

HONEST ENOUGH TO STOP BEING CORRUPT...?



To Rt. Rev. Pedro Cirilo Uriz y Labayru:
Bishop of Lérida

Barcelona, May 18, 1852

J.M.J.

His Excellency, Msgr.:

The enemy has laid snares to Your Excellency's feet and has taken you by surprise; extirpated the order that you have issued against my family who had always been under my direction.

From the time the School of Virtue unfurled its banner in this capital, the impious anti-Christians conspired to demolish and raze it. If we have enemies, we do not lack friends who know how to support. It was natural that I was the target of all the blows. No stone was left unturned against the Director of the School. The enemy did not forget that the province of Lérida is my native place: they knew I had worked in this area, there they pursued my affairs and restrained me. In what point of view, they imagined and exaggerated my relationships with those ladies, widows and maidens against what Your Excellency had denounced with a terrible thunder? Listen with discretion to the following:

The police of Barcelona were drawing up a criminal case against me: **is it a horrible crime to preach the Gospel?** They searched for facts and deeds. Let us set aside those that do not have regard for the object that inspired me to write. Let us come to the relationships with these ladies.

I could not please all bishops. Msgr. Doney, bishop of Montauban, had said and had written much against me, that Luther was not as wretched as I am. I stood up to him with the protection of the law. He told the bishop of Barcelona that I had taken out a religious from the convent (in France), had her followed, deceived her completely, seduced her and swindled what she had, and abandoned her in France, that... Juana Gratiás, whose exemplary life is well known in this province, could not escape the intoxicating darts of the mordant tongue of one of her companions, Teresa Christiá, whose bad reputation is also known in Lérida and Aytona. This lady, protected by the bishop of Montauban, circulated the most abominable rumors against Juana Gratiás: followed a Spanish Friar in Spain and... this Friar is the Director of the School of Virtue. Last October this lady, Teresa Christiá, wrote an extensive **frame-up testimonial** to Msgr. José Caixal, canon of Tarragona, emitting the most execrable accusations against me. Msgr. Caixal, neither an authority nor a judge should have been a little cautious. He believed everything the lady said, communicated to his friends and a friend turned into an enemy. The information that came from Tarragona to Lérida about these ladies has been so slanderous that they were in a house of prostitution... notorious and bandits. Let us state facts: two maidens came from Reus and their relatives were so alarmed to know that they were in a despicable house; they ran to Lérida and took them home. It was at this point that the Vicar general and Your Excellency summoned Juana Gratiás, made her swear to keep silent about the questions and her answers; the same thing was done to the parish priest of San Andrés and of Aytona... and then Your Excellency expelled them from your diocese, disbanded the group and force them out from their own house. The mayor of Aytona demanded to the landlady to surrender the keys of the house and ordered her to leave. This order and ordinance presented the Director of the School of Virtue before the public, as founder of houses of prostitution, transgressor of civil and ecclesiastical laws and confirmed the atrocious calumnies of the bishop of Montauban and Miss Christiá. All of these were sent to Madrid and registered in the book of accusations and crimes that there impute the adversaries. Moreover, Your Excellency exposed these ladies to mockery, shame, scandal and scoff and to public disgrace.

Your Excellency compelled me to defend myself and I am obliged to do it or else I will be politically and morally dead. The bishop of this diocese is urged to either vindicate me or punish me as a good father and pastor; as a wise doctor and as zealous prelate of the good public, he will have the special satisfaction to declare me innocent before the nation, before the law and before the religious press. The frame-up testimonial of Miss Christiá and the letter of the Bishop of Montauban together with other letters are in the possession of Mr. Valls¹, the lawyer in charge of defending this case, in the name of the bishop of this diocese and mine. If I would consent to the advice of the lawyer, I could sue the bishop of Montauban and Miss Christiá for the crime of **calumny and slander**. I believe I am innocent; it is equitable that the slanderers suffer the penalty of the law. Virtue has unfurled its banner in this city; what a revolution in this nation of vice! Justice and Charity had been presented in public; what a horrible crime to the eyes of the wicked. We will sustain our banner with tenacity, firmness and constancy. Could we count on Your Excellency as a friend? As such I always believed. If

¹ D. Isidro Valls y Pascual, a priest, temporarily prosecutor of the diocesan Curia of Barcelona. Bishop of Gerona in 1875.

you do not intend to protect or defend us, at least be a spectator in this struggle, neither to attack us nor pronounce against us without knowing first our case. Do not place me in a painful and grave situation and in an unavoidable necessity of having to defend myself against my bishop, whom I respect as my Pastor, venerate as my Father, and to whom I wish to serve as a humble subject.

In this *struggle of justice against injustice*, of illegal encroachment against equity, of the infringement of the law, of virtue against vice, in this battleground I do not acknowledge the names of Bishop, Governor, King or Pope. We are distinguished by our uniform, by our banner, by our rights and deeds.

Your Excellency attacked me in the field of civil rights. Here is one exposition that I am sending hand carried from my family as highly offended, despised, insulted and afflicted in their rights and honor by the order issued by Your Excellency against some of them.

“A wise man changes his opinion”; Your Excellency, revoke this order or modify it according to law and rights. Do not oblige us, I implore, to execute, because there is no necessity.

Your Excellency's servant,
Francisco Palau, Priest

P.S. I am enclosing today's issue of *La Actualidad*². Please do not forget to submit the order and arrangement issued by Your Excellency as a testimony of a violation of laws.

WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

As promised in his previous letter, Palau writes in self-defense regarding his relationship with the two groups that were dissolved. He explains facts connected with the incident, notably the criminal case being hatched against him by the Barcelona police and which has been referred to Madrid.

The bishop of Lerida has never met Fr. Palau, and without knowing him, has denied to him any canonic permit to reside as priest in diocese of Lerida. More, this adversity now was extended also towards his spiritual daughters. It's true, Palau got busy those days with all the activities of the School of Virtues, but still, the news coming from communities and Lerida an Aytona about actions of the bishop were a big and unpleasant surprise. The two groups were to be closed, based on false accusations coming from one of ex-friends and followers of Palau, used by his enemies to despise Francisco Palau and his good deeds in the field of Christian Formation.

² The issue of 18 May 1852 read: “The life, actions and behavior of the Director of the School do not belong to a remote period. It belongs to the present and hence it is very easy to know it and verify it with the witness of those in authority. Besides the past records which the Lerida province could supply to our bishops and to the military and civil authorities (...), some light could be shed by the French bishops in whose diocese Fr. Palau resided during his stay. Would that the findings might not harm anybody's reputation!” (Joaquin Maria Nin).

IN REALITY...

Again, the fake news seem to be as old as the world itself. It's quite sad when you realize that your "enemies" will do whatever it takes to make you despicable, when it serves to their dark purposes. It's even sadder when these attacks come from people you less expected, from inside of our families, communities, friends... How fragile we are... How prone to corruption (in a wide meaning of the word, of being inclined to manipulation to achieve our goals)... The rest issue in the Philippines is the closure of ABS CBN, a station accused officially of actions against corporate law, but also said to be a victim of political games of those who would like to hide uncomfortable truth. In some point we all start asking ourselves about whom we can really believe to: Government? Journalists? And if we look closer, if we are courageous enough, we might also start asking ourselves about corruption in our own lives: how far are we ready to manipulate facts in order to achieve what we desire? Maybe even to ourselves we shouldn't believe, because we also a mixture of contrary desires, motivations, fears, anxieties, jealousies etc. Let us make it an invitation to a live of more transparency and sincerity, starting with ourselves. This way, the "new normal" will have some chance to be really something new.

