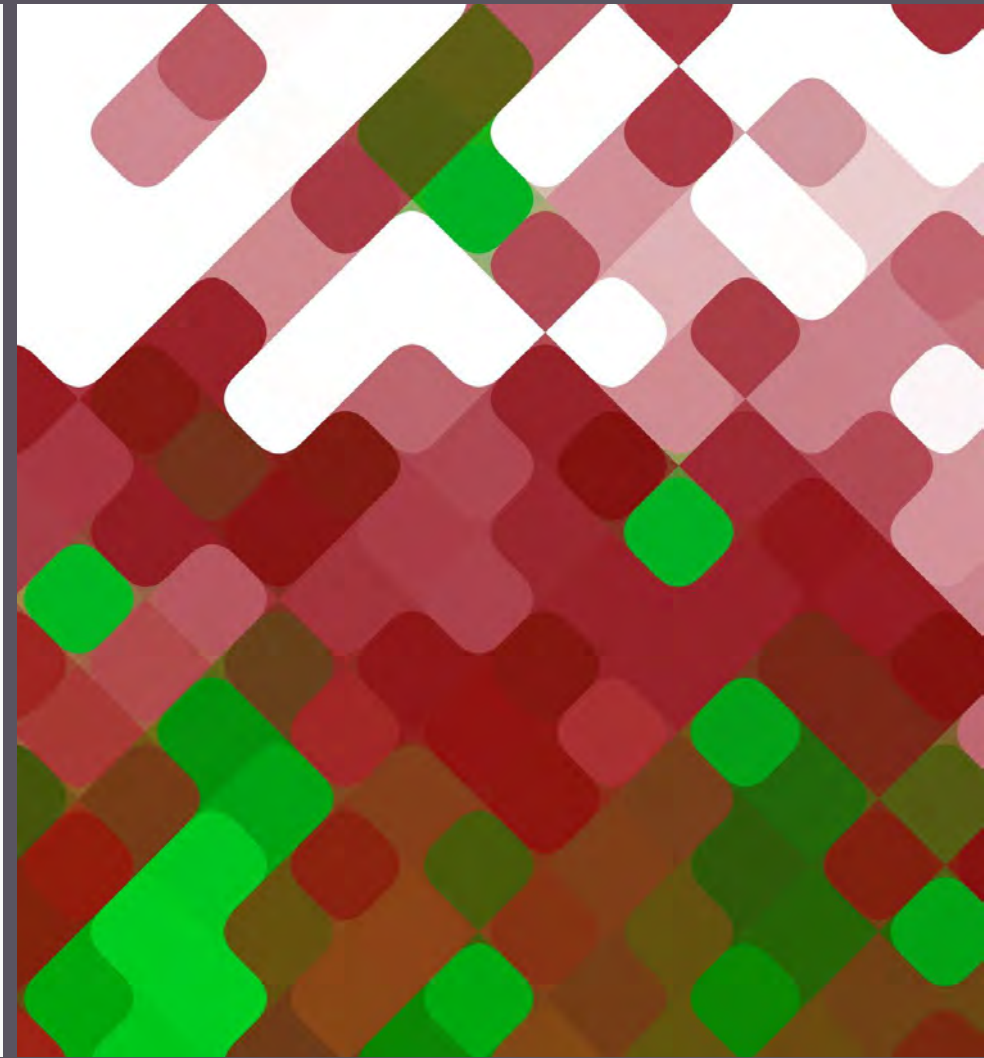




STRUGGLES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MEXICO

TMIY- December 2020



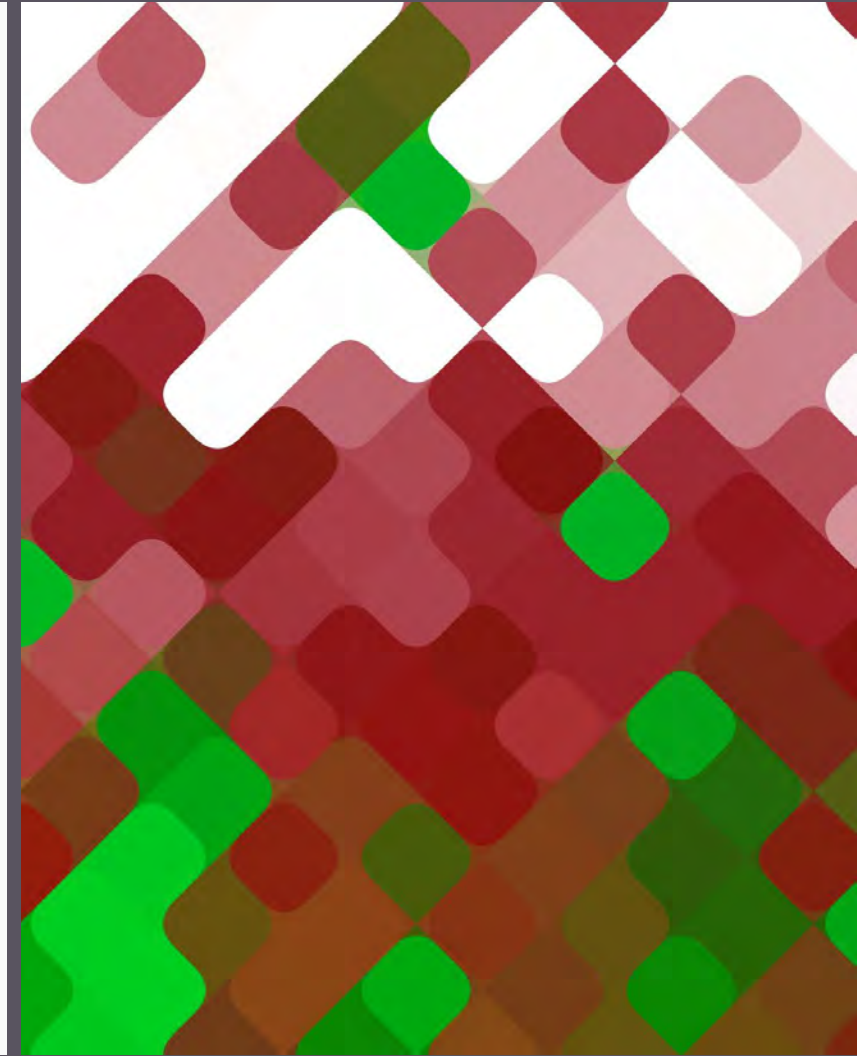
Colonial Mexico – New Spain

- Hernan Cortez conquered the Aztec Empire in August of 1521
- On his expedition, Cortez brought a friar Bartolomé de Olmedo
- After Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, Pope Alexander VI had ordered that natives of the new lands be instructed in Catholicism
- Cortez took this to heart and after conquering the Aztecs, requested that Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians be sent to the New Spain to convert the Indigenous



Colonial Mexico – New Spain

- The Franciscans arrived in 1524, followed by the Dominicans in 1526 and the Augustinians in 1533
- The first Bishop of the New Spain was Franciscan, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, consecrated in 1533
- He was known as “Protector of the Indians”
- Though the Indians did not put a lot of resistance to their conversion, the Spanish rule was so severe that a bloody revolt was not that far out
- In 1531, Fray Juan de Zumárraga prayed to Our Lady to intercede to reconcile the Spanish and the Natives
- He asked, as a sign, to receive roses from his native Castille



Colonial Mexico – New Spain

- Our Lady of Guadalupe made 4 apparitions in December of 1531, the last one on the 12th
- As requested by Our Lady of Guadalupe, a shrine was built in the hills of Tepeyac
- The Church grew and established schools and hospitals benefiting the Natives



XIX Century Mexico

- The struggle for Independence started on September 16th, 1810
- Miguel Hidalgo, a Catholic Priest from a small town in Guanajuato led the insurgence carrying a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Independence was gained until September 21, 1821
- The Empire of Mexico was formed recognizing the Catholic Church as the only valid religion in the country



