

Romeronews

Issue 20: July 2017

Registered Charity no. 1110069

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, OSCAR ROMERO!



JOIN US FOR TWO CELEBRATIONS

DETAILS INSIDE

ALL ARE WELCOME

www.romerotrue.org.uk

Archbishop Romero Trust

Romero Centenary Mass

Celebrating 100 years since the birth of Blessed Oscar Romero
1917-2017



**Saturday August 12th at 12.30 in St George's Cathedral,
Southwark, London SE1 7HY**

Principal Celebrant: **Archbishop Peter Smith**
Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, Postulator of Romero's Cause in Rome,
will give the homily.

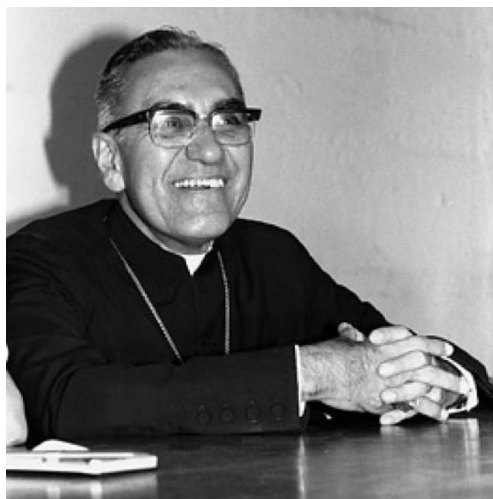
Refreshments and a toast in the Amigo Hall afterwards.

ALL ARE WELCOME



contact: romerotrust@gmail.com website: www.romerotrust.org.uk

Archbishop Romero Trust registered charity no. 1110069



Archbishop Romero Centenary 1917 - 2017

Celebrating one hundred years of Blessed Oscar Romero

The Archbishop
Romero Trust

Special Evensong

National Ecumenical Celebration of the Birth of Blessed Oscar Romero

Westminster Abbey

Saturday 23 September 15:00

“The Hope That Inspires Christians”

The theme, taken from Romero’s final words, will be “The Hope that Inspires Christians. The Address will be given by Lord Rowan Williams. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop Peter Smith and the Ambassador of El Salvador will also take part.

Evensong will include chosen readings and music reflecting this special centenary, and the premiere of a special Romero Anthem composed by James MacMillan.

Please book your tickets online through Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/evensong-to-commemorate-the-centenary-of-the-birth-of-blessed-oscar-romero-tickets-35349736012>

Or use this short link: goo.gl/BXAvnF

ALL ARE WELCOME

This event is sponsored by The Archbishop Romero Trust, Churches Together in England, Christian Aid and CAFOD

IN THIS ISSUE

Remembering Blessed Oscar Romero's
100 Years

Canonisation Watch

The Secret of Romero: Passion for God
and Compassion for the Poor

New Film Review

Romero's Glasses – a Poem

Justice and Impunity in El Salvador

El Salvador's First Cardinal

El Salvador focus for CAFOD Harvest
Fast Day

New Books

Book Offers

Friends of Romero

Romero on Social Media

New Llort Romero Mural

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

100th Birthday Mass

12 August 12:30

St. George's Cathedral Southwark

Ecumenical Celebration of the Centenary of Blessed Oscar Romero

23 September 15:00

Westminster Abbey

PLEASE BOOK ONLINE

Romero Pilgrimage 2017

13 – 25 November

Archbishop Romero Lecture

30 November 17:00

Speaker: Fr Gustavo Gutierrez OP, the
father of Liberation Theology

Las Casas Institute, Blackfriars, Oxford

PLEASE BOOK ONLINE:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/celebrating-a-martyr-why-oscar-romero-matters-fr-gustavo-gutierrez-op-tickets-35929453964>

Or quicker to type in, but takes you to
the same Eventbrite page:

<https://tinyurl.com/yc8jhjz2>

Remembering Blessed Oscar Romero's 100 Years

Julian Filochowski looks ahead to two big Romero celebrations in London in August and September. See the Dates for Your Diary for full details. Please come along!



This Romero Centenary Year is a time to remember and to cherish the life, ministry and martyrdom of a valiant and prophetic contemporary pastor. As we wait confidently for the announcement of his canonisation, Archbishop Romero remains a riveting inspiration for Christians in the 21st century, especially for those striving to become genuine missionary disciples, in the way that Pope Francis propounds, with

compassion and mercy as our watchwords. Romero is a very special icon for the Ignatian family, striving to live ever more authentically that commitment, made over 40 years ago, to *"...the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another."* Oscar Romero gave his life in unequivocal obedience to that same mandate.

Key Moments

Romero was born on the Feast of the Assumption, **August 15th 1917**, in the small town of Ciudad Barrios in El Salvador – the deeply Catholic country in Central America named after Christ the Saviour.

In 1977, Romero became metropolitan archbishop of the capital city, San Salvador. Three years after his appointment, on **March 24th 1980**, as he celebrated Mass, he was assassinated at the altar by a death squad linked to the security forces.

Two years ago, on **May 23rd 2015**, he was beatified, acclaimed as a martyr of

the Church, killed out of hatred of the faith – shockingly, killed by people describing themselves as Catholics and Christians.

Oscar Romero's ministry as archbishop was a paradigm example of a faith that does justice. He remained close to the poor, and became their fearless advocate. In his preaching and teaching, he opened up the scriptures and presented them as truly Good News to the Christian communities, in the midst of poverty and oppression. Each Sunday he recounted the bad news of the week - he listed the atrocities committed, named the victims and the perpetrators and sought redress; and he criticised the grotesque accumulation of wealth by landowners whilst peasant families went hungry. To the disgust of the oligarchy, Romero turned into the voice of the voiceless poor.

With every fibre of his being, Romero sought to prevent the civil war that was looming. He denounced both the repressive violence of the security forces and the assassinations carried out by leftist guerrillas. He demanded economic

and social justice as the indispensable basis for a durable peace in El Salvador.

Preaching on the eve of his murder, Romero tackled the thorny question of what ordinary soldiers should do when ordered to kill and massacre.

“.... Before an order to kill that a man may give, God's law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God.... It is time to obey your consciences rather than the orders of sin. In the name of God, therefore and in the name of this suffering people, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression.”

He had pronounced his own death sentence. The next day, with a single marksman's bullet, Archbishop Romero was taken from us.

