

Romeronews

Issue 21: January 2018

Registered Charity no. 1110069



Photo: Victor Peña / El Faro News

Salvadoreans walk in commemoration of Romero's Centenary

2000 pilgrims called for justice for Romero's assassination as they marched for 3 days from 11 – 13 August, covering 157 km from the Cathedral in San Salvador to Ciudad Barrios, the birthplace of Romero.

See the photo story by Victor Peña and El Faro News at:

https://elfaro.net/es/201708/ef_foto/20782/La-travesía-de-los-'romeristas'.htm

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

February – March 2018

RISE Theatre Tour

"Romero: Heartbeat of El Salvador"
Abergavenny, Swindon, Trowbridge,
Redhill, Plymouth, Cardiff, Ealing,
Stamford Hill, Wokingham,
Northampton, Dublin. Book tickets at
www.ticketsource.co.uk/risetheatre

14 – 20 March

Romero Week Speaker Tour

17 March, 11am
National Ecumenical Service
St Martin-in-the-Fields
London

24 March, 12:30 pm
Romero Feast Day Mass
St George's Cathedral, Southwark
London
Celebrated by Archbishop Peter Smith

11 August, 12:30 pm
Romero's 101 Birthday Mass
St George's Cathedral, Southwark
London

ROMERO WEEK 2018



Photo: United States Mission Geneva

This year's guest speaker for the Romero Week events in March is Rubén Zamora, a distinguished Salvadorean diplomat, academic and social democratic politician with close links to the UK.

From a devout Catholic family, Rubén Zamora studied for the priesthood for several years before pursuing a career in politics. After a degree in Law in El Salvador he obtained an MA in Political Science from Essex University.

As a member of the Christian Democrat Party of El Salvador he served briefly in the cabinet of the 1979 reformist government, resigning in early 1980 in

protest at the escalation of repression. His brother, the Attorney General Mario Zamora, was assassinated by a right wing death squad in February 1980.

Throughout the war in El Salvador Ruben Zamora was a passionate advocate for peace, and as a founding member of the political opposition front, FDR, he travelled the world to build diplomatic support for peace negotiations. Due to threats against his family, he was forced to spend some years in exile but after the Peace Accords in 1992, he stood as presidential candidate of the FDR-FMLN centre-left coalition.

During the 1990s, he served as Vice President of the National Assembly and as a member of the National Peace Commission, and he founded and led the United Democratic Centre party. He has taught political science at several Universities in Central America as well as in Stanford University and Essex, worked as an advisor on democratisation in Africa and has published many works on Salvadorean politics.

In late 2017 Ruben Zamora stepped down from his post as El Salvador's permanent representative to the United

Nations having served previously as the country's Ambassador to the United States and Ambassador to India.

He is currently based in El Salvador as an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Romero Week Tour Dates:

Cardiff, Thursday 15 March

Cambridge, Friday 16 March

St Martin-in-the-Fields, Saturday 17 March

Liverpool, Monday 19 March

Leeds, Tuesday 20 March.

Please keep your eye on www.romerotrust.org.uk for details of times and venues. You may also follow the Trust on Twitter: @RomeroTrust

CANONISATION WATCH

Julian Filochowski offers the latest insights on the cause for canonisation.

We are on tenterhooks. Here and in El Salvador! There is confident expectation that very soon, and certainly before Romero's Feast Day on 24 March, there will be a formal announcement from the

Vatican that Archbishop Romero is to be canonised in 2018. Oremus!

It will be recalled that the one requirement for Oscar Romero's canonisation, in the wake of his 2015 beatification as a martyr killed out of hatred of the faith, is a single verified miracle, occurring after seeking Blessed Oscar's intercession. A potential miracle was documented and submitted to Rome in March 2017 following a successful examination of the facts by a diocesan Tribunal in San Salvador. On 26 October 2017, the Medical Commission of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, after thorough investigation and analysis, unanimously accepted the inexplicable cure as a miracle (see box).