XIX Century Mexico

- During the 1830's, anticlerical ideas from Mexican liberals were taking root to eliminate the social and economic power of the Catholic Church
- Vice-President Valentin Gomez Farias, a radical liberal, enacted strong anticlerical measures, while President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna retired to his estate in Veracruz
- The Government asserted the right to appoint clerics, Catholic missions were dissolved, assets confiscated, and education was secularized
- Gomez Farias was deposed by a group of Conservatives, ending the persecution of the Church



XIX Century Mexico

- In 1851, a new group of liberals led by Benito Juarez took over the country
- In 1855, the first of the Reform Laws, the so-called *Juarez Law*, restricted the authority of Church Courts, by subverting their authority to Civil Law
- A new Constitution was passed in 1857, adding more laws restricting the Church activities, such as the *Lerdo Law*, which confiscated Church property, (again!)
- A third law, the *Iglesias Law*, named after Jose Maria Iglesias, regulated the collection of clerical fees from the poor and prohibited the Church from charging fees for Baptisms and funeral services
- Registry of births, marriages and deaths were provided only by the civil authority



I want to add another point, that perhaps, I missed to clearly stated. The way XIX century Mexican history is thought, the Historians make you believe that the Liberals were the "Good Guys" while the Conservatives were the "Bad Guys", ergo The Church was "Bad", as It backed the Conservatives. This was not mentioned directly, but the message was very clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation today.

Regards,

David

XIX Century Mexico

- Once again, a group of Mexican Conservatives fought to restore the Church's rights
- In 1864, Maximiliano of Habsburgo was asked to be the Emperor of the second Mexican Empire
- Liberals and Conservatives fought a civil war ending in 1867, with the restoration of the Republic
- In 1876, Porfirio Diaz became Mexico's President that lasted until 1910
- During his presidency, though the 1857 Constitution was in effect, there was no enforcement of the anticlerical laws, leading the Church to regain part of its influence



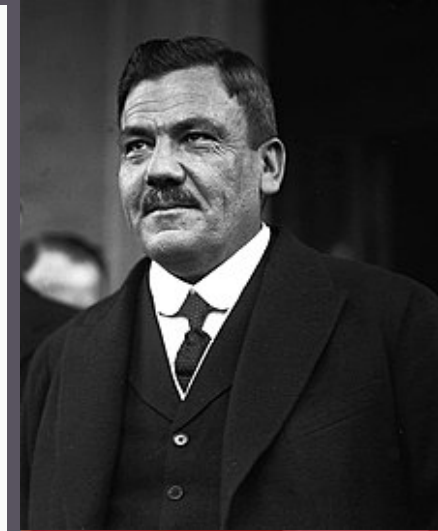
XX Century Mexico

- **With the Mexican Revolution of 1910 a new Constitution was passed in 1917**
- **Five articles were specifically aimed against the Church**
 - Article 3, enforced secular elementary and secondary education
 - Article 5 outlawed Monastic vows and clerical orders
 - Article 24 prevented public worship outside Church buildings
 - Article 27 prohibited religious institutions the right to acquire, hold or administer real property. It also declared existing religious real estate held by third parties to be national property
 - Finally, article 130 prohibited any Church members to vote or commenting on any public affair. Priests and Nuns could not wear their religious cloth in public
 - It also declared the State as the final arbiter on public worship, including the number of Priests and obligated them to register with the government as “professionals”



XX Century Mexico

- Even though the anti-clerical laws were on the books, these were not being enforced to the letter
- This changed, though, when Plutarco Elias Calles became President in 1924. He was a socialist and deported all but Mexican born Priests and put limits on the number of Priests in the country
- From 1926 to 1929, in Central Mexico, a rebellion known as the “Cristeros War” took place



