

**Remarks by HE Ambassador Werner Matías Romero**

**At the Blessing & Dedication of**

**the Monsignor Óscar Romero Cross & Memorial**

**Metropolitan Cathedral Church of St George**

**London**

**19 September 2013**

Good evening.

I would like to thank the Archdiocese of Southwark, the Archbishop Romero Trust and CAFOD for allowing us to join with them today to celebrate the blessing and dedication of the Romero Cross and Memorial.

I acknowledge also the presence of Gaspar Romero, brother of Monsignor Romero; Archbishop Peter Smith; Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster Abbey; Monsignor Ricardo Urioste, President of the Monsignor Romero Foundation of El Salvador; Canon John O' Toole, Dean of the Cathedral Church of St George; and Bishop John Rawsthorne and Julian Filochowski of the Archbishop Romero Trust.

And of course, the artist Fernando Llort and his lovely wife Aura.

Ambassadors and High Commissioners, members of Parliament and government officials, members of the Salvadoran community, friends all.

It is a privilege and an honour for the embassy, for the government of El Salvador and for me personally to be associated with the creation of the Romero Space in this church and the dedication of this great sculpture.

I understand this work of art was created by the master Fernando Llort at his studio in La Palma, which is, as some of you may know, a village high in the mountains of El Salvador.

Fittingly, it is also the place where the first peace talks between the two sides in our civil war were held and is, even today, associated among Salvadorans with the peace process that ended the war more than 20 years ago.

The work was then shipped, piece by piece, from El Salvador and assembled here.

So, with the presence of the Romero cross, this place will truly be a “pedacito de El Salvador”—a little piece of El Salvador – here in the centre of London. It is a place where everyone can come to reflect on Monsignor Romero’s teachings and on El Salvador’s recent history of war and peace.

This memorial is also a splendid representation of Salvadoran art and craftsmanship. It is a reminder of how Salvadorans, no matter how great the adversity we have faced over the years, look forward to the future with faith, resilience and hope.

Through his art, Fernando Llort has expressed, over many years, a deeply personal vision of life in El Salvador, its people and traditions.

His work has been loved and admired for many years by people in El Salvador, in many places and contexts, and by people around the world.

And I am very pleased that we will have such a fine example of his work on permanent display here in London, in the Romero Space, as it will be called.

In a way, all of El Salvador is a Romero Space, a space where we feel his presence and remember his example in denouncing injustice and in holding the powerful to account until the very day of his martyrdom in 1980.

Although our memory of those terrible years has faded a little, we remember his decency, his sense of humour and his abiding humanity. He held us to a higher standard. Now on his way to sainthood, the likeness of the Voice of the Voiceless stands today in stone above the entrance to Westminster Abbey, and his image remains etched in our minds, his example undimmed.

Thank you.