Soon afterwards, Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga wrote a beautiful poem with the closing line:

***San Romero of America, our
shepherd and martyr: nobody will
silence your last homily!***

Romero Evensong – Book your ticket

On Saturday 23 September, that declaration of Dom Pedro will be underlined in Westminster Abbey at a Special Evensong to celebrate Romero's Centenary. The Service will include the choir singing an anthem, commissioned for the occasion from composer James MacMillan, which draws on those closing words of the last homily, intermingled with verses from Psalm 31. Cardinal Nichols will take part and the former archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will preach. Westminster Abbey placed a statue of Archbishop Romero over the West Door back in 1998, a testimony to the esteem in which the Anglican Communion holds Oscar Romero. It constituted, if you like, a beautiful Anglican 'canonisation' at a time when Romero's Cause was paralysed in Rome.

All our readers and 'Friends of Romero' are warmly invited to attend the Abbey Service. We hope to see many of you there for this National Ecumenical Celebration of Blessed Oscar. Please book on Eventbrite: Use this link: [goo.gl/BXAvnF](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/evensong-to-commemorate-the-centenary-of-the-birth-of-blessed-oscar-romero-tickets-35349736012). It will take you to: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/evensong-to-commemorate-the-centenary-of-the-birth-of-blessed-oscar-romero-tickets-35349736012>

New Commemorative Art

The Liverpool archdiocese has already marked the Centenary by placing in the Metropolitan Cathedral a bust of Archbishop Romero by the sculptor, Rory Young.



He crafted the seven coloured stone statues of modern martyrs, including Romero, that stand in the nave screen of St Alban's Anglican Cathedral. A second casting of the Liverpool bust has been placed in the chapel of the cancer hospital in San Salvador, the site of Romero's martyrdom.

Close by that hospital chapel, opposite the little bungalow where Romero lived, with the assistance of Jesuit Missions and the British Carmelites, a new wall has been built with a mosaic mural, 'Romero goes out to his people'. Based on Luke 4:18, this was commissioned from the renowned Salvadorean artist, Fernando Llort, who also designed the Cross at the shrine to Romero in Southwark's Catholic Cathedral. Llort describes the meaning of the symbols.



Monseñor Romero calls out with open arms to all those who suffer, the forgotten. His saintly halo is the sun with its twelve rays: the twelve apostles united with Jesus. The white dove at his right side represents the Holy Spirit, the Creator Spirit. Above his left arm is the symbol of God the Father, with twelve small dwellings that represent the People of God, and the Community. Below Monseñor Romero's right hand is a small girl who has lost her feet through amputation and there is a sick woman

lying down. Below his left hand is a man, a campesino, also in poor health and also lying down. The Bible is there, the Word of God, which Archbishop Romero both preached and lived. Above the campesino there is a maize plant. It is the most important staple food of our daily diet. There is also a pitcher, a symbol of the water of eternal life, and a coffee branch, symbolising our culture. We see too volcanoes and mountains from our land of El Salvador. Beneath the mountains, we find a village with its church. On the church door, we see the initials: O.R. for Oscar Romero.

(We have included this mural and explanation on the endpage of this newsletter)

Centenary Mass – All Welcome

On Saturday 12 August, just before Romero's 100th birthday, there will be a Centenary Mass in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, celebrated by Archbishop Peter Smith. The Postulator of Romero's Canonisation Cause, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, will travel from Rome to preach. During the Mass, a new hymn, 'God You Raise Up True Disciples', specially commissioned for the Centenary from composer Chris

Olding, will be sung. The words of the hymn are an inspiring remembrance of Archbishop Romero's ministry for any parish event. Here are the first and last verses.

*God, you raise up true disciples,
teachers, martyrs deep in faith.*

*Like Romero, holy people, giving
witness to your grace.*

*Let us listen to their voices, speaking of
new ways to live.*

*By their words and by their actions, we
may know the love you give.*

*Brought together by your Spirit, one in
you, our risen Lord,
now you send us as your chosen, hearts
emboldened, hope restored.*

*Like Romero, we will serve you and
whatever may befall,
we'll devote ourselves to justice and the
common good of all.*

The hymn is available on the Romero Trust website:

<http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Romero%20Hymn%20Study%20Edition.pdf>

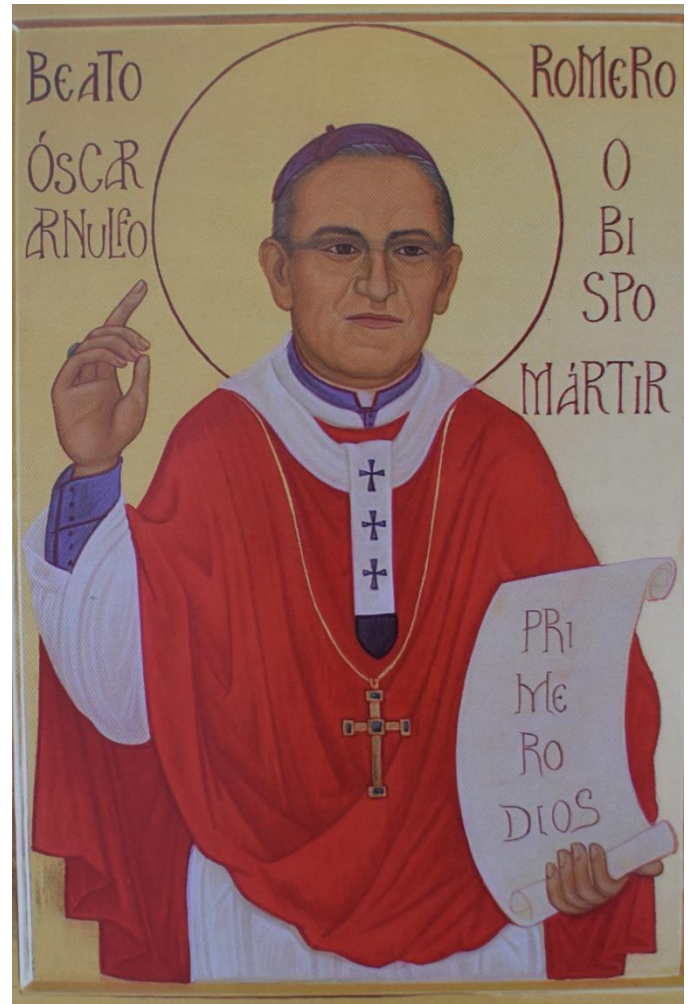
Listen to the tune on

<https://soundcloud.com/wheatsheafmusic/god-you-raise-up-true-disciples>.

