

# Romeronews

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## 99 Years!

### **Blessed Oscar Romero and the Many Faces of Mercy**

12.30pm, Saturday 13 August  
St George's Catholic Cathedral in Southwark

Bishop Patrick Lynch will celebrate a special Mass to mark the 99<sup>th</sup> birthday of Blessed Oscar Romero. It is the beginning of the centenary year celebrations which will continue through 2017.

Mass will be followed by refreshments in the nearby Amigo Hall and the showing of a rarely-seen Mexican film on Archbishop Romero's life (with subtitles) called 'El Cielo Abierto', meaning 'the open sky'.

### **All are welcome**

### **Please come and join us!**

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## **FOR YOUR DIARIES:**

**99<sup>th</sup> Birthday Mass:**

**13 August, 12:30,**

**St. George's Cathedral, Southwark**

**Romero Lecture Tour:**

**31 October to 4 November 2016**

**Centenary Pilgrimage:**

**13 to 24 November 2017**

## **PILGRIMAGE 2017 ROMERO'S CENTENARY**

We regret that for various reasons the planned pilgrimage to El Salvador for 2016 had to be postponed. Details, though, are now available for our pilgrimage in 2017 to celebrate the centenary year of Blessed Oscar Romero's birth. The dates are 13 to 24 November 2017 and the cost £1695. For further information, please contact Anthony Coles at [arctc@btinternet.com](mailto:arctc@btinternet.com) or by telephone on 020 7431 3414.

**ARCHBISHOP ROMERO MEMORIAL  
LECTURE TOUR 2016  
31 OCTOBER – 4 NOVEMBER  
‘RUTILIO, ROMERO AND POPE  
FRANCIS’  
SPEAKER: FR. RODOLFO  
CARDENAL, SJ**

**Rodolfo Cardenal SJ**

Fr Rodolfo Cardenal is a Central American Jesuit and Director of the Monseñor Romero Centre at the UCA, the Jesuit University in El Salvador. He is a surviving colleague of the six Jesuit martyrs killed on the UCA campus in 1989 at the height of El Salvador's civil war. He is a historian and has written the biography of his Jesuit colleague, Fr Rutilio Grande, assassinated in March 1977 and now on the road to beatification. Rodolfo chairs the History Commission which is documenting Rutilio's story for the beatification cause.

Fr. Cardenal will be the guest of the Archbishop Romero Trust in Britain from 31 October until 5 November 2016. He will speak about Fr Rutilio and the huge

impact his martyrdom had on Blessed Oscar Romero. The provisional title of his presentation is 'Rutilio, Romero and Pope Francis'.

Precise times are still to be confirmed, but Fr. Cardenal will speak on successive evenings as follows:-

**PLEASE NOTE THE DATES**

**PLYMOUTH**

Monday, 31 October 19:00 in the  
Catholic Cathedral, PL1 5HW

**LONDON**

Tuesday, 1 November, venue to be  
confirmed

**DURHAM**

Wednesday, 2 November, 17:30 in  
Durham University Centre for Catholic  
Studies

**GLASGOW**

Thursday, 3 November, 19:00 in St  
Aloysius College, GR3 6RJ

**PRESTON**

Friday, 4 November, St Wilfrid's Church,  
PR1 8BU

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

## THE VIOLENCE OF PEACEMAKING: COLOMBIA AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

*Father Francisco de Roux SJ, a Colombian Jesuit, was our Romero Week speaker this year. Since the 1980s he has been a leading voice for a negotiated settlement to Colombia's 50 years of armed conflict. He founded and directed for 15 years the Peace and Development Programme of Magdalena Medio, one of the most successful local peacemaking initiatives in Colombia. This article summarises a talk he gave in CAFOD. Since he gave this presentation, an agreement has finally been reached between the government and the FARC in late June. This article was recently published in the Jesuit journal Thinking Faith.*



Almost forty years ago, Archbishop Oscar Romero was rejected by the oligarchy, the military and even his fellow bishops in El Salvador. He was also a

sign of contradiction for the guerrillas and the extreme left wing organisations.

Our work has also led us to be seen as a sign of contradiction in Colombia, a country experiencing the longest internal armed conflict in the western hemisphere.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, we faced radical opposition when we were working with the poorest, the excluded and the victims in the Magdalena Medio region. We were often considered suspicious, dangerous, and unacceptable - by the paramilitaries, the military, the guerrillas or the local governments.

The Magdalena Medio region, based around the oil town of Barrancabermeja, is known chiefly for the violence that has accompanied the battle between guerrillas and paramilitaries for control of this strategic region, rich in natural resources.

Our purpose was to accompany regional communities in a programme of development and peace in the middle of the conflict. During this time, paramilitaries assassinated 24 members

of our team, and the guerrillas killed three of our companions.

I remember the day we found Alma Rosa Jaramillo, a courageous woman from our team, an audacious lawyer who was working to support displaced small-scale farmers. First she was kidnapped by the National Liberation Army (ELN) and I spent seven days negotiating with the guerrillas for her release. Then she was captured by the paramilitaries. When we managed to recover Alma Rosa, she was lying in the mud, dead; they had cut off her arms and legs with a chainsaw.

Nevertheless, we kept looking for peace in the Magdalena Medio. Talking with the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the army. Trying to demonstrate that there was a way to work together, if we took the risk of opening ourselves up to human dignity, present in each and every one of us.

Dignity is the profound experience that we all share: that we matter as persons, as families, as people. The dignity we have seen in women and men in the countryside who refuse to be displaced, to lose their leaders, to be kidnapped –

those who stood unarmed facing those who had the power and the guns.



*Peace candles in Colombia.*

And there, in the Magdalena Medio region, when we were surrounded by violent groups, we discovered that there is no safety in weapons. That the only true and sustainable protection comes through trusting people. And that to win trust we have to go through a long process of dialogue and mutual acceptance, and unprecedented individual and social changes, in the midst of uncertainties.

Today, we write another chapter in my country. Colombia is about to sign a



peace agreement between the government and the FARC guerrilla. It will hopefully bring an end to over fifty years of terror and victimisation. Half a century of war that has caused seven million people - women, children, teenagers, men – to be displaced from the countryside.

