

## LITURGY RESOURCES FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF OSCAR ROMERO, ARCHBISHOP OF EL SALVADOR

When choosing readings, it may be helpful to look at the Lectionary readings, for the closing days of Lent or Holy Week, from 20 - 28 March approximately. These 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.romerotrusted.org.uk](http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk).

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.

The following publications include suitable material:

**The Complete Celebration Hymnal** - *Commitment/Discipleship (pg. 1333) Peace & Justice (pg.1343). Hymns Old & New with Supplement* - *See Index of Uses: Dedication & Discipleship; Peace & Justice. Laudate* - *Lent (193-237); Commitment, Discipleship, Mission (pp. 854-879); Justice & Peace (pp. 880-904)*

**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

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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*

*Return to God*, Calamus UK

*Enquiries regarding both 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 8 Deans Mews, London W1G 9EE**

[www.romerotrusted.org.uk](http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk)

[romerotrusted@btinternet.com](mailto:romerotrusted@btinternet.com)

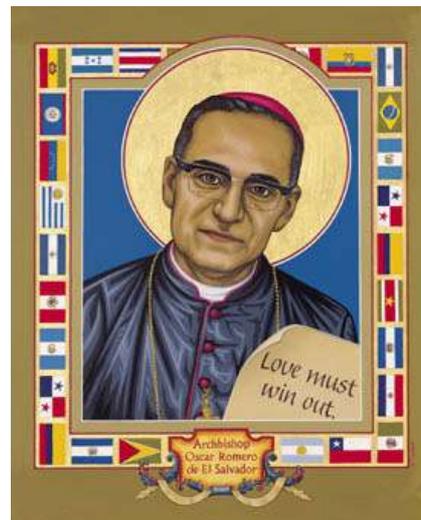
## A MASS IN MEMORY OF OSCAR ROMERO ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR

### **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 memory 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.

For progress in the beatification cause of Archbishop Oscar Romero, that his example will continue to inspire a lively commitment to growth in faith and solidarity with the poor. 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***

*Eucharistic acclamations:*

Santo, santo, santo

(Laudate 723)

***memorial:*** If we are living

(Laudate 906, v.1)

OR

*Pues si vivimos, para El vivimos  
y si morimos para El morimos,  
sea que vivamos o que moramos,  
somos del Senor, somos del Senor.*

OR

*Lord, by your dying, you destroyed our death,  
and by your rising, you restored our life!  
Lord Jesus come! Lord Jesus come!  
Lord Jesus come, come in glory now!*

***at the Breaking of the Bread:***

Behold the Lamb of God

(Laudate 598)

***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: 1<sup>st</sup> verse begins: 'Faith of our **mothers**', with the refrain continuing this; the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse, 'Faith of our **fathers**'; 4<sup>th</sup> verse, 'Faith of our **martyrs**' ...

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



**From Cross to Resurrection**

**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 ***faith beyond resentment***, James Alison

Nicodemus has begun to pluck up some courage to step tentatively out of his closet of night-time belief in the darkness. Following an incident in which the Temple guard failed to arrest Jesus, who was speaking openly, and thus scandalously, in the Temple, the Pharisees get seriously annoyed. The enforcers really should not allow themselves to be led astray by this man's fine-sounding words! At this stage, and with considerable courage, Nicodemus dares to break the angry unanimity which can only anathematise those with whom it disagrees. He raises a legal procedural question to defer the violence. The Pharisees are not fooled. Due process is unimportant when the truth is already known. Anyone who speaks up on behalf of such a person is probably 'one of them'. In other words: only 'one of them' could take him seriously, and the unanimous voice of Scripture is against the possibility that 'one of them' could tell the truth. Nevertheless, Nicodemus does seem successfully to have thrown a monkey-wrench in their works, for he breaks their conspiratorial unanimity and 'they went each to his own house'. Nicodemus had run the risk of stepping outside the 'flesh' and has lived to tell the tale. What went through Nicodemus' head as he went to his own house? He had just witnessed the other side of what Jesus had said to him: the absolute incompatibility between flesh and Spirit. The Pharisees were even clearer than Jesus had been about the radical nature of witnessing, however half-heartedly, to the possibility that there might be a discussion about Jesus' presentation of God. But where Jesus had simply confronted him with being consequent, the Pharisees had instantly detected what his failure to join their unanimity said about him, had seen that it gave him away. The closet is a place in which you are safe neither by night, nor by day. By night you face the threat of coming clean and thus losing your daytime belonging; by day you face the threat of being found out, and thus being expelled. Which is the more frightening, to take your chances with the living God, or to see whether you can negotiate survival in the midst of violent men?

*(Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001)*

## **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*

*(Laudate, 552)*

**May God's reign come.**

*For the people of El Salvador and its President, Mauricio Funes: 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: that as we hope and pray for the formal proclamation of Oscar Romero's sanctity by the Church, we may celebrate his witness and those of others, and so commit ourselves to follow in their footsteps. 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**