**Blessed Oscar Romero, defender of
the poor, Pray for Us.**

CANONISATION WATCH

*The latest insights on the cause for
canonisation...*



There is every indication that the canonisation process that will take Blessed Oscar Romero forward to Sainthood is moving forward smoothly in Rome. It is running in parallel with the rather straightforward beatification process for Romero's friend, Rutilio Grande, the martyred Jesuit priest. At this stage, however, nobody - whether

they be in San Salvador or in Rome - knows when those processes will be completed. Anyone who says otherwise is not to be believed.

Pope Francis has quite evidently made the Romero canonisation a priority for his pontificate. The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, the Vatican department overseeing the process, is well aware of this and seems committed to move with the same alacrity that characterised the progress on Pope John Paul II's and Mother Teresa's canonisations. Within this compact, Pope Francis is clearly determined to follow the regular canonical processes without any overt interference on his own part. Indeed, in March, he reportedly scolded the Salvadoran Bishops during their *'ad limina'* visit, telling them that they must have patience and 'respect the rhythms of the Holy See'.



Julian Filochowski presents Pope Francis with Romero's homilies.

The single requirement for Romero's canonisation is a verified miracle. A diocesan tribunal set up in San Salvador, questioned witnesses and carefully examined the medical documentation surrounding the inexplicable cure of a pregnant woman, who, according to Archbishop Paglia, the Postulator of Romero's Cause, was in danger of death together with the child she was carrying. This is now put forward as the possible miracle. The Salvadoran tribunal's positive findings reached Rome early in March 2017. The Vatican Congregation opened its examination of the paperwork on March 24th, the anniversary of Romero's 1980 martyrdom.

It is a complex process; and from a panel of seven medical experts who will examine the potential miracle and discuss and probe the materials from San Salvador, once they have been translated from Spanish into Italian, five must concur that it was an inexplicable cure. The 'Relator' in the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints will then prepare a new 'Positio' document focused simply on the cure. Provided the theologians' panel at the Congregation is satisfied that this cure was linked to

prayers for the intercession of Blessed Oscar Romero, it will be passed to Pope Francis, via the Cardinal members of this Congregation, as a miraculous cure meriting canonisation. This process in an ordinary case, with no problems or difficulties, can take 12 to 18 months. However, given that Romero's Cause is moving along in what might be called 'the fast lane' there could well be an announcement in the last months of 2017 or early in 2018 – with canonisation following two or three months later. Canonisation in 2017 now appears highly unlikely and the exaggerated expectations in El Salvador that Pope Francis would travel there in August to canonise Romero as part of the centenary celebrations have come to nought.

Fr Rutilio Grande has been presented for beatification together with his two lay companions, Manuel Solorzano and Nelson Lemus, assassinated as they travelled together in Rutilio's VW shooting-brake to celebrate Mass in an outlying village. The Vatican has sought more details of their backgrounds; but there are apparently no obstacles on the road to their beatification. It is widely

anticipated that Rutilio's beatification and Romero's canonisation will take place in the same ceremony, increasingly likely to be in Rome, at which Pope Francis would preside.

Today there is little doubt that the canonisation will happen; but there is no knowing for sure when. The first quarter of 2018 would seem a plausible guess – but it is no more than that, a guess!



ROMERO WEEK 2017

THE SECRET OF ROMERO: PASSION FOR GOD AND COMPASSION FOR THE POOR



*Sister **Martha Zechmeister CJ**, pictured with Julian Filochowski on the left and Bishop Peter Brignall on the right, was our Romero Week speaker this centenary year. Here we share the address she gave at the ecumenical service on 25 March. You can read her fuller talk on the Romero Trust website: <http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/ARTMarthaZechmeisterMarch2017.pdf>*

“Over these ruins of ours the glory of the Lord will shine” Archbishop Oscar Romero spoke these words in his cathedral in San Salvador on the Feast

of the Epiphany in 1979. It was in the midst of a desperate situation, prior to the outbreak of the civil war: people were being sacrificed on the altar of wealth, they were being cut down in their struggle for a life of dignity and they were exposed to cruel and barbaric violence. They were expelled from their homes and their land, living in a nightmare of torture, of overnight escapes and separation from their loved ones. Romero describes the atmosphere of his home country at that moment without any illusions, using the words of Isaiah: “there are only ruins here, there is nothing more than pessimism, a tremendous sense of frustration.” What the prophet was saying about Jerusalem, Romero is applying to the situation of El Salvador. He continues in his own words, “our human strength can do no more... we are stuck in a dead-end alley ... Politics and diplomacy achieve nothing here, everything is destruction and disaster, and to deny it is madness.” I think many of us here are beginning to feel the same way with respect to our actual global situation: we are stunned by the interminable vicious circle of war and violence in the Middle-East and in other conflictive zones of our world. The tentacles of terror are

reaching out to the capitals of Europe. (We are shocked by the attack in the heart of London: 5 dead and over 40 injured. And this atrocity was carried out exactly on the first anniversary of the Brussels killings when people were mourning those victims). There are more than 60 million refugees worldwide, driven from their homelands by violence, hunger, poverty and climate change - and the “First World” seems to be riven with the fear of being overcrowded by the migrants and becoming ever more vulnerable. In consequence Europe is seeking to convert itself into a fortress constructed against “these invaders”. But as we know there are also still more marginalized and excluded people in the midst of the rich “developed nations”, who feel themselves betrayed by the political establishment. And finally we are confronted with the seemingly unstoppable rise of irresponsible populists and nationalists all over the world. It seems that our world is getting a little bit out of control, that it is falling apart – and we are in danger of being overwhelmed and paralyzed by fear and anxiety. Here and now we are sharing with the people of El Salvador the awful experience that our world is in a great

mess and that we are stumped - and that sometimes we are tempted to despair.

Exactly into this situation come those prophetic words of Oscar Romero: “Over these ruins of ours the glory of the Lord will shine. That is the great mission that Christians have at this critical moment: keeping hope alive.” But - if actually we face up to the crude facts, what is it in the end that can justify our persistent confidence? What can strengthen our tenacity to pin all our hopes on God and on the “transcendent salvation” that Romero evokes? As an attempt to answer that, I will offer you my experience with El Salvador and with Archbishop Oscar Romero.

