

Mass held on the V Anniversary of the downing of the two Brothers to the Rescue Planes

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ENA CURNOW

The bells of the St. Agatha Church in the neighborhood of Sweetwater in Miami were heard repeatedly this Saturday 24 February at an unusual time. The harsh metallic sound, recalled the murder of Armando Alejandro, Pablo Morales, Carlos Costa and Mario de la Peña, and at the same time was like a call for justice for an unpunished crime. A day like that, which was perhaps so full of light, Fidel Castro's regime cast a shadow over the homes of four exiled Cuban families. From 3:21 until 3:28 in the afternoon the bells tolled. The same interval that it took two MiGs to shoot down two civilian planes on 24 February, 1996, ending the life of its crew in mid flight who were completing the most noblest of missions: to save helpless rafters crossing dangerous waters in fragile boats in search of freedom.

"The bells have announced that four brothers have gone to eternity", was the divine interpretation of Monsignor San Román who officiated the mass in God's house, that the public filled under the silent gaze of the four enormous photographs of the martyrs that dominated the room from under the altar. A few minutes earlier, Marlene, the much loved girl of the tough fighter Armando Alejandro, who has grown as tall as her dad, took the holy podium and with her Spanish learned from hearing about Cuba, read out the liturgy: "Death, everything has its time". Then Mario de la Peña followed, the parent who does not speak of his son without a hoarse voice from the tears he is holding back: "Lord, we ask you to influence the minds of our new rulers for there to be a change favoring the enforcement of justice in the case of Carlos, Armando, Mario and Pablo. We ask Lord: For everyone present, who are faithful witnesses of this case, to not be satisfied with the absence, but rather we ask you Lord for peace and freedom for Cuba".

And that was the message that presided the V Anniversary. Although lawyers and prosecutors say they cannot prosecute Fidel Castro for being the head of state, we will continue to insist that those responsible for the crime be at least brought to justice, because as Mario explained before DIARIO LAS AMERICAS: "We hope that a person who supports us more, is now in Washington."

The mass continued amidst the pain of the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews, and all the people in exile who do not forgive the insult.

Monsignor San Román also highlighted the altruism of Carlos, Armando, Mario and Pablo when he referred to their noble mission to rescue human lives from the ocean:

"Nobody has more love for his friends than the one who has given his life for them. It is the Lord's love that penetrated the heart of Mario, Paul, Armando and Carlos. These 4 youths were a wonderful example ... There is no doubt that the crime is big, but love is bigger. Today let's ask that in a special way, this deed be understood. Lord, abide by the wishes of these families."