Urban and especially rural communities are desperate and exhausted by the war.

**But peace means division.** Because of political interests our president campaigned for his election with the slogan “I am the peace and my political opponents are the war”, and this slogan has divided the country. The former president, Alvaro Uribe, is leader of the opposition, and he seems not willing to accept a peace agreement if he himself is not the author of it. There are also economic interests involved in the prolongation of the war. The military, the cocaine barons, and an important group of the ruling class, see their economic power threatened with the end of the armed conflict.

I have the sad foreboding that, when we conclude a peace agreement and a

bilateral ceasefire in Havana, Cuba, there will be celebrations in the Vatican and in many countries that have supported our peace negotiations. But that in Colombia an announcement would see fighting in the streets.

### **A peace agreement is only the beginning**



We know that we have to keep going, to continue, to insist, in the struggle for peace and reconciliation; we have the continuing support of UK aid agency CAFOD and the energy of plenty of women and men who have made a stand for peace. We will see a period where empowered communities will stand up for their rights against the intransigence of the powerful right-wing politicians, business people, landowners, mafia barons, paramilitaries and entrepreneurs of devastating mining companies.

Signing a peace agreement will not be the most difficult moment. It will be only the beginning of an extremely challenging process of peacebuilding, which if we are to have sustainable peace, obliges us to enter into a complex and demanding transformation in Colombia.

## RUTILIO AND ROMERO

*Expectation grows for beatification of Fr. Rutilio Grande, friend and inspiration of Mons. Romero. Julian Filochowski explains who he was, and the profound link between him and Blessed Oscar Romero.*

The Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande, along with his two companions, 72-year-old Manuel Solórzano and 15-year-old Nelson Lemus, was murdered by a death squad on the Saturday afternoon of 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1977. He was driving his battered Volkswagen Safari from his parish church in Aguilares along the dusty road between fields of sugar cane on his way to say Mass in the outlying village of El Paisnal.

It happened three weeks after Oscar Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador. Rutilio was Romero's friend - “I

*think of him like a brother”*, Romero said at his funeral. As soon as he heard of the assassination, Romero drove to the church in Aguilares where the three bodies were laid out with blood still seeping from Rutilio's body. He was shocked and sickened and he prayed over his body for some hours. It became a pivotal moment in Romero's own development.

*“When I looked at Rutilio lying there dead, I thought: if they killed him for doing what he did, then I too have to walk the same path.”*

He saw in his mind's eye where it would take him and he said ‘yes’. A process of change going on inside Romero was crystallised in Rutilio's killing. Archbishop Rivera y Damas, Romero's successor as archbishop, certainly believed that Rutilio's death was a key moment in Romero's transformation.

*“One martyr gave life to another martyr. Before the dead body of Father Rutilio Grande, Monseñor Romero, in his twentieth day as archbishop, felt the call from Christ to overcome his natural timidity and to be filled with apostolic*

*courage. From that moment on, he left behind the pagan lands of Tyre and Sidon and marched boldly towards Jerusalem."*

This is why Rutilio has frequently been described as Romero's 'John the Baptist', or his precursor. Happily, today Rutilio Grande and his two companions are on the fast track to beatification.



*Memorial to Rutilio Grande and his companions Manuel Solórzano and Nelson Lemus*

Rutilio Grande was born in July 1928 in that same Salvadoran village of El Paisnal. He was ordained a Jesuit priest

in July 1959 and was assigned to teach in Jesuit schools and at the national seminary. This is where he found himself in 1967 when Romero became Secretary of the Bishops' Conference and came to live at the seminary. But Romero was an isolated figure withdrawing himself from the community there. Romero was entering a new phase of life; he had a nervous disposition and for a while showed traits of obsessive compulsive disorder. Rutilio too had suffered more than one bout of stress-induced depression and scrupulosity. He befriended Romero and regularly sat with him. Perhaps they recognized the vulnerability in one another, two of a kind, 'cut from the same cloth'. As the late Dean Brackley commented *"For all of us neurotics, Romero and especially Rutilio are a genuine inspiration!"*

Although Romero at that time disagreed with some of Rutilio's ideas about pastoral renewal and social change there was a profound underlying respect and genuine friendship. It is not surprising therefore that Rutilio was master of ceremonies at Romero's consecration as auxiliary bishop in 1970.





*Rutilio Grande, far right, Blessed Oscar Romero, far left, at Romero's episcopal ordination.*

By 1972 Rutilio was heading up a team of priests and pastoral workers in the rural town of Aguilaes. It was the epicenter of the conflicts in El Salvador between exploited landless peasants and the owners of the great coffee and sugar estates alongside the security forces. Rutilio is well described as 'a servant leader' with a radical approach to his ministry as 'pastoral liberation'. Inspired by the work of the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Grande strove to be a non-paternalistic, non-clericalist pastor. He and his team integrated social analysis into formation programmes for the base communities and tried to sow the seeds of a Vatican II and Medellin Church situated alongside the poor.

In fostering base Christian communities and in empowering catechists and

'delegates of the Word' a process of education and awareness-raising took place which led the landless communities to begin to demand their most fundamental rights instead of submitting to hunger and exploitation. Repression intensified as a new Church, a community of communities that openly promoted social and economic justice, began to emerge and grow up in Aguilaes. Rutilio became a courageous defender and advocate for his suffering communities, insisting that no one had the right to the superfluous while so many were deprived of the essentials.



*Rutilio Grande's possessions and portrait on display at the UCA museum in the Monseñor Romero Centre*

In his work with exploited *campesinos* there was inevitably tension between evangelization and politicisation. Having jettisoned disincarnate sacramentalism, desperate activism was a new temptation. Rutilio emphasized that

individual conversion of heart and working together as communities to tackle structures of injustice were both crucial. And as he put it to his team, *"We come to put leaven in the dough, not to give them a plan"*. Rutilio's ministry in the parish of Aguilares was what the "preferential option for the poor" called for by the bishops at Medellín looked like in practice. And there were many people, inside and outside the Church, who didn't like what they saw. Rutilio was vilified but he did not cower in front of the repression.