El Salvador and Oscar Romero taught me what it truly means to be a Christian. Romero became really meaningful to me through an experience I had in “La Chacra”, a slum area in the suburbs of San Salvador. It was during the all-night vigil celebrated on 24 March 1999, the anniversary of Romero’s assassination. On that night one family after another described, in front of the whole assembly, how their relatives and friends had disappeared and had been

tortured and murdered during the years of the civil war. The martyrs of El Salvador were truly present there to testify to resurrection and as witnesses not only to God, who does not allow these victims to vanish in death, but also as witnesses to a life that takes the risk of 'making a stand against death' here in this place and now in this time. That was a night of many tears and great distress, yet it also brought us into the 'real presence' of radiant humanity and the authentic experience that Romero's death was a source of life for us. A source of life that helps us to resist despair and can give staying power – perseverance - to our hope. El Salvador, with its martyrs who sealed the Gospel with their blood, became for me a "Holy Land". It became for me a privileged place where I was confronted with the drama of Jesus in a frighteningly current way - and it was the first time in my life I understood what it truly means to be a Christian. It's not sophisticated, it's very simple: Christians are those people who follow Jesus, and who do what he did. They risk their own lives by taking sides - without any ifs or buts – alongside the vulnerable, those in danger and those excluded. But in spite of the simplicity of

this message, we all know that we are unable to cope with this essential challenge of the Gospel. When it really happens, it is not our merit, it is not the result of our ethical efforts – it is the unexpected irruption of God's grace and mercy. With Archbishop Romero, God's grace irrupted into the midst of the cruel reality of El Salvador. So, the theologian, Ignacio Ellacuria, far from reciting pious platitudes, declared at the moment of the assassination of Romero: "With Archbishop Romero, God passed through El Salvador".

Romero: a source of Christian hope and joy

Yes, Oscar Romero is a true incarnation of God's mercy and love in that historic moment; he is a "sacrament of Jesus Christ", the real presence of the whole drama of the life of Jesus. His assassination confronts us with the cross of Jesus – as a consequence of his Jesus-like way of living. Therefore, Romero's life and Romero's death – like the life and death of Jesus – become an unfailing source of Christian hope and joy. Living this core of the Christian life with such integrity, Romero also had a very clear view of what is the essence of

the Church and what has to be her mission. The Church, as the community of those who follow Jesus, has to make the Gospel present, here and now, as a liberating and redeeming reality in the midst of whatever is oppressing and enslaving people. In the words of Romero himself: “A Church that does not join the poor in order to speak out on behalf of the poor and against the injustices committed against them, is not the true Church of Jesus Christ... The voice of the Church has always been the voice of the Gospel - it can be nothing else. Many times this Gospel touches the open wounds of society and it is natural that it should sting and cause pain.”



A Fernando Llort Romero cross, recalling the cross in St. George's Cathedral in Southwark.

As he took up this vocation Oscar Romero was transformed into one of Christianity's outstanding prophets. He himself defines what it means to be a prophet: “The prophet is the watchman who keeps vigil. When God tells the evildoers to be converted, the prophet has to sound the trumpet of God and tell the evildoers to repent. ...” As a bishop, Romero considered himself as the guardian of his brothers and sisters, called to protect and defend them. Certainly it was a highly risky task to sound the trumpet, to bring to public light, that evildoers were threatening and damaging the lives of his people, motivated by greed or other egocentric interests. Romero by his natural temperament wasn't a “trumpet”; in fact he was a calm, peaceful and shy man. But he accepted the hazardous burden of confronting the oppressors with their crimes. And most of them had the benefit of great wealth or high office with political or military power behind them. Even so he encouraged his priests, his fellow pastoral workers – and every one of us to take this risk: “Do not be false in your service to this ministry. It is very easy to be servants of the word without disturbing the world: a very spiritualized

word, a word without any commitment to history, a word that can sound in any part of the world because it belongs to no part of the world. A word like that creates no problems, starts no conflicts.”

Following Romero and the martyrs we become fully alive

Remembering Archbishop Romero, remembering the martyrs, and celebrating them, is a dangerous thing to do. It obliges us, like them, to let ourselves be touched in our innermost being, by the anguish that the victims of exclusion, discrimination and impoverishment suffer today. It obliges us to risk what seems like self-destructive insanity: in Bonhoeffer’s words, to throw ourselves, with all of our existence, against those systems that crush and exclude the vulnerable.

To remember the body and blood of the martyrs, among them, the proto-martyr Jesus of Nazareth, does not allow for any kind of diluted celebration. It either draws us into following those martyrs, or the celebration is a lie, and carries within itself “its own judgment” - as Corinthians tells us. To be faithful to the legacy of the martyrs of El Salvador, we are obliged to

practice a patient exercise of contemplation, of paying close attention to the situation in which the crucified people live today. If we do it well, it will hurt. Only from such pain can a new pastoral word and action be born, pastoral action that is effective and hope-giving. In an audacious and courageous way, Romero identifies the cross of Jesus Christ with the horror that the people lived through in his time. They were exposed to violence, cruelty, and humiliation. He affirms the inseparable connection, between the crucified people and the crucified Christ. They are one single flesh and cannot be separated. When we Europeans are speaking about martyrs we are always in danger of provoking depression and feelings of guilt. This is not the Gospel and it is not Oscar Romero! However paradoxical it may seem, the most vulnerable, the marginalized people of El Salvador and the poor all over the world, can teach us, what it means to celebrate the martyrs. To follow in their footsteps is not forcing ourselves into some kind of moral and ascetic performance, but rather something that enables us to become more human and fully alive. Following in their footsteps we become liberated from

our paralysis and depression and we are empowered to joyful action. ‘Whoever loses his or her life . . . will gain it.’

Hope as a divine virtue

Christian hope is not the starry-eyed confidence that somehow everything will go well – it is not the pious variant of “positive thinking”, the self-centered autosuggestion that: “nothing bad will happen to me”. Christian hope is far more radical, it does not trivialize these forces that have the power to bring suffering and to destroy the lives of others. The meaning of Christian hope reveals itself only as we face the victims. If there is no hope for them, then certainly there is no hope for us. Christian hope is the vigour of the heart, capable of resisting and rejecting the imposition of the “law of the strongest” as the inevitable “law of nature”. Hope is stubborn enough not to accept, that the victims are the inevitable collateral damage of human history. Our God is the solemn promise that the evildoers of this world WILL NOT HAVE THE LAST WORD. This confidence, that GOD will have the last word, transformed the shy man of El Salvador into a courageous prophet. With him the saving and life-giving love of God passed

through El Salvador, and was present amongst us.

Blessed Oscar Romero, servant of God, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, friend of the poor, voice of the voiceless – Pray for us.

FILM REVIEW: *ARCHBISHOP ROMERO, HIS PEOPLE AND POPE FRANCIS*

Ellen Teague reviews a new film of Romero.

