

orders, expelled foreign-born clergy and prohibited public worship. Priests and nuns were barred from wearing religious garments, from voting, and from criticizing the government or commenting on public affairs either in writing or in speech. If charged with a violation of the law, they were, like Durán, often denied a trial.

Mexico's bishops were expelled, and many of the clergy were exiled for years; those who remained or returned in secret were forced to work and minister "underground." Many seminarians were also exiled to Spain or the United States.

Although the Knights as an organization did not provide support to the Cristeros' military efforts, it remained a target for the Mexican government, explains historian Jean Meyer.

According to Meyer, more than 200,000 people from every socioeconomic background were killed or martyred by 1930. On May 21, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized 25 martyrs — including six Knights — from the Cristiada period. Thirteen more Mexican martyrs — including three Knights — were beatified in Guadalajara, Mexico, on the Solemnity of Christ the King on Nov. 20, 2005.

The May 2012 issue of Columbia magazine explores the history of the persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico during the 1920s and '30s. This history has been hidden from the people of Mexico, and the real causes of the conflict have been ignored by many scholars.

The articles in this issue set the record straight, both as to the real cause of the violence and the peaceful efforts of the Knights of Columbus on both sides of the border to defend religious liberty in Mexico.

Today in the United States, it is impossible to recall these events without thinking of current threats to religious liberty, including the Obama administration's insistence that contraceptives, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs be included in the health insurance programs of Catholic organizations. This federal mandate is backed by the threat of millions of dollars in fines if Catholic organizations refuse to comply as a matter of conscience.

The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, earlier this year stated, "We have become certain of two things: religious freedom is under attack, and we will not cease our struggle to protect it."

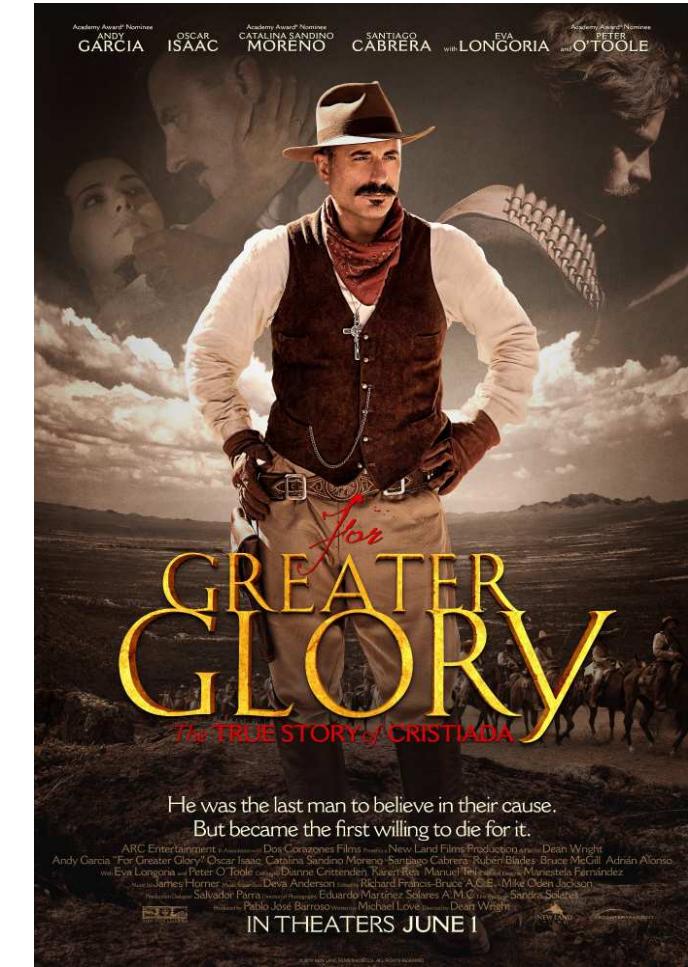
Cardinal Francis E. George, the past president of the bishops' conference, has concluded from the intransigence of the Obama administration that it wants Catholics to "give up" our schools, hospitals and charitable ministries.

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