*Mural in El Paisnal*

Rutilio preached boldly in the very same style that Romero came to personify. They called him a guerrilla but he was nothing more than a highly sensitive, skilled and committed pastor - a paradigmatic example of the missionary disciple that Pope Francis sets out in *Evangelii Gaudium* as the model for a

Christian in the Church today. Just three weeks before his assassination, at a huge Mass in Apopa, following the expulsion from the country of Colombian priest Mario Bernal, he said:

*"I'm afraid, my brothers and sisters that very soon the Bible and the Gospel will not be able to enter our borders. We will only get the covers, because all its pages are subversive ... I fear that if Jesus of Nazareth returned, as in times of old ... down from Chalatenango to San Salvador ... they would surely crucify him again."*

In the early 1970s, as Fr Jorge Bergoglio SJ, Pope Francis had met Rutilio Grande and had been greatly impressed by him. Since Rutilio was one of the first Jesuits to be killed because of his wholehearted embrace of the Jesuits' newly articulated (GC32) commitment to the service of faith inseparable from the pursuit of justice, it is not surprising that Rutilio's murder had a huge impact on him.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the Promoter of Romero's Cause for canonization declared *"One cannot understand Romero without Rutilio"*. In

the wake of Romero's beatification Pope Francis was heard to say, "*Next comes Rutilio.*" In a recent audience conversation, he said "*the miracle of Rutilio is Romero*".

There is a growing expectation that Blessed Oscar Romero will be canonised in 2017, either in Rome or in San Salvador; let's hope in the very same ceremony Rutilio Grande and his companions will be beatified as Pope Francis seems to desire – and all in time for the celebration of the centenary of Romero's birth on August 15<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Oremus.**

Two books are available in English on Rutilio Grande both written by Thomas Kelly and published by Liturgical Press and available from bookshops or online: the biography 'When the Gospel Grows Feet' (ISBN 978-08146-8077-3) and a collection of Rutilio's homilies and writings 'Rutilio Grande SJ' (ISBN 978-0-8146-8773-4).

## **BLESSED OSCAR ROMERO'S RELICS - AN UPDATE**

*Jan Graffius has been advising the UCA, the Archdiocese of San Salvador and the Carmelite Sisters at the Divine Providence Hospital on the preservation of relics and artefacts of the UCA martyrs and Blessed Oscar Romero. This is her latest update.*

At the emotional and beautiful mass of beatification in May 2015, a precious relic of Monseñor Romero was carried in state to the altar. The glass and gilded bronze reliquary was borne on the shoulders of eight stalwart seminarians, and contained Monseñor's bloodstained grey shirt with a single bullet hole over the heart. The shirt had been brought from the Divine Providence cancer hospital, where the Sisters care for his house and its contents.

My task was to prepare the shirt and install it in the reliquary. This was not a straightforward task, however, as the shirt had to be folded and placed on an angled display board so that the faithful could see it clearly. The careful process of folding the shirt, so as not to damage the fragile, blood-soaked fabric, took

several anxious hours, in temperatures exceeding 30°C and humidity in excess of 90%. The task involved the use of acid-free tissue and unbleached linen tape. Never have I felt the weight of responsibility so keenly. The shirt would be on display for the world to see, and I had to ensure that it was mounted safely and securely inside the reliquary. (See Jan's report in [Romero News July 2015](#).)



*Jan working on the presentation of Blessed Romero's shirt in time for the Beatification.*

Following the mass, the shirt was briefly taken around the dioceses in El Salvador, bringing the tangible witness of Monseñor's sacrifice to his people. Joyous dancing and singing greeted the reliquary wherever it went. After the tour, the shirt was put on display in Romero's own cathedral in San Salvador, where it

was venerated by thousands of devout pilgrims from all over the world. But the tour had taken a toll on the fragile shirt, and I was invited back in November last year to carry out further conservation. I unpicked the linen tapes, inserted a clerical collar into the neck of the shirt to provide much needed support, and gently padded the shirt with more tissue, but it was clear that the folded shirt would suffer if left too long in the reliquary. The Romero Trust advised the archdiocese that the shirt would be best served by being returned to the Hospital of Divine Providence, where it could hang on the specially padded support I originally made for it back in 2009. So, after a suitable period of display and veneration in the Cathedral, the shirt was returned to the faithful, loving and professional care of the Sisters, and can be seen today hanging next to Romero's bloodsoaked alb and chasuble, with the chalice which was present on the altar when he was murdered, and other relics of that terrible day.

My second task was to conserve a grim reminder of Romero's sacrifice; a piece of his rib, removed at the post-mortem and entrusted to Monseñor's younger



brother, Don Gaspar Romero. In the thirty and more years since his martyrdom, the bone had deteriorated into a mass of crumbled powder. On my advice, Don Gaspar allowed the bone to dry out, and I separated it into two small crystal reliquaries. One was retained by Don Gaspar's family, the other he generously donated to the Sisters at the Hospital of Divine Providence.



*Gaspar Romero, left, and Jon Sobrino SJ, right, with the relic of Romero's rib.*

The process was fully recorded, signed and approved by a canon lawyer, and the reliquary was handed over to the Sisters in November 2015. It was a deeply emotional day for us all. Monseñor Romero's relic was returning to his home, to the place where he spent his last years, writing, praying, working, and within yards of the chapel where he was martyred. The Sisters had created a space for the relic, let into the floor in the room which served as his office, bedroom and private space for prayer. A glass tile sealed the relic, lit by discreet LED conservation lighting. Jon Sobrino, a close friend of Oscar Romero and of the Jesuit Martyrs of the UCA, celebrated Mass to mark the coming home of Monseñor's relic.

### **ROMERO'S SECOND MARTYRDOM**

Blessed Oscar Romero's martyrdom is often compared with that of St Thomas á Becket killed in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170 on the orders of King Henry II. In lectures in May 2016 to welcome to Britain relics of Becket from Hungary there was a reminder that he suffered a 'second martyrdom' in the Reformation



period. His shrine was destroyed in 1538, during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, on orders from King Henry VIII. The king also destroyed Becket's bones and ordered that all mention of his name be obliterated.

In a speech to pilgrims from El Salvador in October 2015, Pope Francis reminded us that Blessed Oscar Romero suffered a second martyrdom too. Many have tried to airbrush this out of the story of Romero's road to beatification. But such amnesia is dishonest. Pope Francis spoke out because he recognised this – and, unsurprisingly, his words shocked a good number of his listeners!

