

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom



Venezuela

Fr Alex Pinto OFM (disappeared on the [road near Ciudad Bolivar](#) on [July 15, 2015](#), [body found on July 15-20, 2015](#), [had been set on fire, possibly had been shot dead](#))

Cardinal Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardozo (condemned a [July 1, 2016](#) attack by a gang on five seminarians in which they were beaten, stripped naked, and forced to run through the streets of [Merida](#);

elevated to the College of Cardinals in a Vatican ceremony on [November 19, 2016](#);

spoke out in [Merida](#) on [April 2, 2017](#) after the national legislature was dissolved "corrections to sentences are simply cosmetic changes which do not resolve the situation, since they fail to recognize the National Assembly as an autonomous body thus confusing the people. We continue to uphold valid the request made by Cardinal Parolin, last year, to restore the regular function of Parliament... If parliament is to be accused, it must be the people who decide, however at the moment, the real needs of the people are food and medicine")

Fr Darwin Antonio Zambrano Gamez (aged 38, [found dead](#), in [San Cristobal](#) on [March 31, 2016](#), had been beaten and stabbed)

Br David Marin (aged 64, gagged on [February 15, 2014](#) by two teenage robbers at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#), stabbed, treated at a local clinic, out of danger)

Br Diego Bedoya (Colombian citizen, [stabbed to death](#) in his [La Victoria, Aragua state](#) office on [April 10, 2017](#), food stores for the elderly and for disabled children stolen)

Archbishop Diego Rafael Padron Sanchez (in [Caracas](#) on [April 3, 2014](#) had published a statement signed by all Catholic bishops in the country stating that "the fundamental cause of the crisis Venezuela is experiencing, the demand of President Nicolas Maduro's government to try and impose the so-called 'Plan of the Fatherland', behind which hides the imposition of a totalitarian government";

reported on [July 12, 2016](#) to have criticized the government for calling for peace while prevented the church from distributing food and medicine "The interests of the government are not the interests of the country...The ungovernability, aside from the brutal repression, the lack of serious and stabilizing responses that would be more than improvisational and provisional, create the widespread perception that the global crisis is getting more acute and is being prolonged with no end in sight";

said in a radio broadcast following the [January 23, 2017](#) invasion of a [Caracas](#) church by pro-government demonstrators who shut the doors to prevent parishioners from leaving, and subjected them to an anti-Catholic rant "These are not isolated occurrences but rather,

one gets the impression that these are premeditated events meant to intimidate the Catholic Church...[The Church has become a target because it] has taken a very clear position before the government, noting its difficulties, problems, and the crisis the nation is currently in”;

said after pro-government militants invaded and stopped a [February 12, 2017](#) Mass in [Caracas](#) “There must be a line, an order, to intimidate the Church, to lower its discourse, to [silence it]”;

on [January 24, 2018](#) condemned the government decision to postpone the next presidential election by 7 months, said “In any country in the world, democracy operates with clarity, with transparency. Instead, [this] is a midnight ambush...as a Venezuelan, it is my opinion that moving up the date for elections has no legal basis. [The National Constituent Assembly] is very discredited because it is fraudulent in its origin and how it is run”)

Bishop Enrique Perez Lavado (spoke in [Maturin](#) on [June 1, 2017](#) "The situation in the Country is dramatic, there is no food and people have reached the limit of tolerance. The attitude of closure of Nicolas Maduro's government only aggravates the context. The Bishops' Conference and Venezuelan Caritas continue to make proposals to establish an aid channel. Many Caritas from other countries, as well as other NGOs, are willing to help us by bringing medicines and food. However, the Government hampers any kind of intervention. I happened to see miles of people in a row to buy food. Hundreds of people are dying, including many chronically ill children")

Fr Fernando Santana (called on the media to not politicize the [February 15, 2014](#) murders at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#))

Fr Iraluis Jose Garcia Escobar (aged 38, **shot** in an apparent robbery in the [Santa Isabel neighborhood of Barquisimeto](#) on [July 8, 2018](#), hospitalized, **died**)

Janeth Marquez (Caritas director, reported on [May 24, 2019](#) on the continuing economic crisis "we have almost 4 million Venezuelans who have left the country with a huge social cost: broken families, children and elderly left alone. Caritas Venezuela is doing everything possible, but we have limited means. We call for the urgent opening of a channel for humanitarian aid. This crisis is destroying the lives of all Venezuelans. The majority of children born in the last five years are growing up in a condition of chronic malnutrition")

