I returned from San Luis, and I didn't want to answer it because it didn't have a signature. I have, as a rule, that those who write as anonymous are dirty people and of low sort; and I, as a good Quixote, only mess with those who are armed gentlemen. To those "good Catholics", I propose to return the quantities that you might have giv-

en me, as long as you present the receipt that I might have signed and that I identify the personality of whoever presents it. Could a repented thief offer any more?

This is what Plancarte wrote in a humorous way. But, “the good enemy” wrote an unimaginable letter to Mr. Archbishop, and somehow managed to get it signed innocently by all the canons, against the program of the Coronation already sent by Monsignor Alarcon to the Bishop of Queretaro, Monsignor Camacho and directed to the entire Mexican Bisho- ric.

The Chapter’s letter, stirred up all the Bishops when they heard the news of it; it was directed to the Archbishop, to whom the canons came to deprive of authority, all of it was, nonetheless, against Father Plancarte.

But one of the undersigned, canon Mr. Basilio Soto, acknowledging the mistake he had made of signing what was presented to them as a trap, wrote a public letter to Monsignor Alarcon; exciting, retracting himself with heroic courage of the wrong he had done somewhat unconsciously. And, for what matters here, our Priest said:

-Mister Archbishop, there is my signature, there is my name, shimming a document that never had to be written. I am nothing, I am worth nothing, I mean nothing, Illustrious Sire; but I, screamingly, declare that no vows of censure, but of plain trust, should all the Mexican Catholics give to the Presbyter Mr. Plancarte, since the extraordinary qualities that he has deployed in the fulfilment of is title, are evident, all enhanced and valued in the cruci- ble of contrariness, of the perpetual afflictions, of the vile and sneaky slander, of suffering, and so on, with which Our Lord God had put his consistency and his efforts to the test.

After this incident, topped off, with so much glory by a noble true canon, we got to the finest point in the life of Father Plancarte. The title of Abbot of Guadalupe was vacant due to the death of the previous title holder, Mr. Melo, and he was going to be appointed to substitute him in such charge. All the Bishops advised Monsignor Alarcon to appoint Plancarte for the delicate charge that, also, had to carry the one of Titular Bishop: he had to be a prelate Abbot with episcopal nature.

The Archbishop saw that it was pointless to propose it to Jose Antonio, sin he had rejected being canon in Zamora and also in the very same Collegiate of Guadalupe, and had asked to be removed from the list of possible Bishops. Archbishop Alarcon used the nephew, Monsignor Francisco Plancarte, who reminded his reluctant uncle those words that we already know:

-Remember what you told me when I didn’t want to accept the Bishopric of Campe- che?... Well, this is what I say to you now. In regards of future sufferings and problematic honors, I wouldn’t wish to switch with you. We both have to fulfil our responsibilities: I, of Bishop of Campeche and, you, of Abbot of Guadalupe.

As always, a Retreat to think and discern God’s will, and at the end Jose Antonio gave up, accepting what his Shepherd the Archbishop asked him to.

On his part, Pope Leo XIII sent, through the Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla, the designation of the “Reverend Sire, Mr. Antonio Plancarte, Abbot of the Church of Guada-

lupe and Titular Bishop”. That’s how the papal document, received in Mexico on June 27th of 1895, read.

The joy that the news caused was huge and the greetings rained in tons, arriving from all over Mexico.

From, among the titles that were offered to him, the Priest chose to be Titular of Constance, and the consecration had to happen on October along with that of his nephew Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete, Bishop of Campeche.

The inauguration as Abbot of the Collegiate of Guadalupe happened on September 8th, and the Priest said, in the chapter hall, some touching words, full of humbleness, of generosity, of forgiveness. Not all, but several of the canons cried: how come?... Sincere tears eliminate many blots.

Were all persecutions against the Prelate Abbot through? No, in no way. The big fish was coming now. On October 2nd, the episcopal consecration of the Prelate Abbot Jose Antonio Plancarte won’t be able to happen, only that of his nephew Dr. Francisco Plancarte was authorized. The countermand had arrived from Rome. What had happened?... Let’s leave it for later.

