

REFLECTION**Could You Be Convicted?****by Guillermo de Carndonagh**

I was reading a small novella recently, the account of the persecution of Catholic Christians in a fictitious South European country at the beginning of this century. The story itself was nothing special but the idea is worth considering. Could you be convicted of being a Catholic Christian? If the ----tonistas gained power and adhering to Catholicism was made a crime could you be convicted?

Material evidence

If they searched your person would they find a well-worn medal or scapular? Or a shiny gold trinket that a skilled lawyer could dismiss as no different than the apparel of the pagan's selling dope on street corners.

When they searched your house would they find a statue or a Crucifix prominently displayed? Or would they find some inconspicuous display of semi-religious items that a skilled lawyer could dismiss as commonplace bric-a-brac.

In your library would they find prayer books, missals and bibles stained and tattered by constant use, or just some books hardly used on a shelf? Things the lawyer could claim were simply references any educated person would own.

Material witnesses

How would your neighbors testify? Would they say you kept the Sabbath or that for you Sunday was just another day for business and shopping as it is for them? Would they testify about seeing you going to church often or that they never noticed? Would they testify about your reserve and abstinence or describe your participation in their drunken revels?

And your fellow workers, what would they say? Do you give a full days work for a full days pay? Or do you goof-off when given chance and think nothing of taking work materials home? Do you evidence Christian virtue or participate in salacious talk at the watercolor? Could your lawyer show that your life style was in no-way significantly different than that of your neighbors and coworkers?

Co-conspirators

If they brought in some known Christian convicts would they know you? Would the people in the Catholic community know who you are? Or would they testify that they saw you occasionally but did not know you? You really are not a participating member of the community. Could your lawyer make the case that yes you made social appearances but this should not be confused with commitment?

The paper trail

When they checked your financial records, would they find significant contributions? Would they find any contributions to religious organizations and charitable causes? Or are you a stick a dollar in the basket and run person making no real sacrifice and leaving no record? Would your lawyer be able to show that your entertainment expenses are so much greater than any church or charity related contributions that you could hardly be considered a serious Christian?

The final sentence

And if you lawyer can make a good case that your no different than you neighbors and that there's no significant evidence you're Catholic, thus sparing you the judgment of the civil bar, what will be your fate when you appear before the Awesome Judgment Seat of Christ?