Fr Jario Clavijo (attempted to stop a [May 1, 2019](#) National Guard attack on his church in [Sucre barrio, San Cristobal](#) as Mass ended)

Fr Javier Yonekura (rector of the Catholic University of Tachira [UCAT], issued a [March 3, 2015](#) statement on police repression that "strongly condemns the murder of the student Kluiverth Roa and expresses solidarity with the pain suffered by his family" and condemned the police because "the statements against UCAT are unfounded and are not coherent with the mission and the work of an institution that houses more than ten thousand people...whose sole purpose is to train new professionals for the common good of Tachira and Venezuela")

Auxiliary Bishop Jesus Gonzalez de Zarate (aged 56, pleaded on [January 23, 2017](#) with pro-government demonstrators who invaded a [Caracas](#) church during Mass, shut the doors to prevent parishioners from leaving, and subjected them to an anti-Catholic rant;

presented a pastoral exhortation on [July 11, 2019](#) which stated "There are reasonable grounds to believe that serious violations of economic and social rights have been

committed...for over a decade, Venezuela has adopted and implemented a series of laws, policies and practices that have limited democratic space...the State has systematically denied the rights of victims of violations of human rights to truth, justice and reparation...The immense majority of the inhabitants of the country reject this situation because it is in open contradiction with the traditional civil, cultural and religious values that have characterized our people...Venezuelans continue to bet on a pluralist and peaceful civil coexistence in justice, freedom and solidarity, as established by the constitution...political regimes, ideologies, organizations or institutions must be at the service of fundamental principles. This requires a decisive promotion and defense of human rights and a permanent denunciation of abuses and violations of these rights, from the moment that all abuses of this dignity are abuses for God himself...The ethical and spiritual renewal of the country is everyone's task...in the face of the reality of an illegitimate and failed government, Venezuela cries out for a change of direction, a return to the constitution...This change requires the exit of those who exercise power illegitimately and elections, as soon as possible, of a new President of the Republic")

Fr Jesus Plaza (aged 80, **stabbed to death** on [February 15, 2014](#) by two teenage robbers at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#))

Bishop Jorge Anibal Quintero (presented a pastoral exhortation on [July 11, 2019](#) which stated "There are reasonable grounds to believe that serious violations of economic and social rights have been committed...for over a decade, Venezuela has adopted and implemented a series of laws, policies and practices that have limited democratic space...the State has systematically denied the rights of victims of violations of human rights to truth, justice and reparation...The immense majority of the inhabitants of the country reject this situation because it is in open contradiction with the traditional civil, cultural and religious values that have characterized our people...Venezuelans continue to bet on a pluralist and peaceful civil coexistence in justice, freedom and solidarity, as established by the constitution...political regimes, ideologies, organizations or institutions must be at the service of fundamental principles. This requires a decisive promotion and defense of human rights and a permanent denunciation of abuses and violations of these rights, from the moment that all abuses of this dignity are abuses for God himself...The ethical and spiritual renewal of the country is everyone's task...in the face of the reality of an illegitimate and failed government, Venezuela cries out for a change of direction, a return to the constitution...This change requires the exit of those who exercise power illegitimately and elections, as soon as possible, of a new President of the Republic")

Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino (denounced the killing of three students, apparently by police, and police refusal to allow visitors for three students in detention, said in [Caracas](#) on [February 22, 2015](#) "Venezuela should not be known, as it is today, for abuse and maltreatment of prisoners, especially regarding these boys who are political prisoners";

spoke in [Caracas](#) on [September 10, 2016](#) of the country's situation which has included deaths by starvation in a psychiatric hospital in Barquisimeto "There is no food, and there are no medicines, this has become a serious problem but we have to solve it peacefully";

spoke out in [Caracas](#) on [April 2, 2017](#) after the national legislature was dissolved "The National Assembly is still blocked. I am deeply concerned about the state of emergency in our country regarding poor economic growth which has persisted for the past twelve months. This situation is not normal. Neither are other measures such as the annulment of the revocatory referendum and postponement of elections for governors. This creates a

situation of dictatorship";