On 14 December the Theological Commission of the Congregation, also unanimously, endorsed that judgment. The 'Positio Super Miro', which is the formal document setting out the details of the presumed miracle and the judgements made, has been prepared and printed. We now simply await a Plenary Meeting of the Cardinals, who make up the Congregation's Board, for the formalisation of this verdict and its

presentation to Pope Francis, who will make the final decision and, hopefully, promulgate the decree to enable canonisation. The date for any canonisation ceremony is uncertain and will only be announced formally when Pope Francis convenes a Consistory of the Cardinals. The expectation is that the ceremony will take place in Rome, which would emphatically underline the recognition of Archbishop Romero as a Saint of the Universal Church - not just a Central American icon. It is feasible that Pope Francis will choose an early date for the ceremony, in May or June, but 'canonisation season' in Rome tends to be around October and it is rumoured that this year Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Newman might also be 'sainted'.

There has been a good deal of speculation that Fr Rutilio Grande could be beatified on the same occasion as Romero is canonised, given Pope Francis' publicly-expressed admiration for his fellow Jesuit. This now seems less likely as Rutilio's Cause is not as advanced as Romero's and, although no obstacles are foreseen, the Cause of 'Rutilio Grande and Companions' does not appear to be moving quickly at the

Congregation for Saints. It is conceivable that Pope Francis might travel to El Salvador towards the end of 2019, and beatify Rutilio in his homeland.

The Miracle

Señora Cecilia Maribel Flores de Rivas, a 34-year-old pregnant Salvadorean woman, became gravely ill in August 2015, just prior to the birth of her child. She was hospitalised. In complex medical terminology she was suffering from serious preeclampsia leading to Type 1 HELLP which was complicated by DIC. Cecilia was diagnosed as fatally ill – seemingly with a 95% likelihood she would die.

The principal goal of the medical doctors was to save the child she was bearing. Her family, practising Catholics, and the Neocatechumenal community to which they belonged, prayed to Blessed Oscar Romero asking for his intercession to save Cecilia. Not only was the child born safely, through a Caesarean operation, but also, and to the astonishment of the doctors, Cecilia had a speedy, complete, and lasting recovery. According to the Medical Commission of the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, her recovery was scientifically "inexplicable in the light of present-day knowledge".

RELIVING THE ROMERO CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS



15 August 2017 was the 100 birthday of Mons. Romero. We marked the occasion with a Centenary Mass on Saturday 12 August in St

George's Cathedral, Southwark, at which Archbishop Peter Smith presided. With great generosity Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the Postulator of the Cause for Romero's Canonisation, agreed to interrupt his vacation to preach at the Mass. The Liturgy was followed by a reception for the whole congregation with a huge birthday cake - and glasses of prosecco for all to toast Blessed Oscar.

In September a special Romero Evensong in Westminster Abbey was a most worthy national ecumenical celebration of Romero's life and martyrdom, and his significance for the Church today, a century after his birth. The superlatives to describe the event are almost exhausted;

it was a flawless, beautiful service including Romero's own voice briefly echoing round the Abbey. It was a magnificent Romero occasion with 1300 people in attendance. Alongside the Dean, Dr John Hall, there was an enormous sanctuary party, including Cardinal Nichols, the new Nuncio, the newly-elected Anglican Archbishop of Wales, a dozen or more bishops from the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions, and leaders of the Free Churches. Westminster Abbey and its choir led the ceremony with all their customary grace. The emeritus Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, delivered a superb sermon. The transcript is on page 9 of this newsletter and the audio can be found on the Abbey website at <https://audioboom.com/posts/6331681-sermon-given-at-blessed-oscar-romero-evensong> .

The highlight of a splendid liturgy was undoubtedly the stunning anthem, 'A Special Appeal', that James MacMillan had been commissioned to compose by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. In this motet, MacMillan interwove the key lines from Romero's penultimate homily, delivered on the day before his

assassination, together with verses from Psalm 31 (see box).

A Special Appeal

I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army. Brothers, each one of you is one of us. We are all the same people. Before any order to kill a man may give, God's law must prevail- 'Thou Shalt Not Kill'.

*For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—*

*as they scheme against me,
as they plot to take my life.*

*But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, 'You are my God'.*

In the name of God, then, in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise up to heaven each day more tumultuously, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you, in the name of God: stop the repression!

Everyone attending received a small Salvadorean Cross to take away as a

special memento of the occasion and raised them high for an act of re-dedication towards the end of the Service. The Evensong was recorded and broadcast on BBC Radio Three.

Although the whole Service is no longer available on BBC iPlayer, it is possible to listen to the performance of James MacMillan's anthem on the BBC Radio 3 webpage

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05ky67s>. It lasts 6 minutes and 21 seconds - and is not to be missed!

