

Westminster Abbey

A SERVICE TO MARK THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF OSCAR ROMERO



PALM SUNDAY
Sunday 28 March 2010
6.30 pm



Oscar Romero (1917–80)

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ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO (1917–80)

Oscar Romero was born to a family of modest means in the small town of Ciudad Barrios. He went to the seminary at thirteen, studied for the priesthood in Rome, and was ordained in 1942. At work in San Miguel he was a zealous pastor with a simple lifestyle, shy and bookish; close to, and much loved by, the communities he served. In 1970 he was made a bishop and in 1977 to the shock of many he was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador. There followed three tumultuous years of ministry at the head of the archdiocese in his strife-torn country before his assassination.

El Salvador is a small country in Central America named after Christ the Saviour. In 1977 it had a population of about four million. The country was deeply divided between a tiny land-owning elite and the mass of landless poor. There was economic exploitation, social deprivation, and malnutrition in the countryside, on the coffee estates and sugar plantations. The whole system was kept in place through electoral fraud and wholesale repression. Killings, torture, disappearances, and political imprisonment were the routines of the military regime. The Church put itself alongside the poor in their struggle for basic rights and human dignity and suffered persecution too. Civil war was imminent.

Archbishop Romero had a deep and prayerful spiritual life and he loved the poor. He preached a message of social justice, non-violent change, peace, and reconciliation. Week by week from the pulpit Romero confronted the human rights violations, the political violence, the corrupt system of justice, the iniquitous land tenure system, and the suffering of El Salvador's poor. His sermons were legendary. He sought to make the Word of God come alive in the lives of the poor. He teased out all the meaning from the Gospel and applied it to contemporary El Salvador.

He pleaded to the right and the left for an end to the violence and killings. He urged dialogue. He demanded human rights for all. Bumper stickers appeared: 'Be a Patriot. Kill a priest'. Six priests were killed before Romero. But on 24 March 1980 he was shot dead as he celebrated mass in the hospital chapel where he lived. His funeral took place on Palm Sunday, thirty years ago. A twentieth-century martyr for the poor: a credible witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the twenty-first century.

The relic of Archbishop Romero, a piece of the blood-stained alb in which he was martyred, is displayed in a reliquary on the Altar.

Most of the church, with the exception of the North Transept, is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

Please ensure that mobile phones, cellular phones, and pagers are switched OFF.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The organ is played by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist

The marimba is played by Sam Wilson.

The Ambassador of El Salvador is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. All stand as the Ambassador is conducted to his place, and then sit.

The Lord Mayor Locum Tenens is received and conducted to his place. All stand.

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ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing to sing

THE HYMN



O Christ, the great foundation
on which your people stand
to preach your true salvation
in every age and land:
pour out your Holy Spirit
to make us strong and pure,
to keep the faith unbroken
as long as worlds endure.

Baptized in one confession,
one church in all the earth,
we bear our Lord's impression,
the sign of second birth:
one holy people gathered
in love beyond our own,
by grace we were invited,
by grace we make you known.

*Aurelia 167 NEH
Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-76)*

Where tyrants' hold is tightened,
where strong devour the weak,
where innocents are frightened,
the righteous fear to speak,
there let your church awaking
attack the powers of sin
and, all their ramparts breaking,
with you the victory win.

This is the moment glorious
when he who once was dead
shall lead his church victorious,
their champion and their head.
The Lord of all creation,
his heavenly kingdom brings
the final consummation,
the glory of all things.

*Timothy Tin Fang Lew (1891-1947)
translated by Frank W Price (1895-1947)
and Daniel T Niles (1908-1970)*

All remain standing for an excerpt from the homily preached by Archbishop Romero in the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Saviour, San Salvador, on the eve of his martyrdom:

I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army, and specifically to the ranks of the National Guard, the police, and the military. Brothers, you come from our own people. You are killing your own brother peasants when any human order to kill must be subordinate to the law of God which says, 'Thou shalt not kill'. No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. No one has to obey an immoral law. It is high time you recovered your consciences and obeyed your consciences rather than a sinful order. The church, the defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such an abomination. We want the government to face the fact that reforms are valueless if they are to be carried out at the cost of so much blood. In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression.

The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE BIDDING

All sit. Sandra Zamora reads in Spanish

PHILIPPIANS 3: 7-11

Lectura de la Carta del apóstol San Pablo a los Filipenses:

En esa época pensaba que todo eso era muy valioso, pero gracias a Cristo, ahora sé que eso no tiene ningún valor. Es más, creo que nada vale la pena comparado con el invaluable bien de conocer a Jesucristo, mi Señor. Por Cristo he abandonado todo lo que creía haber alcanzado. Ahora considero que todo aquello era basura con tal de lograr a Cristo. En él soy aprobado por Dios. No es que yo mismo me doy aprobación por lo que dice la ley, sino que Dios me aprueba por la fe en Cristo. La aprobación viene de Dios por la fe. Lo que quiero es conocer a Cristo y experimentar el poder de su resurrección. Quiero compartir con él sus sufrimientos. También quisiera ser como él en su muerte, y de alguna manera poder alcanzar la resurrección de los muertos.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Palabra de Dios.
Te alabamos, Señor.