wrote in [Caracas](#) on [June 30, 2017](#) "We [the Bishops] ask the national government to reconsider, stop that attitude of wanting to establish a totalitarian Marxist militaristic system in Venezuela, and, of course, to refrain from using legal resources to dismantle the state. All this is reprehensible and intolerable and it is not what most Venezuelan people want...One could speak of a government war against the people";

on [July 16, 2017](#) had mediated the safe exit of a crowd that had taken refuge in a church in [Catia, outside Caracas](#) after armed civilian supporters of the government had fired on them, killing one;

submitted his resignation upon reaching retirement age on [August 28, 2017](#);

said in [Rome, Italy](#) on [September 29, 2017](#) "In general, the situation continues to be really bad, because the government stubbornly continues to insist, in an absurd way, to enforce a failed political and economic project that is the socialist, communist, Marxist, totalitarian and militaristic system. It's led to nothing but ruin, pain, and death in the countries where it has been imposed";

on or near [November 2, 2017](#) called the Constituent Assembly "fraudulent and illegitimate...It's made up of political activists at the service of the government and it's not going to resolve the problems with the economy. What's needed here is to change the Marxist, totalitarian, and statist ideology that has brought the country to ruin...[President Maduro wants to] decapitate the opposition so there's just one political party...the situation in the country is worse than a month ago: disregard for human rights continues, there are still political prisoners and opposition leaders that won in the elections are being persecuted, childhood malnutrition has increased and diseases eradicated in the 1950s are coming back, such as malaria, tuberculosis and diphtheria")

Fr Jose Luis Arismendi (aged 35, **died** in [Merida](#) on [April 15, 2017](#) **from meningitis and from lack of medicine** caused by government economic policies)

Bishop Jose Luis Azuaje Ayala OCD (spoke on [July 30, 2017](#) on the results of the Constituent Assembly election that is intended by the government to impose a new constitution and the general situation: "On Sunday, 30 we could see with our eyes the small amount of participation of the people in the elections. In this way a direct, informal, but experiential audit was made. Before six o'clock in the afternoon, which was the official time of the closing of the tables, they sent to speak to one of the observers of the National Electoral Council to announce that there was an immense number of people remaining still in lines to vote, and the vote was extended for another hour. I looked at the school that is close to the diocesan see where there were several polling stations and it looked like a desert. They tried to make people believe that there were voters at that time. There's nothing more false. It was like the official announcement of fraud...before and during the electoral process for the Constituent Assembly, many people were coerced and threatened to attend to vote...There is large number of murders that, according to the national prosecution, number 121 deaths. Of these, 25 percent have been murdered by state security agencies and 40 percent by groups of armed civilians sympathetic to the regime. There are more than 1,500 wounded, with more than thousands of detainees, in little more than three months, give us a hellish picture that would make any person or institution worried about the lives of citizens at stake...[the economic collapse] is the result of dire governmental policies, of improvisation, of wanting to establish a socialism without humanist support, and in its

place generating a permanent conflict plagued by corruption and violence...Whenever this government has been at a disadvantage, it has asked to dialogue, but it is always the same script: dialogue is used to gain time and advance in the hegemonic project of totalitarianism and greater power of domination”;

reported on [May 24, 2019](#) on the continuing economic crisis "We Bishops are often accused by the government of being opponents. What is certain is that if being on the side of the poor means being in opposition, then yes: we are in opposition";

on [July 7, 2019](#) denounced government mismanagement of the economy from [Caracas](#), and complicity in violence and the flight of 11% of the population from the country)

Fr Jose Juan Flores (church in [Ejido](#) seized on [May 28, 2018](#) by people claiming affiliation with the local government, forced to remove his personal property, said parishioners had been threatened prior to the seizure)

Fr Jose Luis Salazar (gagged on [February 15, 2014](#) by two teenage robbers at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#))