A quarter of a million people attended the beatification ceremony in El Salvador for Archbishop Oscar Romero on 23 May 2015. A huge crowd chanted songs and carried banners, as a procession moved from the cathedral where Archbishop Romero's tomb lies in the crypt, to Salvador del Mundo (Saviour of the World) Square in the centre of San Salvador, where Vatican envoy Cardinal Angelo Amato presided over the beatification ceremony. These were the opening images in a new film about Romero, subtitled ‘Archbishop Romero, his people and Pope Francis’, which had its first UK viewing in London on

Saturday 1 July. It will probably be entitled 'Making Amends' in its English version, suggesting that Romero is finally being recognised as a martyr, after Pope Francis declared two years ago that he was killed "in hatred of the faith" and not, as some contended, for political reasons.

Beatification has been the penultimate step before Archbishop Romero is declared a saint. He was shot dead by a sniper as he celebrated Mass in a hospital chapel in San Salvador on the evening of 24 March 1980. The film contained much new footage of Romero, particularly of the last three years of his life when he challenged the violence going on in El Salvador. He regularly visited poor communities and affirmed young people who were growing up amidst poverty and repression. There was spontaneous clapping as he walked among people, standing close to them and entering their houses. A real love between Romero and the Salvadorean people was evident.

"The Church is trying to give them a little hope" Romero said.

His homilies in these years were a dynamic challenge to the military-backed government, especially since they were

broadcast nationwide by radio. When the US-backed Salvadorean army was using death squads and torture to silence leftist movements demanding change, he was not afraid to speak out in his weekly sermons. "The law of God which says thou shalt not kill must come before any human order to kill; it is high time you recovered your conscience," he said in his last homily in 1980, calling on the National Guard and police to stop the violence. "I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression." That sermon, interpreted as calling for insubordination, cost him his life. A day later, while saying Mass, he was shot through the heart by a single bullet.

The film records those who knew him well, giving insight into his character. Monseñor Ricardo Urioste, who died last year, told us that when Romero was chosen as archbishop he did not attend his swearing in. "I thought he was not a good choice for archbishop" he said "and that he was appointed to control the priests who were interested in Medellín", a reference to the 1968 meeting of the Conference of Latin American Bishops which stated that the Church should make a "preferential option for the poor"

and tackle “the institutionalised violence of poverty”. Theologian Jon Sobrino reported on the change evident in Romero just a month after his appointment, following the murder of his friend, the Jesuit priest Rutilio Grande, on 12 March 1977. “He was shocked at what was happening to poor people, catechists and priests, and was outraged at the bumper stickers put out by the military, ‘Be a patriot, kill a priest’”.

But Romero’s adversaries were not just in the military and the affluent families who controlled El Salvador.

His focus on social justice, condemning the concentration of power and wealth in El Salvador, and speaking out against structural violence attracted criticism from his fellow bishops who complained to Rome that he had Marxist leanings. Roberto Cuellar, a lawyer who was hired by Romero to run a free-legal assistance office in San Salvador, reported on Romero’s sadness when his fellow bishops laughed in his face “like hyenas”, and he was so upset he asked Romero’s permission to leave the meeting. And when Romero travelled to Rome in 1979 to show the documentation about the victims of repression to Pope John Paul II, the latter told him “you should not have

come to Rome with so many documents”. In a difficult meeting, the pope expressed concern that the priests killed were linked to the guerrillas and that Romero was not making enough effort to get along with the Salvadorean government. Romero not only continued his challenge but wrote a letter to President Jimmy Carter begging the United States to stop sending weapons to the Salvadorean military which were used to repress the people.



Pope John Paul II clearly had a change of heart when he visited El Salvador in 1983 and 1996 and both times asked to visit Romero’s tomb and pray before it. And thereafter gave his full support to his beatification. Unfortunately, many senior officials in the Curia did not.

Archbishop Romero comes across as a brave man whom the Church can rightly

be proud of for his defence of the poor, and his call for justice and peace. Was he ever fearful that he too would die a violent death? The film contains an interview where he says: "I am mildly fearful, but not in a paralysing way that affects my work". He was one of about 70,000 people who died during El Salvador's Civil War, in which a UN report records that approximately 85% of all killings of civilians were committed by the Salvadorean armed forces and death squads.

We also learnt things that were new to me - that he consulted widely before delivering his explosive sermons and spent the final morning of his life on a trip to the beach with some of his priests and a packed lunch!

A popular saint

Several conservative Latin American cardinals in the Vatican had blocked his beatification for years because they were concerned his death was prompted more by his politics than by his preaching. But with Pope Francis the process has been "unblocked", as he put it.

Now that he is beatified the next stage is canonisation. However, he has been a saint by popular acclaim in Latin America

since his death. Roberto Cuellar told of walking down a street in San Salvador on the day Romero was shot and finding a group of beggars who said "They have killed the saint". He reports that as being "the first time I heard him called a saint". At his beatification Pope Francis said: "In this day of joy for El Salvador and also for other Latin American countries, we thank God for giving the martyr archbishop the ability to see and feel the suffering of his people".

A secular saint

Taking questions after Saturday's preview from assembled Catholic journalists and friends of the Archbishop Romero Trust, filmmaker Gianni Beretta explained that the likely title, 'Making Amends' refers to the "moral reparation" of recognising Romero more than 30 years after his death as a champion of human values of the calibre of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. It was pointed out that the date of his killing – 24 March – is now the United Nations 'Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims'. This is explicitly linked to Archbishop Romero and could be described as a 'secular canonization'.

ROMERO'S GLASSES

*We like this poem by Trevor Scott Barton,
published on his blog on 7 July.
<https://teachandwrite-blog.tumblr.com/>*



Hero

living love, peace and hope,
protecting ordinary people from
extraordinary hatred and violence,
peaceful hero,
dying for the cause but not killing for it,
denying guns and bombs their power,
risking the violence of love.
Conserving tradition at first for the
greatest,
seeing through your glasses at last for
the least,
feeling the hunger of underpaid workers,
knowing the poverty of farmers,
hearing the warning, "Here's what
happens to priests who get involved in
politics,"
holding tears of the disappeared.

Challenging,

calling all to view the liberating body of a
slain priest,

serving the poor

using words to build up humanity and
tear down injustice,

"In the name of God, stop killing ..."

crucifixion,

resurrection.

JUSTICE AND IMPUNITY IN EL SALVADOR

*Clare Dixon has been following
developments in the cases of the UCA
Martyrs and Romero.*

Recent months have seen some
significant breakthroughs in the slow
process of truth, justice and
reconciliation in El Salvador. These
come in the wake of the repeal of the
Amnesty Law which was introduced after
the Peace Accords in El Salvador in
1993. According to a United Nations
Truth Commission, more than 75,000
people were tortured, unlawfully killed or
forcibly disappeared during the armed
conflict in El Salvador between 1980 and
1992.