"...I would also like to add something that perhaps has escaped us. Archbishop Romero's martyrdom did not occur precisely at the moment of his death; it was a martyrdom of witness, of previous suffering, of previous persecution, until his death. But also afterwards because, after he died – I was a young priest and I witnessed this – he was defamed, slandered, soiled, that is, his

martyrdom continued even by his brothers in the priesthood and in the episcopate. I am not speaking from hearsay; I heard those things. In other words, it is nice to see him like this: as a man who continues to be a martyr. I think that now they would no longer say such things. However, after giving his life, he continued to give it, allowing himself to be scourged by all of that misunderstanding and slander. This gives me strength, God only knows. Only God knows the history of people and how many times people who have already given their life, or who have died, continue to be scourged with the hardest stone that exists in the world: the tongue...."

**A LANDMARK PASTORAL LETTER  
IN THE STYLE OF ARCHBISHOP  
ROMERO**

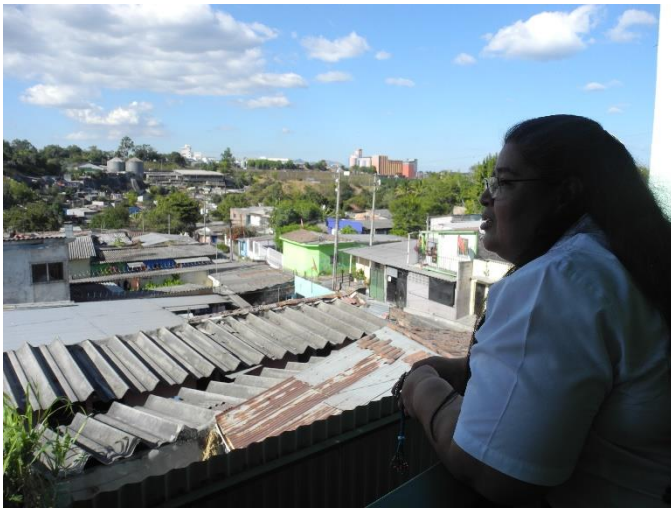
*El Salvador remains enveloped in seemingly unending murderous violence which the government is unable to control. During the first three months of 2016 there was roughly one homicide per*

*hour. Gang violence and extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members have turned El Salvador into the 'murder capital of the world'. In this context San Salvador's archbishop, José Luis Escobar Alas, has written a Pastoral Letter in the style of Archbishop Romero reflecting in depth on the issues at the heart of the violence. Here we offer an abridged version of an article by José Maria Tojeira from the Jesuit University (UCA) in San Salvador which summarises the Pastoral Letter. The article in full can be read in Spanish in Carta a las Iglesias (Jan – Feb 2016 edition).*

On 24 March 2016, the archbishop of San Salvador issued a Pastoral Letter with the title, “**I See Violence and Discord in the City**”. In the context of the terrible violence that we are suffering, the Pastoral Letter is based on a clear-sightedness of the situation and the culture underpinning it, as well as a serious analysis of the structural problems in El Salvador that are causing the violence. It provides an historic summary of a focus on violence throughout the Bible, particularly centred on the figure of Jesus, who through his love and sacrifice gives us true peace. Finally, it proposes a series of recommendations to help us to escape our paralysis. For those who would like

an analysis and reflection on violence from the perspective of Christian faith, this Pastoral Letter is a magnificent summary, and helps us to find the paths to building peace.

The Letter puts social exclusion first amongst the causes of the violence, which for us is “synonymous with extreme inequality”. Together with Pope Francis, the archbishop invites us to say, “No to an economy of exclusion and inequality”, for a very simple reason: “This economy kills”. We see today, repeatedly, scandals of ill use of money whilst others remain in poverty. Tax evasion by the richest through businesses based in tax havens has been revealed in the Panama Papers. Alliances between politicians and capital suspected to belong to organised crime are a disgrace. Minimum wages make some people poor and favour others. Social exclusion, without doubt, joined as it is to inequality, is an important structural cause of the current violence.



*Sister Cruz lives and works in a marginalised area on the outskirts of San Salvador that is deeply affected by social violence and gangs.*

Idolatry of money is closely linked to exclusion. The archbishop is clear when he says that, “in a Christian and poor country like ours, there cannot be an economy of waste that forgets the principal duty of meeting the basic needs of our poorest brothers and sisters”. He presses for a “solidarity economy” in contrast with the series of defenders of tax evasion who have recently appeared defending the capital flows through artificial businesses in tax havens.

A closed, self-referencing individualism that takes priority over our neighbour, particularly the marginalised neighbour living in poverty, is another of the causes that the Pastoral Letter highlights. Taking up the message of the Latin American bishops in Aparecida, the

Letter tells us that, “affirmation of individual and subjective rights, without a similar effort to guarantee social and cultural rights and rights based on solidarity, endangers the dignity of everyone, especially the poorest and most vulnerable”. An inability to defend social rights is perhaps the backdrop to the fourth cause of violence put forward by the archbishop: impunity. On this, the Pastoral Letter states in no uncertain terms, “El Salvador cannot continue to prop up a judicial system that shelters impunity. This has to end if there is a real desire to heal the wounds of the past”. Referring to the present, our archbishop demands an end to impunity. And with reference to the past he asks for, “historic cases” to be judged, not so much to condemn the dead or their descendants, but to “vindicate the victims and to know their aggressors, so that others do not feel encouraged to commit those injustices over again”.



*A mural in the area where Sister Cruz works calls for Peace, Harmony, Freedom.*

In its final exhortation, the Letter calls upon a series of social groups and professions - advising them directly on the task of building peace. To politicians and those in government positions, he says, “look out always for the common good and the wellbeing of the large majority”, and “design policies that develop conditions of social wellbeing so people are not tempted to turn to violence”. To those who are economically powerful, he insists that they must promote, “an economy rooted more in solidarity”, that they should, “create more jobs”, and that, “food, health, housing, education, recreation, pensions, amongst other necessities, are provided to a decent standard through a wage that meets current needs.” He asks pardon of indigenous peoples for the “treatment of exclusion” that so often

we have given them, despite the teachings on love for the earth and nature and “relationships of living together in solidarity that are prevalent in their culture”. It is enormously important that we read this Pastoral Letter. Above all it should be seen as a cry of hope, deeply linked to the teachings of Archbishop Romero. It is essential reading in the current context and the suffering of so many men, women and children who are victims of the various kinds of violence that exist.