ROMERO'S CENTENARY IN EL SALVADOR



Young people join pilgrims walking from San Salvador to Ciudad Barrios.

Photo: Victor Peña / El Faro News.

Clare Dixon reports on Centenary events in El Salvador.

In El Salvador, the centenary of Archbishop Romero was celebrated in style. Newly created Cardinal, Gregorio Rosa Chávez, announced a three-day pilgrimage, beginning at the tomb of Romero in the Cathedral of San Salvador on 11 August to his birthplace in Ciudad Barrios: a walk of 157 kilometres.

Under a blazing sun Cardinal Rosa Chávez led the pilgrimage alongside the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Leon Kalenga, as well as priests and nuns from various dioceses.

"Everyone has been joining us along the way. There is great enthusiasm, so this is a sign of hope for the country. We believe that this people moved by faith can achieve what was believed to be impossible, a country at peace", said Cardinal Rosa.

Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati, Archbishop of Santiago in Chile, was the special envoy of the Pope for the celebration of the centenary. At the Cathedral Mass on August 15, attended by a huge crowd, five more Cardinals including Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila and Church delegations from throughout

Latin America joined him. At the head of the congregation was President Salvador Sánchez Cerén and leading government ministers.

Pope Francis' message to the faithful described Romero as an "illustrious pastor and witness of the Gospel, defender of the Church and of human dignity", who showed "love for all, especially the poor, marginalised and isolated from society, proclaiming justice, reconciliation and peace".



Photo: Victor Peña / El Faro News

For love of Romero. That is how Wilgen Arias, 72 years old, from San Salvador, described his pilgrimage. Wilgen recalls hearing Blessed Romero's homilies during Sunday masses at the Rosario Church, and learnt then how to defend his rights. In this photo Wilgen is at the 78 kilometre of the Panamerican Highway, on the second day of the

pilgrimage, 22 hours after departing from the Metropolitan Cathedral.

Wilgen's photo and the photos on our front cover, and at the start of this article are taken from a beautiful photogallery of the pilgrimage from San Salvador to Ciudad Barrios last August on the website of the independent newspaper El Faro. Use this link to go straight to the full photogallery:

https://elfaro.net/es/201708/ef_foto/20782/La-travesía-de-los-‘romeristas’.htm

AGENTS OF THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Lord Rowan Williams' Sermon at Evensong in Westminster Abbey for the Romero Centenary, 23 September 2017

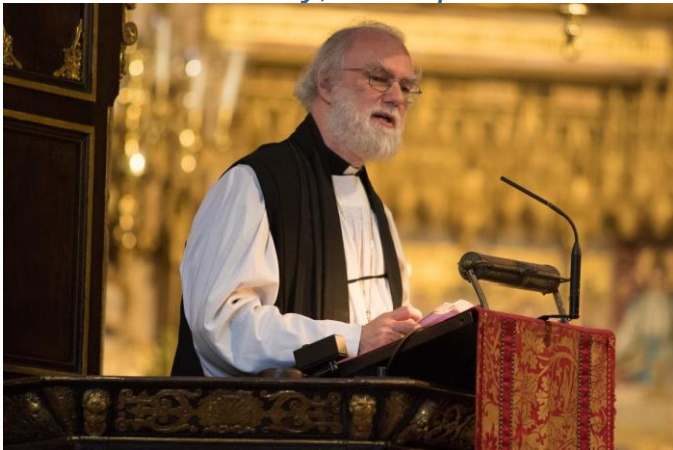


Photo courtesy of Dean and Chapter of Westminster

A true story. Two Welsh countrymen sat in a pub discussing the recent death of one of their neighbours. 'How much did

he leave?', asked one of them. The other lifted an eyebrow and replied, 'Everything!' Almost exactly forty years ago, on the 25 September 1977, Archbishop Oscar Romero in his weekly mass homily provided an extended and more theological version of that comment. He reflected in this homily on the biblical notion of property. Property, he said, in Jewish and Christian Scripture, was something that was lent to the user. Never absolutely given. Always to be used, rented from God. And so, he says, the truth is that the rich pay to the poor the rent for the land whose use they are given for a time.