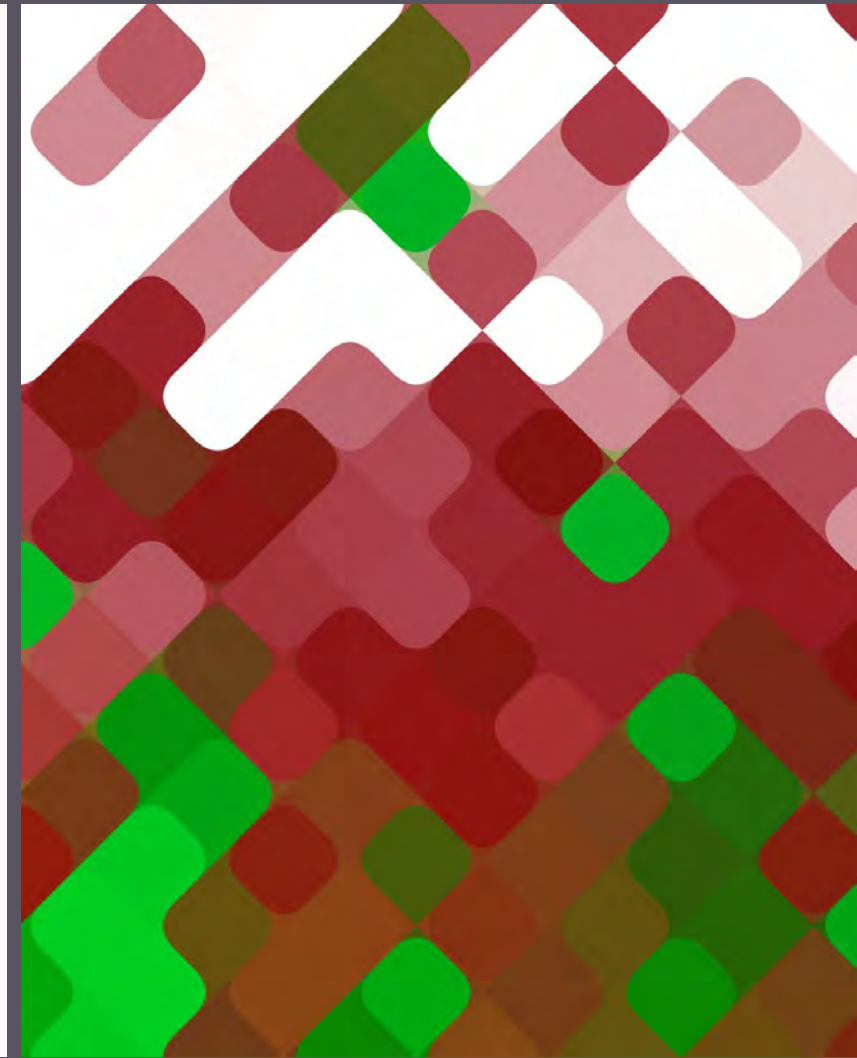
XX Century Mexico

- One Priest, *Blessed Padre Miguel Pro*, was executed with no trial, under the accusation of an assassination plot against former President Alvaro Obregon. His last request was to pray and pardoned his killing squadron. He died shouting "*Viva Cristo Rey*"
- President Calles made sure the Press had access to photograph the execution with the intention of scaring the "Cristeros"
- This, however, took the wrong effect on them. President Calles, was forced, through the U.S. Ambassador to accept some "Agreements" that ended the rebellion
- The war claimed 56K Federal soldiers and 30K Cristeros



XX Century Mexico

- Between 1926 and 1934, at least 40 Priests were killed
- Before the enforcement of the Laws, there were 4,500 Priests in the country, but by 1934 only 334 Priests were “licensed” to serve 15 million Catholics
- The rest had been eliminated by emigration, expulsion or assassination. 17 of 32 states had no Priests
- In 1934, President Lazaro Cardenas began his Presidential term. He did not strictly enforce the laws, but invited many Protestants to come to the country, among them Mormons and Mennonites