We have the Coronation of the Virgin, marked for October 12th, on top of us. Father Plancarte will figure in the front row as Abbot, but not as Titular Bishop, just like Pope Leo XIII had granted it. Now, let’s enjoy ourselves for a little while in the Tabor before making it to the Cavalry.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

The projects of the restoration had costed a lot and always counted with fierce enemies, but they were a small minority in front of the crowd of the generous, devoted to the Guadalupean Virgin, to whom Plancarte, the one in charge of such venture, incited to finish with the last details:

-The admirers and defenders of our national glories won’t refuse to honor the blessed Image that no Mexican can tear off their heart without destroying the holy patriotic symbol of our independence. Discord flees before the Virgin of Guadalupe! Well, let’s finish the Collegiate!

And the most yearned day arrived. All of Mexico blazed in enthusiasm and Guadalupean passion. Father Plancarte sang his Magnificat and encouraged everyone in the pages of *El Tiempo*:

-Here’s the palace! Crown the Queen! My head is gray, but there isn’t a single stain on my forehead! My heart is free of resentments; forgive me if I’ve offended you! Pray



a Hail Mary for me, and long live the Queen of the Mexicans, Saint Mary of Guadalupe!

According to the program made by Father Plancarte as an order from the Archbishop and commended to the Bishop of Queretaro for all the Bishops of Mexico, the whole community had prepared for this day in an authentically admirable way. The program had eighteen points as an orientation. It was impossible to bring them all here, even though some of them resulted truly interesting:

-Preparatory Novena in all the parish churches; fast on the last day so that God grants the commodities that the Virgin will ask for the Mexican Nation; solemn Mass on that day, just like in the Collegiate church; at ten in the morning, moment of the Coronation, chiming of all the bells all the Churches of the Republic; everyone will prepare with a good confession and will devoutly receive communion on that day...

Some points call the attention specially:

-All the faithful and the associations shall seek to sanctify the 12th with alms to the poor, in money, clothing, or feeding them, feeding the prisoners, feeding the patients of the hospitals...

-At the hour of ten in the morning, all the faithful that are in the churches, in their homes or in the streets, will greet the Sovereign Lady saying: *Salve, August Queen of the Mexicans! Holy Mother of Guadalupe, salve! Pray for your Nation to achieve, what you, our Mother, think is most convenient to ask.*

At the dawn of that glorious day, October 12th of 1895, the Crown was taken in threads of red velvet with sticks of gold, from the house of the Abbot to the Collegiate Church. Aside that incomparable jewel, the best that exists in America, there was another crown of silver which would be used in ordinary days.

Monsignor Alarcon, the Archbishop of Mexico, was Pope Leo XIII's Delegate for the Coronation. He was surrounded by all the Bishops of Mexico and seventeen Archbishops and Bishops who came from outside, especially from the United States and Canada. Blessed, the splendid crown, by the Archbishop, the Abbot Father Plancarte went ahead, surrounded by the canons of the Chapter, and pronounced the solemn oath with vigorous voice:

-We will not harm, neither by word, nor by writing or by act, against the apparition of the Virgin in the hill of the Tepeyac. And with all our will, we will keep this crown over the temple of the venerable image.

Then, each canon would individually pass and, with their hand over the sacred book, repeated the formula: "So help me God and these holy Gospels".

The Choral Society of Queretaro, who was in charge of the musical part, performed the original verses that the Latin poet, Pope Leo XIII had composed for that day, in the Offertory.

