LITURGY RESOURCES IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE BEATIFICATION
OF
OSCAR ROMERO, ARCHBISHOP OF EL SALVADOR

When choosing readings, it may be helpful to look at the Lectionary readings, for Lent or Holy Week, particularly 23 - 30 March, which include the texts for Archbishop Romero’s final homilies, as well as the day of his funeral (Palm Sunday). These texts are common to many Churches, so offering further common ground for ecumenical celebrations.

If you wish to use the readings on which Archbishop Romero based his final homilies, these are: 23 March 1980 - Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3: 8-14, John 8:1-11; 24 March 1980 - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Psalm 23: 1-4, John 12:23-26. Archbishop Romero’s homilies and pastoral letters may be found in a range of books available from The Romero Trust, CAFOD, or good religious bookshops, and extracts from these may also be included. The book, The Violence of Love, containing homily extracts, can be downloaded from www.romerotrust.org.uk. Through the Year with Oscar Romero is also available for sale from the Romero Trust.

You are welcome to adapt the sample texts below according to local needs and resources. The hymns/songs are suggestions only. Where a solo is indicated, if this is not available, you may wish to use some recorded music, e.g. parts of the Salvadoran Misa Popular, Guillermo Cuellar; the Nicaraguan Misa Campesina, Carlos Mejia Godoy; or the Argentinian Misa Criolla, Art Ramirez. Some of these can be found in ‘World Music’ sections of stores such as HMV, or via Amazon.

The following publications include suitable material:

The Complete Celebration Hymnal - Commitment/Discipleship (pg. 1333) Peace & Justice (pg.1343), Thanksgiving (1335) Hymns Old & New with Supplement - See Index of Uses: Dedication & Discipleship; Peace & Justice; Praise & Thanksgiving; People of God (Church).


Hymnal references are given in the sample texts so that if your Church uses a particular hymn-book you may wish to use that alongside an Order of Service, rather than run into copyright problems.

Various Iona/John Bell collections, Wild Goose Publications, may be useful, including: Come All You People; There is One Among Us.

Celebrating One World: A resource book on Liturgy & Social Justice, CAFOD, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB

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Choose Life (refrain) is printed with permission of The Benedictine Monks of Weston Priory, Vermont USA, with verses adapted from Archbishop Romero’s final homily - Martin Pendergast

Enquiries regarding the above to: Calamus/Decani, Oak House, 70 High Street, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0AU - 01842 819 830

To the victims, Vaughan Jones
We shall go out, June Boyce-Tillman, Stainer & Bell Ltd

For further advice about texts, visual aids, or music, please contact:
Archbishop Romero Trust
www.romerotrust.org.uk romerotrust@btinternet.com
gathering song: Choose Life  
(music: Gregory Norbet OSB, adapted from Oscar Romero’s final homily)

refrain: Choose life that you may be  
a leaven for the human family.  
Then shall you live in peace,  
as justice bears the gift of freedom  
throughout all the world.

1. I do not believe in death,  
without the resurrection which will come.  
If they kill me, I shall rise  
once again in you, my people,  
God’s beloved poor. refrain

2. May God accept my sacrifice  
as a sign of liberation, living hope.  
A bishop, a pastor, may die,  
but the Church of God, which is the people,  
this will never die. refrain

Greeting & welcome

Penitential rite:

We need not go to Central America, to El Salvador, to face the violence which emerges from deprivation, lack of respect for human rights, ignorance of the precious dignity of the human person, and the marginalisation of so many women, men, children and young people. The evidence is around us, here in our own towns and cities. As we seek God’s peace and reconciliation, so let us first open ourselves to the gift of forgiveness …

Oscar Romero offered, amidst the broken body of your people, O Lord, the bread that would become your living Body: Lord, have mercy … or Senor, ten piedad …

Your venerable servant offered, amidst the spilled blood of your crucified people, O Christ, the wine of joy that would become your saving Blood: Christ, have mercy … or Cristo, ten piedad …

As one who came to serve, ‘Monsenor’ followed you, O Lord, giving his life as a ransom for all: Lord, have mercy … or Senor, ten piedad …

Absolution

Prayer

All powerful, ever-living God, you gave your servant, Bishop Oscar, the courage to witness to the Gospel of Christ, even to the point of giving his life for it, in pursuit of justice. Help us to endure all suffering for love of you, and to seek you with all our hearts, for you alone are the source of life. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. amen

a reading from the prophet Jeremiah (11: 18-20)