The word of God.
We adore you, O Lord.

All stand. Sam Wilson plays

Mexican Dance No 2

Gordon Stout (b 1952)

This short and vibrant piece draws upon the marimba's traditional usage in Guatemalan bands, where it would play flowing and fast-moving roll passages. The gushing exuberance of this dance is contrasted with the folksong-esque melody heard in the centre of the piece, and the composer uses the whole range of the instrument.

The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, says:

The Lord be with you;
and also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

JOHN 12: 20–26

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’. Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

THE ADDRESS

by

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr Rowan Williams
*Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan
Patron, Archbishop Romero Trust*

All remain seated. Sam Wilson plays

Hombre d' Août

Eric Sammut (b 1968)

This calm work inspires the listener to reflection. The English title, Shadow of August, reveals thoughts on summers past, and includes both improvisatory solo lines and gently pulsing grooves. Archbishop Romero was born on 15 August 1917, and this piece looks both backward and forwards in hoping to create a universal stillness.

All kneel or remain seated. The Reverend Ralph Godsall, Minor Canon, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray.

Lord of all the world, open our hearts to your judgement, and grant us the grace of repentance for the intolerance and division that has caused martyrdom in the past; for the hostility to faith and the contempt for justice that your martyrs faithfully withstood; and for the violence and cruelty that causes the suffering and death of the innocent throughout the world.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The Right Reverend Michael Evans, Bishop of East Anglia, and Trustee, Archbishop Romero Trust:

We give thanks for the life and witness of Archbishop Romero; for his fearless championing of the poor and marginalized; for his tireless striving after social justice; for his steadfast courage in the face of every threat of persecution; and for the leadership and inspiration he gave to the church and to the people of El Salvador.

Lord, hear our prayer
and let our cry come unto you.

Clare Dixon, Secretary, Archbishop Romero Trust:

We pray for the nation of El Salvador; for their President Mauricio Funes, his Council of Ministers, and the Legislative Assembly; for an end to all that threatens the well-being and prosperity of its people; and for a society in which all ends are pursued by peaceful means.

Lord, hear our prayer
and let our cry come unto you.

The Reverend Vaughan Jones, United Reformed Church, Chief Executive, Praxis:

We pray for the children of El Salvador; for all who have been orphaned, abandoned, and made homeless, and for all who are at risk on the streets of its cities. We give thanks for those who work for their welfare, especially through the charity ACES (Aid for Children of El Salvador) and in the AMOR centre and safe house in San Salvador; and we pray for your blessing on their work in giving support to destitute children and their families.

Lord, hear our prayer
and let our cry come unto you.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Patron, Archbishop Romero Trust:

We pray for all who lead the church when it shares the anguish and suffering of the world; when it stands alongside the poor and downtrodden; and when it disturbs the peace that is not founded on justice. May the example of Oscar Romero help us to endure all suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ and to work for the coming of God's kingdom.

Lord, hear our prayer
and let our cry come unto you.

Jan Graffius, Conservator, Stonyhurst College, custodian of the relic of Archbishop Romero:

We remember with thanksgiving the witness of Oscar Romero and of all the Christian martyrs who have lived and died for the sake of the gospel down the ages. We commend to your gracious keeping the soul of your servant Oscar Romero, with all those who have remained steadfast in their faith at the cost of their lives.

Lord, hear our prayer
and let our cry come unto you.

The Reverend Dr Anthony Harvey, Canon Emeritus of Westminster:

Let us pray that the statues of the Christian martyrs set above the Great West Door may constantly remind all who enter this Abbey Church of those who have given, and continue to give, their lives as witnesses to Christ and to the Christian values of mercy, truth, justice, and peace. May God grant us and his whole Church the faith of her apostles, the hope of her martyrs, and the love of her Lord.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The Minor Canon concludes:

Lord of all humanity, you have given us in your servant Oscar Romero a faithful and zealous pastor, a fervent lover of your church, and in that church a lover above all of the poor and destitute; grant that we too may learn to shape our lives to conform with the gospel of your Son Jesus Christ, following the example of your servant Oscar and seeking justice for the poor of all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

In the unity that the Spirit gives let us say, each in our own language, the prayer that Jesus has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Padre nuestro, que estás en el Cielo, santificado sea tu nombre, venga a nosotros tu Reino, hágase tu voluntad en la Tierra como en el Cielo, danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día, y perdona nuestras ofensas, como también nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden, no nos dejes caer en la tentación, y líbranos del mal; Tuyo es el Reino, el Poder, y la Gloria por siempre. Amen.