*By kind agreement of Super Martyrio, a full [English translation](#) of the Pastoral Letter is available to download at [www.romerotrusted.org.uk](http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk).*

*The Super Martyrio blog also offers another analysis:*

*<http://polycarpi.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/a-romeroesque-pastoral-letter.html?m=1>*

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR A RE-ENERGISED RADIO**

*Journalist Mark Dowd writes about the revival of a community radio station in rural El Salvador.*

I was half way through my university studies in political science when Blessed



Oscar Romero was murdered in March 1980. Ever since then, he has been my “fig leaf” – for whenever sceptics berate me about clergy abuse, financial scandals in the Vatican and a myriad of other thorny issues that dog my allegiance to Catholicism, I play the Romero card. “That,” I tell them, “is true service to the Gospel. That is the standard of self-giving to which we are all called.”

Two years ago, I moved back to my native Manchester. Free of full time media demands, I had more time on my hands than before and was speaking one day to Julian Filochowski, Romero Trust’s Chair, about how I wanted “to do more.” Within a few weeks, he had received a reply to an email from a remote part of northern El Salvador called Arcatao. The Jesuit parish priest, Father Miguel Vasquez, had told Julian that locals were trying to resurrect a defunct radio station, Radio Farabundo Marti. It had broadcast during the civil war in the 1980s and had been repeatedly bombed by the armed forces – but still it kept going, *Voz de Historia Viva*...“the voice of living history” was their motto. They needed someone to

organise training, programme ideas, and logistical support with equipment. I had been in TV and radio media for more than twenty five years. I spoke Spanish fluently. It seemed a match made in heaven.



*Radio Station Farabundo Marti*

So in November 2014 off I went. First I spent several days in San Salvador, joining in the memorial celebrations for the Jesuit martyrs and workers at the UCA (University of Central America) and making a BBC World Service programme on “Romero: A Saint for the Americas.” Then it was off to remote Arcatao. In two months we climbed hills with mules, cement bags and the proverbial kitchen sink. We installed a mountain-top depot armed with solar panels and a new transmitter. We overhauled all the technical equipment and paid for an expert trainer from Guatemala to come



and share his wisdom. So Radio Farabundo Marti now has a full time director and transmits every day of the week. Community programming is being extended to include tips on health, agricultural practices and a weekly “pause for thought” reflection from Padre Miguel. Moreover, it is now installed on a web platform which means it has a dedicated following among the Salvadorean diaspora in Canada, the USA and many European countries ([www.arcataodigital.org](http://www.arcataodigital.org))

Romero, of course, was a great believer in the power of the microphone. Radio YSAX, Romero’s diocesan radio, like Farabundo Marti, was also attacked by the forces of darkness, but his voice was and is, irrepressible. In Arcatao, this small radio outlet is now broadcasting to more than 50,000 people in the Department of Chalatenango. There are also ambitious plans to extend solar energy to the whole area if the support of the Vatican and NGOs can be secured. I would hope, one day, to see the Saint Oscar Romero Solar Park opened in Arcatao – a fitting outward sacramental sign of the inward grace that is bestowed

on all of us by a man who was a true servant of the Gospel.



*Installing solar panels on the depot*

### **ARCATAO: FROM VICTIMS TO SURVIVORS; FROM MEMORY TO HISTORY**

*Professor Jenny Pearce teaches at Bradford University in the Department for Peace Studies. In the 1980s she and photographer Mike Goldwater visited El Salvador to document the struggle of campesino communities in north east Chalatenango. They captured the efforts of the people of Arcatao to self-govern in a context of brutal repression. Some thirty years later they returned to support the work of the community to document their experiences and to share back the photos and testimonies they collected at the time. There is a film by Richard Duffy (in Spanish) of the people of Arcatao looking back over their history: [“El pasado no es historia”](https://vimeo.com/133053653)*

<https://vimeo.com/133053653>



I first visited Arcatao in 1984, in the midst of El Salvador's twelve-year civil war. Most of the townspeople had fled and signs of war and devastation were everywhere. Arcatao was the birthplace of Maria Chichilco. Photographer Mike Goldwater and I lived with Maria in the village of Tamarindo, as we recorded through photographs and oral histories the reasons why the peasants of Arcatao and the neighbouring villages of the north east Chalatenango region had come to support a guerrilla insurgency.

Maria was President of the sub-regional government of Chalatenango. The peasants had organised their own Local Popular Power (PPL), a form of self-government and peasant self-defence. The army had determined that all the civilians in the area were the sea which enabled the fish (the guerrillas) to swim, and had to be 'drained' – a strategy involving massacre and bombardment. The population was forced to flee army

invasions and many died. Yet, many people chose to remain to build what they called a 'real power' for those denied every basic right to livelihood and life itself. Archbishop Romero was their guiding spirit, his understanding of their struggle giving them courage and resilience. I wrote a book documenting the history of this peasant movement (Promised Land, London: Latin America Bureau, 1985). It was never published in Spanish, and although I returned to visit Maria and my other friends from Chalatenango, I always felt that somehow our photos and the oral history I had documented should be returned to them.



*Maria Chichilco*

Recently, the people of Arcatao decided to build a museum of historical memory. They set up a Committee of Survivors' Memory, because they did not want to be

seen as victims, and they invited me to be a member. Together, we worked on how we could use Mike's photographs to stimulate a discussion about memories and how these memories could become a part of their country's history. Whilst the guerrilla organisation became the political party FMLN after the Peace Accord of 1992, and was elected to power in the 2009 elections, the peasants of Chalatenango were seen as either victims or the 'base' of the guerillas, rather than actors in the country's history who also contributed extraordinary resistance to the army of the oligarchy through their efforts to run their own local government and their organisational capacities as refugees and returnees. In the midst of daily bombardment they had held literacy classes and developed health provision for the civilian population who remained in the guerrilla-controlled area. Archbishop Rivera y Damas was invited by one of the peasants (I knew him as Evaristo) to see the conditions of the civilian population, a meeting which took place, I believe, in Arcatao.