Once the Mass had ended, the procession of the crown, which was placed at the Virgins feet, began. Archbishop Alarcon was the one who would Coronate the Guadalupan Virgin on behalf of the Pope. Then, they called another Archbishop, the one from Michoacan,

Monsignor Arciga, so that, as Mexican and on behalf of all of Mexico, he escorted the Legacy of the Holy Father in the supreme moment. They both deposed the cope, and with only alb and stole, they went up the platform. Monsignor Alarcon couldn't handle his joy, and upon reaching the height of the Virgin, he stamped a tender kiss on her forehead. Both Archbishops took the crown and stopped it over the head of the revered Image, hanging it from the ring of gold that the Angel held strongly.

It was eleven forty-five in the morning. An immense explosion of applause, of long-lives, of rousing cries among the tears of all eyes, extended through all areas of the Collegiate and diffused on the outsides of all the streets, crowded to the fullest, with people who came from all the corners of the city, and who cheered with the same passion as the people present inside the Temple did.

The Bishops improvised an emotional gesture. The entire Prelate, who attended, kneeling down, placed their miters and croziers at the Virgin's feet, like telling the Guadalupe Mother what the Blessed Archbishop from Santiago de Cuba, Claret, told the Patron Virgin upon taking over the diocese: *You, Mother, will be the Prelate.*

That unforgettable day ended. The Abbot of the Collegiate, our Priest Plancarte, didn't say it. But it isn't difficult to guess, that in his heart and with his lips, he said the same thing that the old man from the Temple did: *Now, Lord, now Virgen Mother of Guadalupe, you can send your servant to leave in peace...*

THE CAVALRY BEHIND THE TEPEYAC

It was possible that Father Jose Antonio said the words of Simeon. But we don't know. What we know, is that after the *Hosanna!* of October 12th, he would hear the *Crucify him!*, encouraged by bad and ill-intentioned people like those of Sanhedrin.

In account, the Coronation had been nothing but a parenthesis of the story we had at hand. Ten days before, on October 2nd, the Abbot of the Collegiate had to have been consecrated Titular Bishop of Constancy, and everything was cancelled through an order that came from Rome. Naturally, they didn't make it, though it could've been made, the consecration of the nephew Francisco Plancarte y Navarrete, voluntarily postponed for a couple of months and celebrated it on February 16th of 1896 in Rome. On this issue, we will limit to the most precise details, otherwise we would never finish.

Sister Maria Calderon (Concepcion), the brave young girl who escaped from the control of her parents to continue in the Congregation, faithful to her vows and because of whom a storm unleashed against Father Plancarte in Jacona and Zamora, was later a Religious Saint, and had the prophetic intuition about the future of the Priest: He won't make it to Bishopric!, she said to herself with pain.

What had happened? Why did such slump for the episcopal consecration, which had to be celebrated ten days before the Coronation of the Virgin, come from Rome? Something serious had been happening, since Father Jose Antonio, himself, wrote:

-I know that the Chapter sent an appeal to the Holy See, begging that the appointment be dropped because I had been chased and expelled from the Bishopric of Zamora.

And, from Rome, a great Monsignor said:

-We are all persuaded of the noble merits of the Abbot of Guadalupe, but certain obstacles prevent the fulfillment of the agreement, as long as these haven't had a satisfactory clarification.

The accusations that might have existed came, undoubtedly, from Zamora. In the activities in Jacona as well as in the dispositions of the Collegiate, in spite of always displaying an impeccable conduct, the dirt and trash of envy and slander came handful over him. It looked like a systematic persecution. The Priest endured everything with Christian resignation, with true humbleness, granting forgiveness and accepting the cross that the Lord allowed him to carry over his shoulders. In other words, *with the Holy Spirit*.

But in all of his defenses, in all of his writings, the feeling of personal dignity, with which he demanded that his name, the name of his parents and family, especially that of Monsignor Labastida and of all those who had depended on him, be respected, powerfully called the attention. As a man, he asked for supreme respect to the truth of the accusations they bestowed over him.

These two feelings: of humbleness, patience and resignation towards God on one part, and of personal dignity, to the extent of requiring a process where there was no other remedy; we must have them present in order to value the spirit of our Priest Jose Antonio.