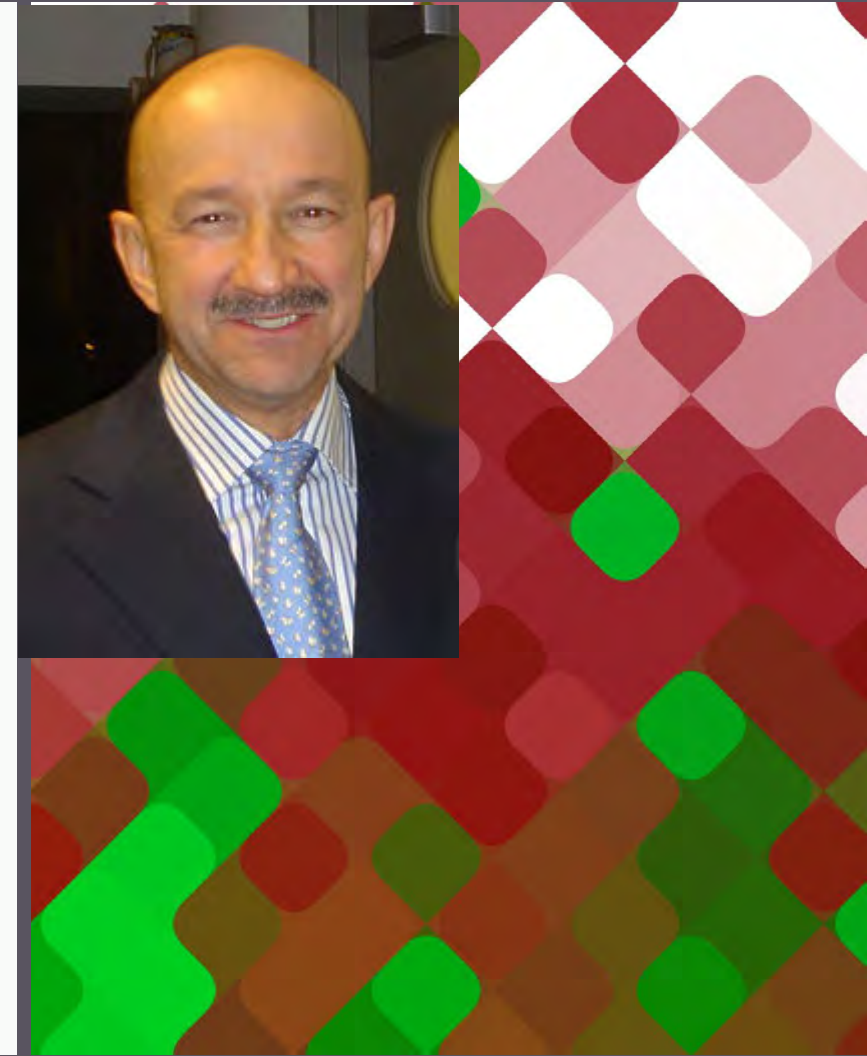
XX Century Mexico

- In 1940, Manuel Avila Camacho succeeded President Cardenas
- He was a devout Catholic who modified the Constitution to reaffirm the freedom of religion but was unsuccessful in repealing all anti-clerical provisions
- Catholic schools were able to open, however under the “disguise” of private institutions
- Article 130, however, remained in place, which meant, Church members could not have any political right
- In 1979, St. Pope John Paul II made his first pilgrim to Mexico. He was welcomed by then President Jose Lopez Portillo, but not as a dignitary of The Vatican or as a Religious Leader



XX Century Mexico

- St. John Paul II visit to Mexico started a long and “underground” negotiation to update the Constitution
- Finally, in 1992 President Carlos Salinas de Gortari passed reforms to the Constitution
- Articles 3, 5, 24 and 130 were reformed. Church religious members were granted the right to vote, but still could not run for office
- The Church still cannot comment on matter of public affairs



XXI Century Mexico

- Mexico now enjoys more religious freedom than before
- Diplomatic relations with The Vatican now exist
- There are 101 million Mexicans claiming to be Catholics, about 91% of the population, according to the 2010 census
- This makes Mexico the second most Catholic country, Brazil is at the top
- Central Mexico concentrates most of Catholics. Southern-most states in Mexico is the region with less Catholics



XXI Century Mexico

Questions???