We are all of us beggars together

In a just world, that is how we should conceive property. We are given something through which we are set free to discharge our debt to the poor. Because if our God is with the poor, then when we serve the poor, we serve God. When we recognise our indebtedness to the poor, we pay our rent to God for the land we use. And in that perspective, he goes on to say, we are all of us beggars together. No one simply owns at another's expense. Everyone is caught up in exchange. Those who are wealthy

– in this world’s terms – are those who have been given the privilege of using the things of the world for the flourishing of their neighbour. Beggars together we become rich together. And we are delivered from the imprisoning falsehood of supposing that the world is something we can own, whether as individuals, as societies, or even as the human race collectively. What is given is given to be given. What did he leave? Everything. Nothing can be stored against that final reckoning. And we should get used now to the call of God to serve, to pay our debt to the needy.

The myth of ownership and control

It’s an unexpected echo of one of the great insights of that father of the English Reformation, William Tyndale, who spoke in his own reflection on the gospels of the debt that the wealthy owe to the wretched. We live in a world where it seems that the wretched are reminded constantly of their debt to those who are already wealthy. But, as Jesus says in the gospel about the use of power and resource, it shall not be so among you. And the gospel promises liberation from that myth of ownership and control, that apparently relentless pattern of

accumulating resources and not sharing. Which is why, later in the same year, when Archbishop Romero preaches about slavery and freedom, he describes the freedom of those who have heard the gospel in terms precisely of a freedom from the slavery of seeking possession.

We are possessed, we are enslaved, by the myth that we can possess the world for ourselves alone. And our true liberation comes when we understand that opening our hands, sharing what we have, is how liberation manifests itself. Christ does not want slaves, says Romero. He wants us all, rich and poor, to love one another as sisters and brothers. He wants liberation to reach everywhere so that no slavery exists in the world, none at all. No person should be the slave of another, nor a slave of misery, nor a slave of anything. This is the content of revelation, this doctrine, this evangelisation.

We are agents of liberation

It’s easy to see from that quotation why it is that Romero believed that our liberation immediately projected us into a deeper level of community. Because once that mythology of possessing and

being possessed has disappeared, we are free for one another in a quite new way. And what happens then is community. A community in which we are creating freedom for one another, day after day, in which we, liberated from myth and slavery, from fiction and oppression and injustice, are set free to feed and nourish each other's humanity to the full. And the responsibility of every baptised person, so Archbishop Romero insists again and again, is a responsibility to create freedom. We are not only recipients of liberation, but agents. Not only those who let themselves be fed, by the grace of God and the grace of their neighbour, but those who have the power and authority to feed, to nourish, to set free.

In life and in death, Blessed Oscar Romero paid his debt to the poor. In every word he spoke, in every encounter in which he was involved, he saw his responsibility as that of an agent of God's liberation, challenging day-by-day and week-by-week, in his letters, his sermons, his public addresses, the death-dealing fiction which kept his entire society in slavery. Addressing the gross injustice and inequality of the land-

owning system in his country. Addressing the barbaric violence that supported that system, and eventually claimed his own life. He would have been grieved, but perhaps not surprised, to know that that inequality and that barbaric violence is still a feature of so many countries in Central and South America to this very day.

Our prayers must today be with those who continue his work, in costly witness, in speaking the truth. He himself describes elsewhere the Church itself as above all an agent of truth in an environment of myth and lies.

But we should always remember the stress which he laid upon the idea that the poor were to take their own agency, their own responsibility. Rather than simply talking about a Church for the poor, Archbishop Romero was one of those who genuinely understood what it might be for the Church to be a Church of the poor. A Church where the dispossessed and the wretched found their dignity and their agency, their capacity to make a difference.

The beauty of the Church

Liberation is not something we receive only, but something of which we become agents. We, baptised into Christ, become agents of that Christ-like, that Christ-shaped gift of bringing liberation. And that's why in yet another sermon from this year, from 1977, Archbishop Romero can speak – as he often speaks very eloquently – of the Eucharist, the mass, as the place where reparation, restoration, the healing of breaches, the overcoming of inequality, is all taking place.

We offer the Eucharist in Christ as a means of peace-making. We offer it, recognising the debt we owe not simply to God, but to one another. And we celebrate the Eucharist, truly effectively with integrity, when that is our goal, when the liberated community shows itself capable of sharing freedom, setting one another free.