The Coronation had ended just before knowing that Monsignor Averardi was coming to Mexico as an Apostolic Visitor and Representative of the Government. How would the Priest expect him? He replied to his friend Enrique Angelini, who gave him the news:

-You're saying that in Averardi I will find a father and a friend; I prefer, in this case, a sincere and flexible judge.

His best friends were willing to defend him, one way or another, and, in this manner, Monsignor Camacho, Bishop of Queretaro, assured:

-I have called Mr. Averardi, and I've told him about Abbot Plancarte, that I'm willing to testify under oath that all the adverse that they say about him is pure envy or bad intelligence or declared slander.

Well, and to all of this, which was the worst accusation of all? No one would've believed it, but it was true: the Bishop, because of unclear machinations, took as truth what a lady told him: that over twenty years ago, in Jacona, on 1872, on the day of the awards ceremony, something had happened between Father Plancarte and his student Concepcion Calderon. Precisely with such formidable student then, and exemplary religious sister in the days of such a strange accusation!

And there's another incident to remember. Between the far back 1872 and the days that we are now retelling, something very humorous happened. Conchita's Father, in 1881, adding his parental rights, wanted to violently get his daughter out of the convent. The mother of the girl, in addition to that, secretly played her role since she wanted to marry her to a rich mason who had, as an endowment, a lot of money.

Things happened this way; Father Plancarte, as her Director, went to the Police and to the Authorities in favor of the young girl, who portrayed herself as faithful and vigorous when she calmly said these very words before the Judge:

-I came to you to protect myself from my parents. I will never leave the School to go back home, and I consciously say this.

The Governor and the Bishop, for as much as it might surprise us, were on the father's side, who had the "custody rights" of a young woman of 27 years of age!... To laugh, if the issue wouldn't have been so serious.

We can't deny the fact that they had to clarify things before the Pope confirmed the Bishopric of Father Plancarte. How did Monsignor Averardi, the Apostolic Visitor, play his role? He chose to have a meeting with the very same Bishop of Zamora, for which he took Doctor Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores as secretary, who later became Bishop. He left an extensive document and, furthermore, interesting. We'll bring two or three facts only.

-The issue of Concepcion Calderon was only *a suspicion* of what someone had said... He had known it *under secret*, and the prosecutor could neither be called because she wouldn't show up, nor could he go and visit her because he feels sick...

And the Doctor ended:

-Upon proposing to Monsignor Averardi to save the honor of Plancarte through a jury, he told me that he didn't come commissioned to start any processes. The Priest replied once he found out:

-I leave my cause to the Mercy and justice of God. I only beg your Highness to manifest my gratitude as well as my indignation to the Holy Father, recognized by myself, but not approved by my prosecutors.

Everything was lost for Father Plancarte. The last blow, hurtful as a matter of fact, came from his great friend Monsignor Ignacio Montes de Oca, who, after talking to the Visitor for three hours, cordially spoke to the Priest and gave him advice:

-Present your resignation to the Bishopric.

The priest closed the matter with dignity:

-As I had resolved to do what Monsignor Montes de Oca told me to, I will formulate that resignation. I want this to be the ending of it, and that God speaks for those who keep quiet. As long as those of you, who I have educated, believe that I'm innocent and that I haven't set a bad example for you, I care very little about everything else.

On July 27th of 1896, Delegate Averardi told Father Plancarte about the acceptance of the resignation from the Holy Father. Had the Delegate been honest in his information?... The beloved pupil of Father Plancarte reveals the thoughts of Averardi to us:

-The Priest is innocent and what is said about him is nothing but slander; but in attention to the circumstances, I've considered more prudent to allow him to resign.

He wasn't making anything up, since he only repeated an old story of two thousand years ago. With tact, Monsignor Plancarte y Navarrete said:

-It was that of: *One should die for all the people....*

At the point of almost finishing the little book, have we done well by expanding such a bad matter like that? It was necessary. It happened just like it did to Jesus in the Gospels. Skipping a detail of the Passion was inconceivable, because it was the most important part of his life. The excellent greatness of Father Jose Antonio was carrying forward the slander, defamation and dishonor with the faith and the resignation of a saint, to configure more to the divine Master.