The Committee, Mike and I, with the support of CAFOD, held three

conversations in Arcatao, Las Flores and Las Vueltas in August 2014 to reflect on the activity of the peasants during the war, focusing particularly on the brief period of Local Popular Power 1983-85.



*Evaristo on the left, studying Jenny Pearce's book Promised Land*

Mike's photographs were the focus and stimulus for the conversations and it was extraordinary to see people respond to them. This was a record they had not expected to have of a period of great trauma and loss in their lives. Much pain still hangs over the communities of this part of Chalatenango. Bodies of loved ones tortured and killed in the war are only now being dug up. However, the memories evoked went beyond the pain to the importance of their history as a peasant movement, of the hardships they had to overcome, of how, reluctantly and despite their deep faith, they had come to accept that there was no option



other than active support for the guerrillas. This led them to take on tasks that they never imagined possible for illiterate people looked down upon by their society as ignorant and worthless. Their struggle became a means for discovery of their human dignity.

These conversations were only one of many efforts by the peasants themselves to make sense of those war years. They have not only constructed their simple Museum, but are also building a mausoleum for the victims of the war, whose bodies are being exhumed. Nicolás, one of the people behind this effort and son of Evaristo, says, “Every human being, deserves to be remembered, particularly those who gave their lives for such a just struggle”.

## **JUSTICE DELAYED – JUSTICE DENIED?**

*Clare Dixon reports on recent developments in the pursuit of justice for the UCA martyrs.*

The long-running efforts by the Spanish courts to bring justice in the case of the murder of the six Jesuit priests, along

with their housekeeper and her daughter, in 1989, may be coming to a head. This year has seen the re-opening of the legal battle to prosecute the assassins of the UCA martyrs.



*Mural commemorating the UCA martyrs.*

The human rights lawyer who has led this case, Almudena Bernabéu, produced an important new piece of evidence. Former Salvadorean president Alfredo Cristiani, who held office at the time of the assassinations, gave a recorded interview where he acknowledged the responsibility of the Salvadorean military officers in the killings. The interview was given to novelist Jorge Galán who was researching a novel based on the events. In his interview he asked Cristiani about the masterminds of the Jesuit massacre, and Cristiani confirmed with the names of the military officials. In

November 2015 when Galan's book, was published, he faced threats and was forced to flee the country.

In early February, at the request of the Spanish national court, the Salvadorean police and Interpol agents unleashed an operation to arrest 17 former members of the Salvadorean armed forces as suspects in the 1989 killings. This operation took place just after the US Judge Kimberly Swank, announced that a key player in the UCA events, former Colonel Orlando Montano, in detention in the United States since April 2015, would be extradited to Spain for his role in the assassination plot. Five of the six murdered Jesuits were Spanish-born. In February 2016 the El Salvador authorities arrested 4 of the 17 military officers for whom the Spanish court issued arrest warrants: Guillermo Alfredo Benavides, Tomás Zarpate Castillo, Antonio Ramiro Ávalos Vargas and Ángel Pérez Vásquez. To date, the other named officers have not been located and detained. The officers arrested have petitioned El Salvador's Supreme Court to release them and reject the extradition request from Spain. The members of the Supreme Court are divided. Initially the court seemed

prepared to deny extradition because some of the officers had already been tried in El Salvador and others are protected by an amnesty law passed after the civil war. Yet on 16 June a further legal petition was presented to the Court which has delayed a final resolution. 26 years of efforts may still bear fruit.

## BREAKING NEWS

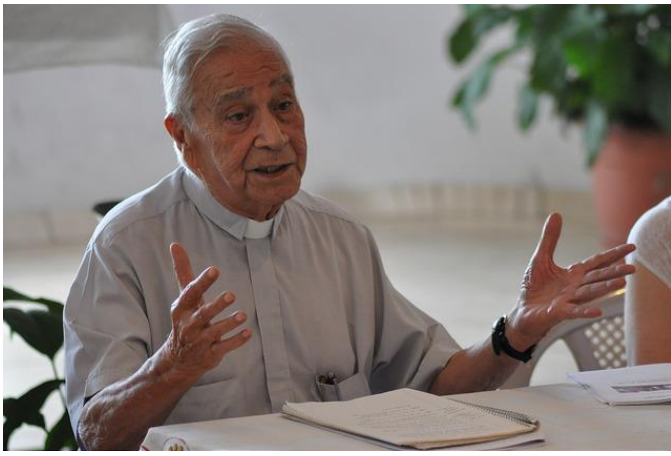
On Wednesday 13 July 2016, El Salvador's Supreme Court declared the 1993 amnesty law unconstitutional, thereby opening the way for possible prosecution of crimes against humanity, such as the assassinations of Blessed Oscar Romero and the UCA martyrs. Read more at Super Martyrio: <http://polycarpi.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/at-last-justice-for-romero.html>

### MONS. URIOSTE

#### MY PROFESSION OF FAITH

*In 2002 Mons. Urioste received a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the Jesuit Central American University UCA. In his acceptance speech, he shared his personal credo.*





*Mons. Urioste speaking to Romero Trust pilgrims in 2013*

I believe in God, the God of love, the Lord of scripture, creator of the universe and creator of man and woman, who heard the cries of his people and liberated them from domination to be a free people, united in God. I believe in God Almighty and I believe in the all-loving and gracious God.

I believe in God who came to liberate the people from slavery, and I believe in God who comes today to continue his work of liberation among so many oppressed people in our country and in the whole world.

I believe in God who chose Abraham as father of all believers, who called Moses to guide the people to freedom, and who continues to call new 'Moses' figures to liberate his people.

I believe in God who invited us, through the prophets, to live a new life and revealed to us that his plan for salvation does not include unjust structures that attack and discriminate. In short, I believe in God who constantly asks us, where is your brother?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God, made man in Mary's womb, Mother of God and our mother too. I believe in the radical mystery of our faith, the incarnation through which Jesus became like us in every way except for sin, and by becoming man he suffered poverty, derision and injustice, inviting us to become incarnate in the suffering of the poor and marginalised.