Bishop Jose Manuel Romero (presented a pastoral exhortation on [July 11, 2019](#) which stated "There are reasonable grounds to believe that serious violations of economic and social rights have been committed...for over a decade, Venezuela has adopted and implemented a series of laws, policies and practices that have limited democratic space...the State has systematically denied the rights of victims of violations of human rights to truth, justice and reparation...The immense majority of the inhabitants of the country reject this situation because it is in open contradiction with the traditional civil, cultural and religious values that have characterized our people...Venezuelans continue to bet on a pluralist and peaceful civil coexistence in justice, freedom and solidarity, as established by the constitution...political regimes, ideologies, organizations or institutions must be at the service of fundamental principles. This requires a decisive promotion and defense of human rights and a permanent denunciation of abuses and violations of these rights, from the moment that all abuses of this dignity are abuses for God himself...The ethical and spiritual renewal of the country is everyone's task...in the face of the reality of an illegitimate and failed government, Venezuela cries out for a change of direction, a return to the constitution...This change requires the exit of those who exercise power illegitimately and elections, as soon as possible, of a new President of the Republic")

Fr Jose Palmar (attacked by police on [February 19, 2014](#) in [Maracaibo](#))

Fr Luciano Stefani (Salesian provincial general in the country, asked for prayers for the [February 15, 2014](#) robbery victims at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#))

Br Luigi Manganiello FSC (aged 49, **died from injuries sustained in an attempted robbery** on school grounds in [Barquisimeto](#) on [January 6, 2021](#))

Luis Arias (aged 67, catechism teacher, said after pro-government militants invaded and stopped a [February 12, 2017](#) Mass in [Caracas](#) "Some people were scared, obviously, but no one was hurt. They [the demonstrators] said 'Because the priests have spoken about politics, we have the right too")

Auxiliary Bishop Luis Enrique Rojas Ruiz (said of the [May 28, 2018](#) [Ejido](#) church seizure perpetrators "They have insulted the faith on many occasions, scratching highly offensive graffiti on the parish buildings. They want to damage the image of the priests and the diocese and so they damage beautiful works of art with expletives and major insults...We

call on the authorities in charge of this case to answer for physical integrity and safety of the parish priests as well as that all of the people who are there”)

Rev Luis Gregorio Coronado (aged 58, husband, father of three, disappeared on [December 12, 2019](#) while travelling to visit parishioners in [Puerto Ordaz](#);

[body found](#) on [December 16, 2019](#) in a nearby church building, [had been murdered](#))

Br Luis Sanchez (aged 84, [stabbed to death](#) on [February 15, 2014](#) by two teenage robbers at Don Bosco College in [Valencia](#))

Fr Luis Sanchez (reported on a [January 30, 2015](#) attack against four churches in [Merida, Merida state](#) with gasoline bombs)

Bishop Mariano Jose Parra Sandoval (robbed at gunpoint along with fifty parishioners during a [January 27, 2015](#) parish meeting in [Ciudad Guyana](#), said "I spoke with the governor to tell him that we cannot continue like this. Money is spent on many things, but not on citizen safety...We cannot close the churches, we need to teach children to live without violence. But one thing is certain, we do not live well in the Venezuelan society")

Bishop Mario del Valle Moronta Rodriguez (in [San Cristobal de Venezuela](#) days before [July 27, 2016](#) denounced statements made on a Twitter account that falsely claimed affiliation with the country's Catholic bishops;

as of [March 27, 2017](#) has begun steps to aid refugees fleeing from Venezuela to Colombia;

reported on the [May 1, 2019](#) National Guard attack on a church in [Sucre barrio, San Cristobal](#) “[Mass was ending] when two [members of] the GNB [the National Guard] entered the church on a motorcycle. The pastor came down from the rectory in order to stop them, in the attempt to dialogue, a horde of 40 GNB arrived trying to enter. The pastor, Fr Jairo Clavijo, stopped them, and after them a general arrived by the last name of Ochoa who started arguing with the pastor, in hardly respectful terms. Not content with the outrage, the GNB threw tear gas canisters inside the church. They were unable to evacuate the sacred precinct where there were a good number of faithful including quite a few elderly people. A nun fainted...This incident is extremely serious and is an attack on the Catholic Church. I blame the aforementioned General Ochoa as well as the military authorities in the region for this despicable incident which by itself speaks of the intentionality of the attackers who don't have the least respect for human dignity and don't even show any fear of God”)

Fr Oswaldo Montilla (church in [Quebrada Honda, Caracas](#) desecrated on [June 26, 2017](#))