That "ending point" was not what Father Jose Antonio had in mind. Not even for the many prosecutors; his innocence was evident to everyone. And among many Bishop friends, they achieved that the Holy See granted him a local Bishopric, none other than the one of Yucatan!... Upon, Visitor Monsignor Averardi, secretly telling him of it, the Priest Confessed what he felt in the deepest of his conscience:

-That demonstrated the opinion that the Holy See had of myself and it was a relief. I asked for tranquility and I couldn't sleep at night. I don't know what to do. On one part, it impels me to regain the cleanliness of the name of my parents and of Mr. Labastida, and on another, the miter that I've never longed for terrifies me, for which I declare myself incapable, and more now that I'm old and full of ailments that will keep me from working as I should. Monsignor didn't even want to hear the resignation I had formulated. May God get me out of this one with grace!

Dr. Ruiz, who was in Rome, wrote to his pupil again on January of 1898:

-I don't even deserve nor wish or accept the miter. God, Our Lord, has already given me the prize, keeping me from losing my faith, and allowing that my adhesion to the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, be stronger every day.

The hero from the Tepeyac had sipped the last drop from the Chalice just like the Martyr from the Cavalry.

BETWEEN THE COLLEGIATE AND THE EXPIATORY TEMPLE

The material works of the Collegiate and of the Temple had finished, and so, the most important part came: raising the "spiritual temple" of the faithful to God, in honor of the Guadalupe Virgin and of Saint Felipe de Jesus. It was a venture that required the strength of a giant. And we're not exaggerating. Moreover, on the letter with which they accepted

the resignation to the Bishopric, they commended him to take advantage of being free “to continue living calmly and to take care of the works of the Ministry with more freedom”. The recommendation wasn’t bad, which, on the other hand, resulted useless for a Priest who was full of apostolic Zeal and of love towards the Church, like how Plancarte was.

Great challenges came up. Let’s start with what Father Jose Antonio wrote to Dr. Mora after the Coronation: “I’ve suffered, in these three months, from October to December, more than I ever did in my life”.

They combined so that everything continued the same in the Basilica, meaning, bad and worse each time; the canons themselves, the people, the Authorities of the town, the newspapers. The Priest preached, whipping the flaws, stimulating the virtues and teaching the Christian life to old and young ones. Let us allow Abbot Jose Antonio to explain it himself:

-I am sacrificing myself pointlessly in this job. I correct the violations and they say that they are customs, privileges, practices... A Chapter without constitutions, a pretentious and corrupted town, a prefect mason who wants to meddle even in the choir, a hostile town council, a slamming press and an army of followers compose the atmosphere that I breathe... I take solace from defending what is prescribed by the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church... I’m worse than before, since moral edification is harder than material edification. This new life is a true martyrdom for me, and I greatly fear not being able to suffer it and to have to resign.

However, he didn’t resign. He wanted to leave the position because of humbleness, but he knew how to remain nailed to the cross until the end. The reform started by the Abbot Plancarte and continued after with intelligence and zeal by those who followed in his position, today the Basilica of Guadalupe, is a model of faith, of love towards the Virgin, of careful and splendid worship; It’s one of the places on earth that is lot like Heaven.

Without being the same, something happened with the Expiatory Temple as well. There, it wasn’t about abuses or immorality, but about great passion, generosity and about the spiritual height that the Founder dreamed of so much.

The Temple had turned out precious, as the Father himself recognized:

-With stone, marble and bronze, I’ve finished it so successfully, that I can assure that Saint Felipe is Mexico’s most perfect and beautiful temple.