Responsorial psalm: The Cry of the Poor (Laudate 892)

a reading from the holy Gospel according to John (7: 40-53)

Homily

Bidding Prayers

As we celebrate the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero, we are conscious of the many challenges which face our world, our Church, our local communities. As we recall these in prayer, let us not be overwhelmed but strengthened to act with love:

For peace in the places of war, poverty and injustice, that leaders of government will be inspired by the vision of humanity which drove Oscar Romero. God, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

For the peoples of Central America, and especially El Salvador, that they may rise above violence, inequalities and injustice in a commitment to the common good. God, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.
For people of faith, that we may respond to situations of injustice, conflict, inequality, poverty and disease in the light of our belief, and so recognise the presence of the divine calling us to action for justice. God, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

For the Church, that its pastors, theologians, and pastoral ministers may always reflect God's call to a preferential option for the poor. God, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Giving thanks for the beatification of Oscar Romero, let us pray that his sacrificial witness to the poor will inspire all followers of Jesus Christ to imitate his example. God, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

And does the Spirit inspire us to pray for more ... spontaneous prayer may be added here ...

Loving Creator, hear your people's prayer, for we are human and often overwhelmed by the many difficulties we face in our world, in our Church, in our lives. We call upon the memory of Monsenor Romero who, in the face of so many challenges, never ceased to act with love. Help us to become instruments of peace in our world, to confront violence and its causes, the toxic roots of injustice, and the vicious hatred that disfigures the human person made in your image. This we ask through the transfigured Christ, for ever and ever. amen

Preparation of bread and wine:

Hymn/song

Prayer over the gifts
God of love, pour out your blessing on our gifts and make our faith as strong as that which your servant Oscar professed by shedding his blood in the cause of truth and justice. This we ask through Christ our Lord. amen

Eucharistic prayer - Jesus Who Went About Doing Good

Communion: Unless a grain of wheat (Laudate 748)

Prayer
Renewed O God, by the mystery of the Eucharist, and imitating the fidelity of your servant Oscar, may we come to share the eternal life you have promised to all who follow the way of your beloved Son. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. amen

Recessional: Faith of our fathers (Laudate 837, vv. 1, 2 & 4)
You may wish to adapt this hymn, replacing ‘fathers’ with martyrs, or as follows: 1st verse begins: ‘Faith of our mothers’, with the refrain continuing this; the 2nd verse, ‘Faith of our fathers’; 4th verse, ‘Faith of our martyrs’ ...

AN ECUMENICAL CELEBRATION IN MEMORY OF OSCAR ROMERO ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR

GATHERING MUSIC

OPENING SONG: Choose Life (music: Gregory Norbet OSB, verses adapted from Archbishop Romero’s last homily)

Choose life that you may be a leaven for the human family.
Then shall you live in peace, as justice bears the gift of freedom, throughout all the world.

1. I do not believe in death, without the resurrection which will come.
   If they kill me, I shall rise once again in you, my people, God’s beloved poor. refrain

2. May God accept my sacrifice as a sign of liberation, living hope.
   A bishop, a pastor may die, but the Church of God, which is the people, this will never die. refrain
WELCOME: I welcome you ….. As we gather in solidarity with all who seek justice in our world, let us first greet each other as we become a worshipping community in this place - the congregation is invited to greet those around them …..

PRAYER

All-loving and ever-living God, you gave your servant Bishop Oscar the courage to witness to the Gospel of Christ, even to the point of giving their lives for it in the pursuit of justice. Help us to endure all suffering for love of you, to seek you with all our hearts, and to rejoice in the resurrection victory, over all oppression, of your beloved Christ, living and reigning in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. amen

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah (11: 18-20)
The word proclaimed by Jeremiah: Thanks be to God

RESPONSORIAL SONG: Return to God (Marty Haugen) (Laudate 193)

Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy; come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

1. Now the time of grace has come, the day of salvation: come and learn now the way of our God. refrain
2. I will take your heart of stone and place a heart within you, a heart of compassion and love. refrain
3. If you break the chains of oppression, if you set the pris’ner free, if you share your bread with the hungry, give protection to the lost, give a shelter to the homeless, clothe the naked in your midst, then your light shall break forth like the dawn. refrain

A reading from the Gospel of John (7:40-52)
The word proclaimed by John: Thanks be to God

SOLO

From Through the Year with Oscar Romero, tr. Irene Hodgson, publ. Darton Longman & Todd.