Five days after the UN Truth Commission published its recommendations in 1993, the authorities in El Salvador passed an Amnesty Law that prevented investigations into the human rights violations committed during the conflict. Even those who committed “genocide and crimes against humanity” were let off the hook.

A decision by El Salvador’s Supreme Court in July 2016 to declare the country’s Amnesty Law unconstitutional was an historic and long awaited step forward, opening the way for those responsible for human rights violations to be finally brought to justice.

In mid-May of this year the Fourth Circuit Court of San Salvador ordered the reopening of the case against Captain Álvaro Rafael Saravia for his role in the murder of Archbishop Romero (see book review on page 27 “Assassination of a Saint”). Almudena Bernabéu, a lawyer from the US-based Centre for Justice and Accountability which led a civil case against Saravia in the United States precisely because there was no hope of doing so in El Salvador, commented, “to see progress in the country, although

there is still a long way to go, is undoubtedly cause for cautious joy.”

The Church and human rights organisations have also pursued other emblematic cases from the conflict in El Salvador, such as the massacre of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter at the UCA Central American University in November 1989. Six members of the elite army Atlacatl Battalion who carried out the murders were prosecuted in 1991. Of them, only Colonel Guillermo Benavides and Lt. Yussly Mendoza were sentenced to prison for 30 years, but were released in 1993 following the adoption of the amnesty law. Whilst both men were found guilty of carrying out the UCA massacre, no member of the military high command who had ordered the operation was brought to justice.

With the repeal of the Amnesty Law Benavides was returned to prison in 2016 to serve out the remainder of his sentence. On 29 May the Jesuits of the UCA appealed to Salvadorean President Sánchez Cerén to commute the Colonel’s sentence and release him in view of his advanced age and ill health.

This humanitarian gesture is an important step towards reconciliation whilst the Jesuits continue to work to ensure that those responsible for ordering the massacre should be held to account.

EL SALVADOR'S FIRST CARDINAL

In May, Pope Francis announced that Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez, Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, and friend of the Romero Trust, would be El Salvador's first Cardinal. Clare Dixon reports.

“A gift from God which I don't deserve” were the words of San Salvador's Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez on the news that Pope Francis had announced that he was one of five new Cardinals to be appointed in a consistory scheduled for 28 June: the first ever Cardinal for El Salvador.

The Pope made his unexpected statement in the Vatican at the end of the Regina Coeli prayer at midday on Sunday. The first that Bishop Rosa Chavez, affectionately known as don Goyo, knew of his elevation was a knock on his door at 5am on Sunday to tell him he had a telephone call from Rome. “It

was a total surprise, I thought it was a joke” Bishop Rosa Chavez told reporters. The rather reserved, and softly-spoken cleric has often commented, rather wryly, that he was the longest-serving bishop in El Salvador, and the only one without a Diocese. Appointed, at the age of only 39, as auxiliary to Archbishop Rivera y Damas in 1982, Bishop Rosa Chavez was a loyal and passionate supporter of the now Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero. In a bitterly divided country, he earned the wrath of the military and the ultra-right wing for his efforts to preserve the memory, example and teaching of the murdered Archbishop and his defence of human rights.



Bishop John Rawsthorne, Romero Trust Trustee, with Bishop (now Cardinal) Rosa Chavez at Romero's beatification ceremony in 2015

Bishop Rosa Chavez played a pivotal role in the mediation initiated by

Archbishop Rivera in the Church's attempt to bring an end to the civil war which raged in the country from 1980 to 1992. For his efforts he was dismissed by some of his fellow bishops as the Archbishop's "messenger boy". Whilst cautiously treading a neutral path in the peace negotiations, Bishop Rosa Chavez came under attack because some members of his family were known to have sympathies with the rebel movement (his brother Herman later became Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources in the 2010 FMLN government).

On Rivera's death in 1994 it was generally expected that Bishop Rosa Chavez, by far the most talented and theologically prepared among the hierarchy, would be appointed Archbishop of San Salvador. To the shock and disappointment of many, Bishop Rosa Chavez was overlooked and Fernando Saenz Lacalle, an Opus Dei sympathiser who held the rank of Brigadier General in the Salvadorean army, was appointed as Archbishop.

Many, especially the poorest, felt bereft in a country where they had always

looked to their Archbishop for protection: "the President was for the rich, but the Archbishop was always ours". Bishop Rosa Chavez moved out of the episcopal residence in San Salvador, where his relationship with the new Archbishop was less than comfortable, and became pastor in a poor and rundown area of the city in the ramshackle parish church of St Francis of Assisi, where he continues to this day.

But if Bishop Rosa Chavez's talents were not appreciated by the Church in El Salvador, admiration within the wider Church led him to be repeatedly elected as regional President of Caritas for Latin America, a role which took him around the world taking every opportunity to promote and honour the memory of his mentor, Blessed Romero. He would also become a close friend of the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa in neighbouring Honduras, who as Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, is a key member of Pope Francis' inner circle of advisers.



CARDENAL GREGORIO ROSA CHÁVEZ

"La palabra queda y este es el gran consuelo del que predica.

*Mi voz desaparecerá,
pero mi palabra, que es Cristo,
quedará en los corazones
que la hayan querido acoger".*

(Monseñor Romero, Homilía 17.12.78)

Roma, 28 de Junio de 2017

Romero's words featured on Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez's card:

The Word remains and this is a great comfort to all preachers --- their voice will disappear but their words which are a proclamation of Christ, will remain in the hearts of those who desire to accept them.

Homily 17 December 1978

In San Salvador many are celebrating this long overdue acknowledgement of Bishop Rosa Chavez as a recognition of Romero, but Fr Juan Hernandez Pico, a leading theologian at El Salvador's Jesuit University, the UCA, thinks otherwise: "I

see it more as a recognition of Goyo himself, to tell him that after Rivera, it should have been him as Archbishop." It remains to be seen just what the future will bring for the Cardinal-elect in a Diocese where he is Cardinal but not Archbishop. His first reaction was to say: "no change, except for the colour of my zucchetto and probably more visits to Rome."



Newly invested Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez with Clare Dixon.

The Pope's announcement came just three days after a judge in El Salvador reopened the investigation into the assassination of Archbishop Romero, a crime for which no-one has yet been brought to justice.