Upon wanting to establish a regulation that would govern the expiation and the praising of the Temple, it providentially landed on his hands, brought by his nephew Monsignor Plancarte y Navarrete; it was the one that had been established three centuries before by Saint Juan de Ribera, Archbishop, Viceroy and General Chief for the Reign of Valencia. The Founders coincided in everything. The Temple of Mexico was an extension of the one that existed in Spain. Worship! Only worship and relief! Without “little spiritual scandals”, according to the Priest’s words, meaning, without commotion or agitation, and for that, no weddings, no burials, no conferences, no flamboyant Masses, no flashy preachings. Merci, silence and nothing other than intimate talk with the Blessed Sacrament.

The Priest set his own ideal:

-My Friends wanted to erect a throne for me in the Tepeyac, and my enemies turned it into a scandalous and into a pillory of ridicule, and God allowed it because it was necessary for the expiation. The Expiatory Temple is the temple of the sinners, and in it, I'm ok and I should be its prominent figure. I shall live the last days of my life here, gathered in silence and praying for the sinners. Upon offering the first Host in the Temple of San Felipe, I offered myself to the Lord in expiation of my sins and I heard the voice of my Father God forgiving me and assuring that I was an expiatory victim.

The words of the Priest weren't hollow words. In order to end his life as the first worshiper, he wanted to resign to the Abbey of Guadalupe, "because the Collegiate and San Felipe were incompatible.

THE SOLDIER WHO PARTED IN SILENCE

"I'm old" and "full of ailments", we heard the Priest say that night of sleeplessness. The first part wasn't true since he was only fifty-seven years old; the second part was true, since he couldn't handle the illness from his stomach which had always afflicted him and had turned his life into a torture. He used to only sleep for about four hours if he could, but passed the night plunged in pain. "I'm no longer capable of fights, but I shall prepare myself to die well in an isolated corner", he wrote to his pupil, Dr. Leopoldo Ruiz, who was in Rome. I still can't say the *It's all done!*..., the Priest used to say in his humbleness, but God, who called his good and faithful servant to Him, said it.

He was with his Daughters in Tacuba. Dr. Carmona diagnosed the seriousness of his illness, and the Priest wanted to talk to his confessor, Father Isidoro Camacho, a Franciscan religious saint, who was transported on a wheelchair into the room of the moribund. The diseased asked that the Holy Anointing be administered by the Canons of the Collegiate. One of his pupils from Rome and future Bishop, gave him the Communion through Viaticum and while Dr. Orozco pronounced, in the Recommendation of the soul, the words *May Jesus Christ receive you with benign face*, at five after six in the morning of April 26th of 1898 that, so exclusive soul, flew to the bosom of God.

He left without making any noise, like an anonymous soldier in the battlefield. The noise was going to be made by others.

Because all the newspapers from the Nation unleashed in praise for the vanished hero of the Guadalupan. Those in favor, with broad stories full of commendations; the adversaries, with news, somewhat broad, but full of respect.

He left, as a perennial memory of his devotion and patriotism, the Expiatory Temple of Saint Felipe de Jesus, National Center of Nightly Mexican Adoration.

With his accurate intuition, he offered the Mexican Church a handful of Archbishops, Bishops, Canons and Doctors, educated in the Pius Latin American of Rome.

His Congregation of Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Guadalupe perpetuates, in the Church and in society, the ideal of educators of the children and youth, which was the determining factor of his choosing for priesthood.

The Association of Lay Guadalupan-Plancatinos figures by his side nowadays, committed to living his strong spirituality.

The Collegiate, restored by him, now that we have the splendid modern Basilica, stays also as an Expiatory Temple dedicated to Christ the King, where they constantly hold Adoration to the Blessed Sacrament.

And whoever wishes to visit the sepulcher of the XVI Abbot of Guadalupe, will find it in the Crypt of the abbots and chapter in the Basilica of the Queen and Mother of all the Mexicans.

What else? The process of beatification has already been started and deposited in Rome; we now yearn the arrival of the day in which we can see, in the glory of the altars, the Saint that God has very well classified amongst the Saints of Heaven.