Not knowing how to love: This is the greatest sickness of today’s world: not knowing how to love. Everything is selfishness, everything is exploitation of human beings by other human beings, everything is cruelty, torture. Everything is repression, violence. They burn the houses of the brothers and sisters, they take their brothers and sisters prisoner and torture them. There are so many horrible acts of one person against another. How Jesus would suffer tonight to see the atmosphere in our country of so many crimes and so much cruelty! I seem to see Christ saddened looking at El Salvador from his Passover table and saying: and I told them to love one another like I loved them. (23 March 1978, based on Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Cor. 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-15)

The victory of Christ: Victories that are amassed through blood are hateful. Victories that are achieved by brute force are beastly. The victory that triumphs is that of faith. It is the victory of Christ who didn’t come to be served but rather to serve. (25 March 1978, based on Genesis 1: 1-2:2, 22:1-18; Exodus 14: 15-15:1; Isaiah 54: 5-14, 55: 1-11; Baruch 3: 9-15, 32-44; Ezekiel 36: 16-28; Romans 6: 3-11; Matthew 28: 1-10)

The church cannot be deaf or dumb: The church cannot be deaf or dumb faced with the clamour of millions of men and women who shout for freedom, oppressed by a thousand slaveries. But it tells them what is the true freedom that they should strive for: the one that Christ has already inaugurated on earth when he was resurrected and broke the chains of sin, of death and of hell. Being like Christ, free from sin, is to be truly free with the true liberation. And those who, with their faith placed in the Resurrected One, work for a more just world, against the abuses of a repressive authority, against the disorder of human beings exploiting other human beings, those who struggle based on the resurrection of the Great Liberator, only they are authentic Christians. (26 March 1978, based on Acts 10:34,37-43; Colossians 3: 1-4; John 20: 1-9)

While I am gathering the cries of the people: I already know that there are many who are scandalised by these words and want to accuse the church of having abandoned the preaching of the gospel to get involved in politics. But I don’t accept the accusation, rather I make an effort so that everything that the 2nd Vatican Council, the meetings of Puebla and Medellin, have wanted to promote doesn’t stay in the texts to be studied in a theoretical sense but rather that we live them and translate them in this conflictive reality so that we preach the gospel as we should for our people. Because of this, I ask the lord all week, while I am gathering the clamour of the people and the pain of so much crime, the ignominy of so much violence, that I be given the right words to console, to denounce, to call to repentance and, although it continues to be a voice crying out in the wilderness, I know that the church is making the effort to carry out its mission. (23 March 1980, based on Isaiah 43: 16-21; Philippians 3: 8-14; John 8: 1-11)

Transcendence: What is transcendence? I think that I may repeat this idea too much, but I never tire of doing so. Because we often run the risk of wanting to get out of immediate situations and we forget that the
immediate solution can be a patch but not a true solution. The true solutions have to fit into the definitive project of God. All the solutions that we might want to suggest for a better land distribution, for a better administration in El Salvador, for a political organisation conformed to the common good of the Salvadorans, will always have to be sought in the achievement of definitive liberation. (23 March 1980)

The Archbishop’s Line: I don’t like it when they say ‘the Archbishop’s line’ - I don’t have a personal line. I am trying to follow then line of the great achievements of the church that I already received as a precious inheritance and that we are trying to put into practice with great success in the communities that take it seriously. (23 March 1980)

Stop the repression! I want to make a special plea to the men of the army, and specifically, to the rank-and-file of the Guardia Civil and then police, to those in the barracks. Brothers, we are part of the same people. You are killing your own brother and sister peasants and when you are faced with an order to kill given by a man, the law of god must prevail, the law that says: Thou shalt not kill. No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the Law of God. Mo one has to obey an immoral law. And it is time that you recover your consciences and obey your consciences over an order that is sinful. The church, defender of human rights, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the human being, cannot remain silent in the face of such abomination. We want the government to take seriously the idea that the reforms are meaningless when they are stained with so much blood. In the name of God, then, and in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise up to heaven each day more tumultuously, I plead with you, I pray, I order you, in the name of God: stop the repression. (23 March 1980)

The last words: That this immolated Body and this Blood, sacrificed for humankind, may nourish our bodies and our blood in suffering and in pain, like Christ, not for its own sake, but rather to give the concepts of justice and peace to our people. Let us join together then, intimately in faith and hope in this moment of prayer …… (at this moment the shot rang out). (24 March 1980)

HOMILY

BIDDING PRAYERS

The theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez reflected upon the deaths of Salvadoran martyrs: “From El Salvador we have received news of the cross from a country with such a meaningful name, ‘The Saviour’. The martyrs were threatened and killed because of their testimony to justice. From El Salvador we also received news of Resurrection, materialised by the Holy Spirit, the Good News of the Resurrection”:

For the leaders of nations, that they might be graced with wisdom, renewed commitment to the common good, and new determination to put people first.