I believe in Jesus Christ who became man to save us and whose ultimate sacrifice on the cross brought us redemption, which we experience in our lives every day and every time we celebrate at the altar his sacrifice on the cross.

I believe in Jesus Christ who was born poor, and lived a poor life, so becoming close to all the poor of the world.

I believe in Jesus Christ who in his first public speech in Nazareth told us why he had come into the world: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.” (Luke 4:18-19)

I believe that scripture was fulfilled in Him that day. I believe that the poor continue to be the priority for Jesus today and should be our priority also.

I believe that Jesus still seeks to liberate captives from all evil rooted in sin. I believe that Jesus came to bring freedom to those oppressed by mankind, by injustice, by all evil and sin.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who upon seeing the crowd, gave us the first rule of the kingdom he came to establish: “Blessed are the poor because theirs is the kingdom of God” (Luke 5:20).

I believe in Jesus Christ who confirmed that He was the long-awaited Messiah

when he told the Baptist, “the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin-diseases are made clean, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor,” (Luke 7:22). This is the sign that the Church must use to show that Christ is in the world, and that will make the Church credible. By this sign Jesus shows us that the time of the Messiah has come.

I believe in Jesus Christ who said, “I am the good shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for his sheep” (John 10:11). I believe that the pastor identifies with Christ through his daily willingness to die for those in need, like Archbishop Romero who thirty days before his death wrote, “Jesus helped the martyrs, and if it is necessary I will feel him very close to me as I give my last breath for him. But dedicating one’s life to him and living for him is worth far more than death”. (Notes from a retreat, 25 February 1980).

I believe in Jesus Christ who said, “Nobody will take my life, unless I give it”, but who was condemned to death by the official representatives of religion, crucified by the Roman empire, in

Palestine, and resurrected by God, as proof that God is on his side and against the powers who condemned him.

I believe in Jesus Christ who said, "He who wants to walk with me, should take up his cross and follow me." Preaching today about Jesus Christ and his cross, implies also committing oneself to the construction of a world where love, peace, justice, solidarity, openness and commitment to God are not difficult. It involves denouncing situations that foster hatred and division. By accepting the cross of this struggle we are carrying a cross as our Lord did. I believe that carrying the cross with Jesus means expressing solidarity with the crucified of this world: those who suffer violence and poverty and who feel dehumanised and deprived of their rights and dignity as human beings.



I believe in Jesus Christ who told us, through Mark, that, "the right time has come, and the kingdom of

God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News," (Mark 1:15). I believe that the coming of the kingdom is good news for the poor; news that their situation will change at its very roots, not by making poor people rich but by bringing about a new society where solidarity, or shared happiness, is possible, sitting at a common table with our brothers and sisters.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, by whose work Jesus was made man in Mary's womb, and who left his Church the core mandate to be like Him, by becoming one with the pain and anxiety of suffering people. I believe that it is not the Church of Jesus Christ if it does not seek assiduously to become incarnate with suffering men and women.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who took Jesus to the desert to be tempted. With the Spirit he rejected the evil spirit that encouraged him to abandon his mission. In this way, he set his Church the example of always staying faithful to its mission, rejecting the temptations of power, prestige and privilege.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, in whose authority we believe, over earthly riches or power.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who came to the Apostles at Pentecost and who comes to every one of us, who is source of life and youth, and guide for his Church on the path of complete truth, a truth without which we cannot be free. I believe he invites each one of us to create a new world, where God is Father to us all, and we all live as brothers and sisters.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who teaches us to live in the Spirit that gives life to people in their wholeness – body and soul.



I believe in Paul the Apostle who says, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3, 17). I believe

the Holy Spirit is freedom, freedom to love, freedom to pray, freedom to reflect and decide, and that, according to the Vatican Council, the people of God, “is characterised by the dignity and freedom of the children of God in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells, as in a temple.” (Lumen Gentium, 4)

I believe in the Church, which I love passionately, because she is not created by this Earth, but by the Trinity, and there is no greater love than the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is love and love must be the founding principle of the Church.

I believe in the Church which, like Jesus, must love its people, be in solidarity with the people and make the ultimate sacrifice for the people. I do not believe in a cold, indifferent, distant Church untouched by the pain of the people.

I believe in the Church that shares the grace of God through its words and its sacraments, and that sees not only souls in need of redemption, but bodies too.

I believe in the Church incarnate which, like Jesus, draws near to the people in

order to save them, “because it has heard the cry of the people, and responded to that cry”. I do not believe in a Church that does not see, hear or feel. I believe in the merciful and tender Church, attentive to the least amongst us. I believe that everyone, without exception, is its child, but that there are those amongst us who merit extra love and care: the poor, the sick and anyone in need at any time.

I believe in the Church which, like Jesus, becomes like the people, as an essential condition of its mission, and which knows how to share their pain and sorrows and seeks to free them from oppressive sin.



I believe in the Church that, “is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the “Church of the poor,” as

John Paul II expresses in *Laborem Exercens*. For this reason, I do not believe in a Church that is not committed to the poor and that does not consider its mission and service to be among them, thereby contradicting the Gospel and contradicting the supreme Shepherd.

I believe in the Church that appraises the world around in order to carry out its mission: “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men and women ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other,” (GS, 4). I believe in the Church that constantly assesses the signs of the times as they affect the human person, trying to see the action of the Spirit in them.

I believe in the Church that, “does not place her trust in the privileges offered by civil authority. She will even give up the exercise of certain rights which have been legitimately acquired, if it becomes clear that their use will cast doubt on the sincerity of her witness” (GS 76). I do not



believe in a Church that looks to money or civil authority to strengthen it, forgetting about the poor and free Jesus.

Finally, I believe that the least amongst us and the poor determine our way to Heaven, as Jesus states in Matthew, "Come you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you...I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25, 34-36)

I believe that it is a truth of divine faith that He is present in the poor and least amongst us, as he tells us, "whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me." (Matthew 25, 45)

This is my simple theology, my profession of faith...