Bishop Polito Rodriguez Mendez (reported from [San Carlos, Cojedes state](#) on or before [July 22, 2020](#), after a study showed that 96% of households were in poverty and 79% in extreme poverty after years of Marxist rule: “The plagues of Egypt are nothing compared to what we are suffering here...Venezuela has entered a time of famine. Every day things get worse. The economy is paralyzed, there is no industry nor work in agriculture. The Gross Domestic Product is below zero. The most affected are the poorest who have nothing to eat and no chance to lead a decent life. We need help from abroad to give them something to eat at least once a week...A family earns about three or four dollars a month. A carton of eggs costs two dollars and a kilo of cheese costs three dollars. We’ve been under the lockdown for more than two months, and everything has become very expensive. It is impossible to go on like this...priests have nothing to eat...The other day, I met with a seminarian who was crying. His parents had been let go, they have nothing to live on and

can't send their son anything. We're living on God's providence...We don't want outside intervention, especially armed intervention, but we have to ask for international humanitarian and health care aid because if not, we have no other alternative: either COVID kills us or hunger kills us")

Bishop Rafael Conde (on [March 11, 2014](#) denounced the vandalism at the church of Our Lady of La Candelaria in [La Otra Banda de La Victoria, Ribas municipality](#) in which the tabernacle was destroyed and consecrated hosts thrown on the ground)

Bishop Emeritus Ramon Ovidio Perez Morales (issued statements from [Los Teques](#) on [July 27, 2016](#) on Twitter that warned of attempts by the government to discredit the church)

Bishop Raul Biord Castillo (said "As Christians, we deplore this death [of Fr Reinaldo Alfonso Herrera Lures] that is added to many other deaths due to the violence and insecurity that we live in the country")

Fr Reinaldo Alfonso Herrera Lures (military chaplain in [La Guaira](#), [murdered](#) on [September 25, 2014](#))

Archbishop Emeritus Roberto Luckert Leon (denounced from [Santa Ana de Coro, Falcon state](#) the [February 19, 2015](#) arrest of the mayor of Caracas allegedly for involvement in a U.S. led coup attempt as "proof of dictatorship", added "Our late President was not mistaken when he promised to take us into Cuba's ocean of happiness, and this is the proof. They are trampling every rule of law";

commented on government actions on [May 8, 2017](#)"This is what they want to impose here, a dictatorship disguised as democracy. The amount of tear gas that the government is using to silence the protests is scandalous, but they will not be able to stop them, people are tired, for 18 long years the situation worsens every day, and now there is anxiety because there is no food, no security, and of course people do not want this, so they protest, to look for a way out of this crisis";

spoke out against the new hate speech law, The Law Against Hatred and Fascism, on [November 2, 2017](#): "[According to the government] it's the opposition that's violent. But when you go to a peaceful march to hand over documents to the prosecutor's office, you're met with the Bolivarian National Guard, the militias and pro-government thugs on motorcycles, so you can't fulfill a civic duty with a state agency. They're the violent ones...Right now they've hamstrung the news media. They're using the supply of newsprint to undermine us. The oldest newspaper in Coro is called La Manana. They can't print it because they're not giving them any newsprint, on the other hand, they gave to the paper that they founded a building, machinery, and newsprint, and it comes out every day. That's freedom of the speech? No...as a Venezuelan, the only solution for the country that I have is elections, but elections that are transparent and fair", added that the Constituent Assembly that replaced the constitutional National Assembly "is an invention [President] Maduro brought in from Cuba")

Auxiliary Bishop Tulio Luis Ramírez Padilla (denounced the [June 26, 2017](#) desecration of a church in [Quebrada Honda, Caracas](#))

Archbishop Ulises Antonio Gutierrez Reyes O. de M. (said in [Ciudad Bolivar](#) on [March 7, 2017](#) "I recently met a gentleman who was looking for food in the garbage, and chatting with him he told me he works, but his salary does not allow him to feed his children...I think this government is administering the resources and wealth of the country in a very bad

manner")

Mgr Victor Hugo Basabe (on [March 11, 2014](#) described an attack on the church of Santa Barbara in [Merida](#) by 'irregular forces' during Mass)

Vilca Fernandez (University Movement member, issued a statement on [January 30, 2015](#) condemning the "vile and cowardly attack" with gasoline bombs against the four churches in [Merida, Merida state](#) "The attack tries to sow terror and fear among the population in Merida. An attack against a place of worship is an attack on religious freedom and against the historical heritage of Merida")