Sung response – Cantor: Through our lives and by our prayers May God’s reign come. (Laudate, 552, adapted)

For the people of El Salvador: that they may pass from their agonies as a crucified people to a promise of hope and justice for all in a new society celebrating the values of the transfigured and risen Saviour.

Response …

For all the martyrs of our own time: Giving thanks for the beatification of Oscar Romero, let us pray that his sacrificial witness to the poor will inspire all followers of Jesus Christ to imitate his example.

Response …

For those without jobs or whose livelihoods are threatened; for the homeless and poor in our midst: that new doors will be opened and new visions of solidarity seen. Response …

For all people of faith and none: that we may be inspired by the openness of Oscar Romero to embrace all who share core values of human dignity, respect, and equality in advocacy for the marginalised in both society and communities of belief. Response …

For all those places and organisations through which we can glimpse signs of God’s realm in our world: that the work of the Archbishop Romero Trust, CAFOD and Christian Aid, Pax Christi, Progressio, and movements for justice and peace across all faith communities, will continue to proclaim the unity that binds us in common witness. Response …

For each person here: that our strength and commitments may be renewed in the options we take in our lives as we pray in some moments of silence …… Response …

God of Cross and Resurrection, like your beloved Christ, we do not die alone, because we are all part of a community; whenever someone dies in the community, the community also dies a little. El Salvador died every day with every sister and brother murdered. Things cannot be the same again after a death in the community, but as the death is shared, so the hope is, will be the Resurrection. Hear the prayers of your people and overcome the sin of daily crucifixion with daily signs of resurrection. Let us find meaning in the many faces of death. Let us find hope beyond the naked violence which pits your people against each other and you. Open our dark places to the light of your Spirit so that we may live in justice, unity, and peace, through Christ our brother, the risen One for ever and ever. amen
During the following hymn, the congregation is invited to come forward to light a candle, as a sign of commitment, in a circle around a Cross or portrait of Archbishop Romero, and remain there during the following hymn:

**HYMN:** To the victims  (words, Vaughan Jones; tune: Finlandia)

1. We sing of those whose lives are lost and broken, who pay the price when reason’s voice is stilled. Across the world, their cries come sharply to us, imprisoned, tortured, starving, bound and killed. We know, like them, of evil’s dark oppression. We live, like them, through hope which God instilled.

2. Where power and terror stand in domination; Where greed dictates what values life can hold – the young, the strong, who shape a better future, into the jails of tyranny are hurled. Their faith refines the cause of liberation; their tears unite the weak throughout the world.

3. Their struggle points the way of love and justice. Their battles quell what evil can arrange. Their anguish shows the depth of crucifixion. Their strength reveals the power we can attain. God sides with them, the poor and the abandoned; God lives in them, the hope for peace and change.

4. They rest in peace; their struggle now is ended. Their people’s pain is still denied a cure. Their task to work for freedom, truth and justice, our God continues to embrace the poor. With them in unity of hope and purpose, we place our trust in vict’ry that is sure.

The congregation remains standing in a circle for the concluding part of the Service:

**CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**DISMISSAL & BLESSING**

Let us go out and be light! May our words burn like the word of the prophets. May our defence of the poor and suffering, the victims of injustice and oppression, be a transforming power for our world. May our voice, our feet, our hands become those of Christ, building up the reign of God in human history.

The blessing is said by all:

*May the blessing of the God of Sarah and Abraham, the blessing of the Redeemer, born of Mary, the blessing of the Spirit, brooding over us as a mother over her children, be with us all, now and for ever. amen*

**RECESSIONAL:** We shall go out  (words, June Boyce-Tillman; tune, Londonderry Air)

1. We shall go out with hope of resurrection, we shall go out, from strength to strength go on; we shall go out and tell our stories boldly, tales of a love that will not let us go. We’ll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted, we’ll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed; we’ll weave a cloth of all the world united, empowered by Christ, whose Spirit sets us free.

2. We’ll give a voice to those who have not spoken, we’ll find the words for those whose lips are sealed, we’ll make the tunes for those who sing no longer, call vibrant love to life in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those around us weeping, sing songs of strength to hearts that break in grief, we’ll leap and dance the resurrection story, including all within the circle of our love.

CONCLUDING MUSIC