***Mons. Ricardo Urioste***

***18 September 1925 – 15 January 2016***

***Rest in peace.***

## BOOK OFFERS AND POSTCARDS

*All these resources may be ordered from [romerotrust@gmail.com](mailto:romerotrust@gmail.com)*

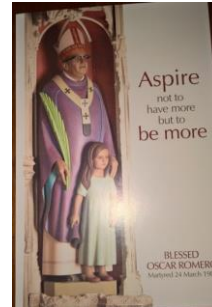
***Or by post:***

*Archbishop Romero Trust*

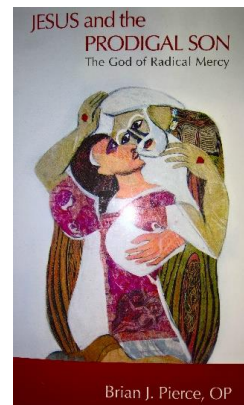
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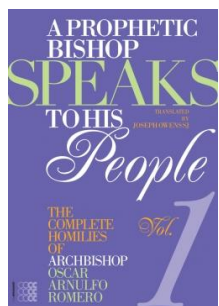


**Postcards from St. Albans Cathedral for sale:** 6 for £3 (including postage)



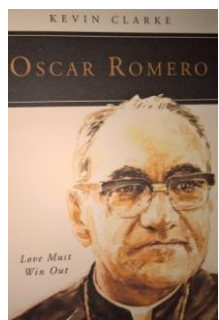
**NEW: Jesus and the Prodigal Son: The God of Radical Mercy** by Brian Pierce OP. In this imaginative and moving work, Brian Pierce OP, Romero Trust guest

speaker in March 2015, brings a startling perspective to the familiar story of the Prodigal Son. Starting with the words of the father, "This son of mine was dead and is alive again," Fr. Brian imagines the parable as a commentary on the story of Jesus himself. £11 (incl. p&p)



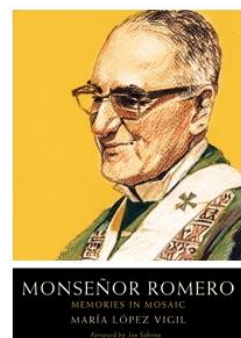
## A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People: The Complete Homilies of Oscar Arnulfo Romero,

Volumes 1-4 now available, £18 each incl. p&p. Volumes 5 and 6 should be available later this year. Readers encounter Romero the way ordinary Salvadorans did—through his sermons, which are brought to a startling new level of clarity and precision. This new set of translations, elegant and mellifluous, is a reference set that no Romero student can do without.



## Oscar Romero – Love Must Win Out by Kevin Clarke, published by Liturgical Press, on sale at £7.95. **Available from the**

**Trust for £7 (incl. p&p).** An excellent and very readable short introduction to the life of Archbishop Romero.



## Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic £15 (incl. p&p) Romero remembered by the people who knew him.

OSCAR ROMERO

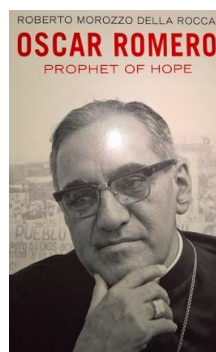
and  
The Communion of Saints



SCOTT WRIGHT

## Oscar Romero and the Communion of the Saints (£12 incl. p&p) A special joy of this biography are the many rarely-seen photographs

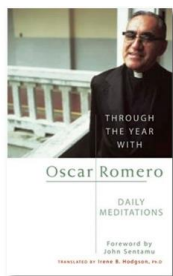
taken by Octavio Durán, a Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer.



## Oscar Romero - Prophet of Hope by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca published by DLT in Britain on sale at £9.99.

**Available from the Trust for £8 including p&p.**

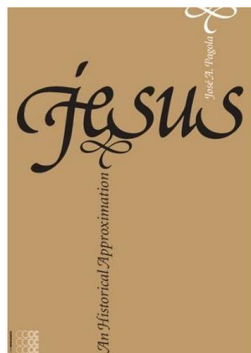
This is a comprehensive biography written by one of the authors of the documentation that secured Archbishop Romero's beatification. It's a full treatment but in presenting Romero for sainthood he downplays his respect for Jon Sobrino and other liberation theologians. Well worth reading.



## Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations £8 (incl. p&p)

Powerful and moving selections from Blessed

Romero's broadcast homilies.



## Jesus, an Historical Approximation

£24 (incl. p&p) from the Romero Trust. Also available in bookshops for £34

Author Mons José Antonio Pagola presents a lively and passionate narrative of Jesus, addressing basic questions about who he was, the originality of his message and how the vision of the Kingdom of God centred his life. A profound theological reflection about Jesus.

*"At my age, I no longer read many books, but I read Pagola's from cover to cover. It has helped me grow in age, wisdom and grace. I recommend it to many people, Christians and non-believers. Monseñor Romero would have quoted from it in his Sunday homilies." Jon Sobrino SJ*

## FRIENDS OF ROMERO

Thank you for your ongoing support as Friends of Romero. There are around 500 *Friends of Romero* who belong to our solidarity network. Your donations help produce the Romero News newsletter and to put on events such as Romero Week and the Romero lecture.

The Carmelite Sisters are celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cancer hospital. We are trying to raise extra funds to assist it. It is the place where Archbishop Romero lived and died. If you would like to make a contribution please mark your donation 'For the cancer hospital'.

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*Mark Dowd:* pages 18, 19 (solar panels on radio installation)

*Richard Duffy:* page 20 (El Pasado no es Historia film)

*Professor Jenny Pearce:* pages 20, 21

*Julian Filochowski:* page 13

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# Archbishop Romero Centenary



## Romero and the Many Faces of Mercy

### 99th Birthday Mass

celebrating the life and martyrdom of  
Blessed Oscar Romero in the Jubilee Year of Mercy



**Saturday August 13th at 12.30 in St George's Cathedral,  
Southwark, London SE1 7HY**

**Celebrant: Bishop Pat Lynch**

Refreshments in the Amigo Hall afterwards and a showing of  
the subtitled Romero film 'El Cielo Abierto' or 'The Open Sky'.

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**The Archbishop  
Romero Trust**

**CAFOD**  
Just One World



**missio**

**PAX  
CHRISTI**

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