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

*during which the Dean,
together with His Excellency Werner Romero, The Ambassador of El Salvador;
Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Patron, Archbishop Romero Trust;
and Julian Filochowski, Chair of the Archbishop Romero Trust,
moves through the Great West Door to stand beneath the statue of
Archbishop Romero.*



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.

Where power and terror stand in domination,
where greed dictates the values life can hold,
the young, the strong, who shape a better future,
into the jails of tyranny are hurled.
Their faith re-fires the cause of liberation,
their tears untie the weak throughout the world.

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.

Finlandia
Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Vaughan Jones (b.1949)

THE LAYING OF THE WREATH

Julian Filochowski reads a translation from an interview with Archbishop Romero:

If they kill me I will rise again in the people of El Salvador. I am not boasting, I say it with the greatest humility. I am bound, as a pastor, by a divine command to give my life for those whom I love, and that is all Salvadorans, even those who are going to kill me. If they manage to carry out their threats, from this moment I offer my blood for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador. Martyrdom is a grace from God which I do not believe I deserve. But if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, then may my blood be the seed of liberty, and a sign that hope will soon become a reality. May my death, if it is accepted by God, be for the liberation of my people, and as a witness of hope in what is to come. Can you tell them, if they succeed in killing me, that I pardon and bless those who do it? But I wish that they could realise that they are wasting their time. A bishop may die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never die.

The Dean says:

Almighty God, you call your martyrs from every nation under heaven. Through persecution and death their lives reveal your grace and power, your forgiveness and your glory. Make us unfailingly thankful for the witness of Oscar Romero that, strengthened by the blood of your holy martyr, our lives, broken and offered with his, may carry Christ's death and proclaim his resurrection in the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Julian Filochowski lays the Wreath under the statue of Archbishop Romero.

Silence is kept.

The Dean says:

Strengthened by God's grace, let us pray that we might benefit from the example of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

All:

**Almighty God,
by whose grace and power your holy martyr Oscar Romero
triumphed over suffering and was faithful unto death:
strengthen us with your grace,
that we may endure reproach and persecution
and faithfully bear witness to the name of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

All sing

THE HYMN



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 the 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—
within the vision of Christ who sets us free.

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,
vibrating love alive in every heart.
We'll shout for joy when all around are weeping,
chant hymns of strength when hearts are sinking down;
we'll lead and dance the resurrection story—
including all within the circles of our love.

Londonderry Air
Traditional Ulster Melody

June Boyce-Tillman (b.1943)

All remain standing. The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no-one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Music after the service:

Prelude & Fugue in B minor BWV 544

*Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)*

All remain standing as the Clergy move to the west end of the Nave.

All remain standing in their places until The Lord Mayor Tenens and His Excellency The Ambassador of El Salvador have been escorted to the west end of the Nave.

Those who wish to pray by the relic are invited to kneel at the Nave Altar rail.

There will be a retiring collection in aid of the work of ACES (Aid for Children of El Salvador).

THE STATUES ON THE WEST FRONT OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The view of the west front of Westminster Abbey is one of the most famous in the world. The lower gothic part was completed in the fifteenth century; the upper classically-influenced part was completed to designs of Nicholas Hawksmoor in the eighteenth century.

In 1992 six high-level niches were filled with conventional figures of saints associated with the Abbey. In 1995 four allegorical figures were placed in the lowest-level niches either side of the west door: truth and justice to the north, mercy and peace to the south. These are intimately connected with the statues of the twentieth-century martyrs as values for which countless innocent men and women have been prepared to give their lives.

The ten statues, unveiled in 1998, proclaim a message of which few are aware: that the twentieth century was truly a century of Christian martyrdom. The cost of Christian witness and the number of Christians willing to die for what they believed was greater in this century than in any other period in the history of the Church. The statues of individual martyrs are intended to represent all those who have died (and continue to die) in similar circumstances of oppression and persecution. Together they represent every continent, and draw together a wide diversity of the Christian Churches.

They include victims of the struggle for human rights in North and South America, of the Soviet and Nazi persecutions in Europe, of religious prejudice and dictatorial rule in Africa, of fanaticism in the Indian subcontinent, of the brutalities of the Second World War in Asia, and of the Cultural Revolution in China.

In these and other similar circumstances during the twentieth century thousands of men and women paid with their lives for their faith and their convictions. Those represented above the Great West Door have left their testimony to the ultimate cost of Christian witness and its enduring significance.

Models for the statues were carefully designed by Tim Crawley from such records and photographs as exist of each of the martyrs and the figures were carved from French Richemont limestone by him and, under his general direction, by Neil Simmons, John Roberts, and Andrew Tanser.

The maquette of the statue of Archbishop Romero is on display today at the west end of the Nave.