EL SALVADOR FOCUS FOR CAFOD HARVEST FAST DAY 2017

6 October 2017 is CAFOD's Harvest Fast Day, and the focus this year will be on El Salvador. Subsistence farmers and city dwellers will be telling us how they are working to transform their daily reality with the support of CAFOD partners Solidarity CVX (formerly Jesuit Development Service) and the Sisters of St. Clare. Look out for materials arriving in Catholic schools and parishes, or take a look at the CAFOD website in late September and October.

www.cafod.org.uk

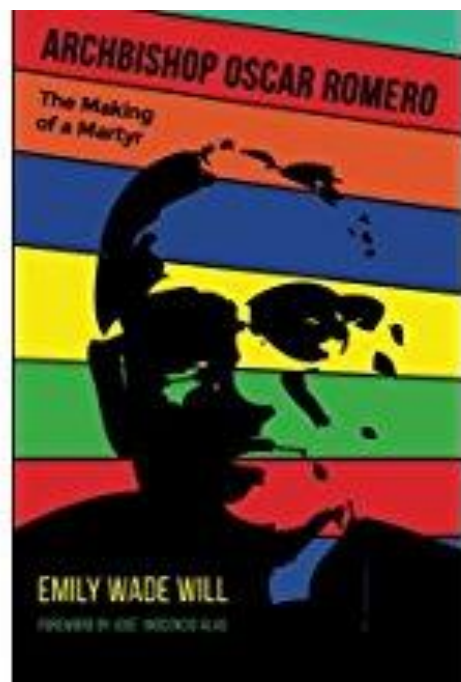
NEW BOOKS

Two new books on Romero have appeared fairly recently. Both are available from Amazon at £19 per copy.

Archbishop Romero – The Making of a Martyr

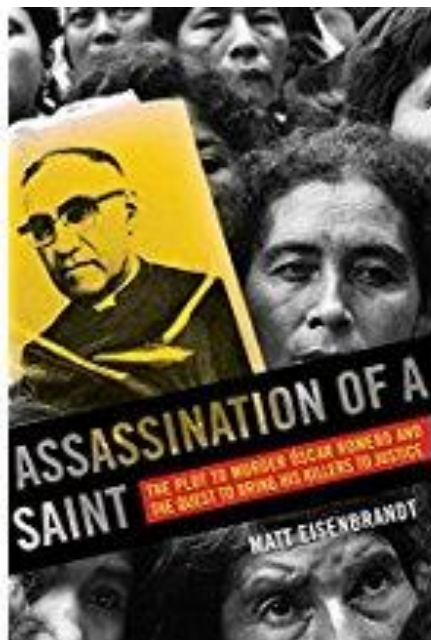
by Emily Wade Will. Published by Wipf and Stock.

This is a good read. An up-to-date and well-researched biography. Valuable focus on the early years. It is highly recommended.



Assassination of a Saint: The Plot to Murder Oscar Romero and the Quest to Bring his Killers to Justice

by Matt Eisenbrandt. Published by
University of California Press



Review by Clare Dixon

In the thirty seven years since Archbishop Oscar Romero was slain at his altar by a single bullet from a hired gun, no-one has ever been arrested, charged or brought to justice for his murder. In March 1980 Romero was the most high profile public figure in El Salvador, yet not a single policeman arrived to investigate or protect the scene of the crime, nor attended his autopsy. Three days after the Archbishop's assassination, two men armed with machine guns attacked the home of the judge who had rushed to witness the examination of Romero's body in the

mortuary. Fearing for his life the judge fled the country, not to return home for ten years.

Twenty four years after Romero's murder, in a court room in Fresno, California, this same Salvadorean judge gave evidence in a civil case brought by a group of idealistic US-based lawyers. Their mission was to bring Romero's killers to justice, and to discover the identity of those who had planned and financed the crime. This new book by one of those lawyers defies easy classification: part courtroom drama, part whodunit, part historical record. Matt Eisenbrandt, himself just a child at the time of Romero's death, dedicated ten years to writing this account of their quest. It chronicles the painstaking research and dogged determination invested in following up leads and clues to track down the men believed to have been directly involved in the plot. In doing so, the lawyers sought to challenge the impunity which is still the scourge of the Central American nation. At the same time, part of Eisenbrandt's underlying motivation was to try to atone in some way for the monstrous role played by the US government in

bankrolling the Salvadorean military which gave free rein to the death squads whose motto was “Be a patriot, kill a priest”.

For anyone who has been inspired by Romero’s life and the circumstances of his death, this book is a fascinating read. It uncovers the details of a conspiracy that deprived El Salvador of its greatest son and in doing so it recreates the climate of terror and oppression which pervaded the country as it slid towards the civil war which claimed more than sixty thousand innocent civilian lives.

The cast-list reads like a novel: with a leading role played by Major Roberto D’Aubuisson, known as “Blowtorch Bob” after his preferred method of torture. As the acknowledged mastermind of the assassination plot D’Aubuisson could be a figure out of fiction, described as a “pathological killer” by former US Ambassador, Robert White.

The passing of the 1993 Amnesty Law in El Salvador guaranteed immunity from prosecution for war-crimes, and no case could be brought in the country against the killers of the Archbishop. D’Aubuisson himself was already dead

and beyond the reach of earthly law. But the California-based lawyers discovered that two of the chief suspects of Romero’s murder were now living in the United States and hence, they could be pursued through the US civil courts. One of them Captain Alvaro Saravia was tried and sentenced in absentia. Whilst the identity of the gunman is still not known the complicity of powerful military figures in the assassination plot is beyond doubt.

As in so many countries racked by war and violence, in El Salvador the path to reconciliation can only be built on foundations of truth and justice. Today the human rights team who worked with Archbishop Romero is still making courageous efforts to pursue the resolution of “emblematic” cases. One example is that of the El Mozote massacre where more than 1,000 civilians, mainly women and children were brutally killed by the army: the children locked into the parish house and burned alive. Maria Julia Hernandez, the head of the Church’s legal aid office and a frequent visitor to the UK as a partner of CAFOD, provided much of the information for the US lawyers to be able

to mount their case and was a witness for the California civil court hearings.

The secretary of the Romero Foundation in San Salvador, who has worked tirelessly to preserve his legacy and his memory, is herself a symbol of the divisions which still split communities and families, but also speaks of hope and reconciliation. Her name is Marisa D'Aubuisson, and she is the sister of the man who ordered Romero's death.

BOOK OFFERS AND POSTCARDS

All these resources may be ordered from romerotrust@gmail.com

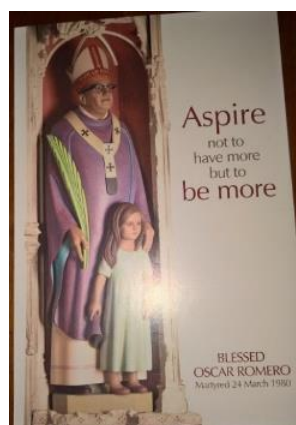
Or by post:

Archbishop Romero Trust

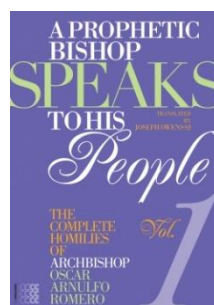
PO Box 70227

London

E9 9BR

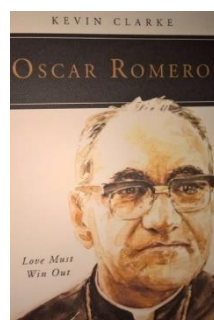


Postcards from St. Albans Cathedral for sale: 6 for £3 (incl. p&p) postage)

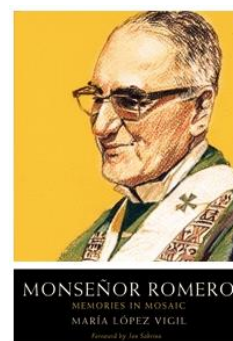


A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People: The Complete Homilies of Oscar Arnulfo Romero,

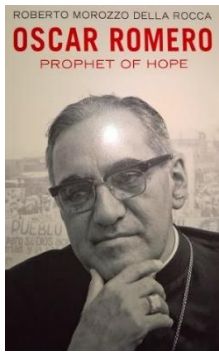
All six Volumes are now available, £20 each (incl. p&p). Readers encounter Romero the way ordinary Salvadoreans did—through his sermons, which are brought to a startling new level of clarity and precision. This new set of translations, elegant and mellifluous, is a reference set that no Romero student 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 - Prophet of Hope by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca published by DLT in Britain on sale at £9.99.
Available from the Trust

for £8 (incl. 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.

OSCAR ROMERO
and
The Communion of Saints

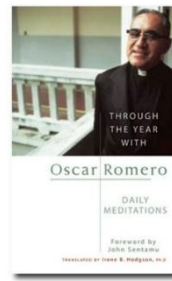


SCOTT WRIGHT

Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints £12 (incl. p&p)

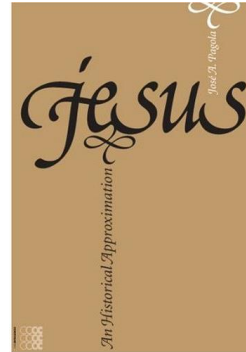
A special joy of this biography are the many rarely-seen photographs taken by Octavio Durán, a

Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer.



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 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

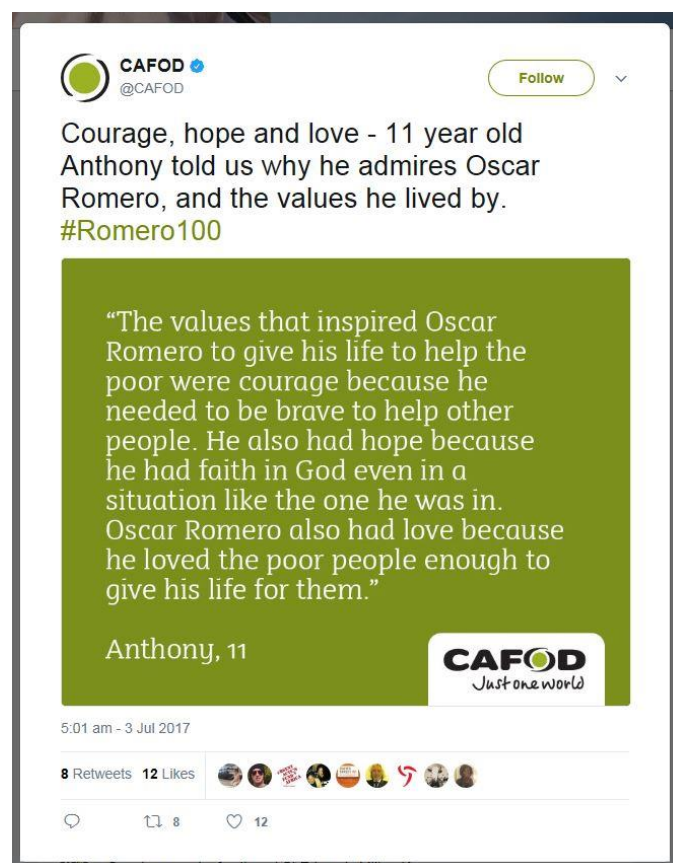
FRIENDS OF ROMERO

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 Trust's reserves are almost depleted. If you would like to make a donation to our work in this centenary year we would be hugely grateful. Please send cheques payable to the Romero Trust to our PO Box address (Archbishop Romero Trust, PO Box 70227, London E9 9BR) or give online at our website – www.romerotrust.org.uk.

ROMERO ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Romero embraced communications technology, broadcasting his homilies weekly by radio. These days we have Twitter. Do you tweet? If so, between now and 23 September, follow #Romero100. Here is an example of a recent tweet:



Picture credits:

Romero Trust: pages 8, 10, 12, 19, 21, 23, 25
Clare Dixon: page 25
Julian Filochowski: page 7
Rory Young: pages 7, 32
Tania Dalton: 15

Trustees: Julian Filochowski, Clare Dixon, Bishop John Rawsthorne, Rev Richard Carter, Frank Turner SJ, David Skidmore, Jan Graffius, Sr. Eileen McLoughlin, Stephen Davies. Treasurer: Stephen Lloyd. Membership: Madge Rondo. Romero News Editor: Tania Dalton.





Fernando Llort's new Romero mural at the Hospital of Divine Providence, San Salvador

Monseñor Romero calls out with open arms to all those who suffer, the forgotten. His saintly halo is the sun with its twelve rays: the twelve apostles united with Jesus. The white dove at his right side represents the Holy Spirit, the Creator Spirit. Above his left arm is the symbol of God the Father, with twelve small dwellings that represent the People of God, and the Community. Below Monseñor Romero's right hand is a small girl who has lost her feet through amputation and there is a sick woman lying down. Below his left hand is a man, a campesino, also in poor health and also lying down. The Bible is there, the Word of God, which Archbishop Romero both preached and lived. Above the campesino there is a maize plant. It is the most important staple food of our daily diet. There is also a pitcher, a symbol of the water of eternal life, and a coffee branch, symbolising our culture. We see too volcanoes and mountains from our land of El Salvador. Beneath the mountains, we find a village with its church. On the church door, we see the initials: O.R. for Oscar Romero.