In a particularly moving passage, Archbishop Romero speaks of how this approach to the Eucharist is a way of restoring what he calls the beauty of the Church. He speaks of the way in which that essential beauty of unconditional

divine love takes flesh again and again in the Eucharistic body, in the community gathered at the mass.

Beauty is a strange word, sometimes, to use of the Church. And beauty is a strange word to bring to mind for anyone who has ever seen the photographs of Archbishop Romero's body, riddled with bullets, and streaming with blood. But to recognise his life and death as something which itself served that Eucharistic beauty of the Church is to recognise that without that commitment to liberation, to that act which frees us from the slavery of myth and fiction, the Church is ugly, the Church is disfigured, it fails to show what it most truly is.

Agents of the beauty of God's people

By God's grace, in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we glimpse fleetingly what it might be for the Church to radiate the beauty of God in justice, in reconciliation and reparation. We, striving to make that real in our own discipleship, are committed to that vision of the Church's beauty, painfully, hauntingly aware of what that might mean in terms of risk for its witnesses. We are beggars together, and when we have recognised that,

liberation begins to come alive. When liberation begins to become alive we become people who in Christ are enabled to set one another free. When we begin to set one another free, we move into the fullness of community. When we move into the fullness of community, we show the beauty of God's act in Christ, and God's continuing act in the Church.

In giving thanks for the life and the martyrdom of Blessed Oscar Romero, we ask ourselves how far we are still enslaved by the myth of possessing and being possessed. What is the level of our own willingness to be beggars together? The level of our own willingness not only to be set free, but to be agents of freedom? We look with thanksgiving to one of Christ's great servants, who stands with us in the everlasting communion of saints, who stands with us at the Eucharistic table of Jesus Christ, who calls us as his blood is shed, to be – with him – agents of the beauty of God's people, renewing the face of the earth.

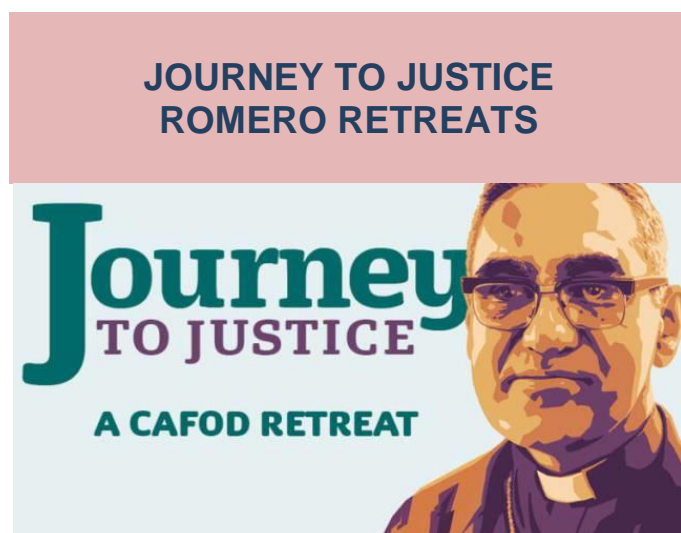
Please note:

This is a transcription of the sermon by Lord Williams, not a written text.

All of the homilies preached by Blessed Oscar Romero whilst Archbishop of San Salvador can be found on the Archbishop Romero Trust website at: <http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/homilies-and-writings/homilies>.

The homily of 25 September 1977 referred to by Lord Williams can be found at:

http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/sites/default/files/homilies/right_use_of_goods_god_created.pdf



Sarah Hagger-Holt worked to develop a Romero retreat programme for CAFOD. Here she shares with us the nature of the retreat and how it has been received.

In November 2017, to mark Romero's centenary year, CAFOD ran a series of day retreats across England and Wales. These focused on Romero's 'journey to justice' and over 300 people – some committed CAFOD volunteers, others new to the organisation – took part. Prior

to the day, many had been unaware about Romero's own personal journey of conversion, or that CAFOD had helped to keep the diocesan radio station which broadcast Romero's homilies on air, when it was bombed.

The retreat day itself was a mix of reflection, discussion, liturgy and action – including sharing the stories of human rights defenders worldwide who are supported by CAFOD today. These ranged from people working with refugees in Lebanon, to those standing up against gender-based violence in the DRC, to people defending communities from mining development in Peru. The aim of the day was to encounter Romero as a real person not as an idol - someone who we could learn from to inspire us to action for social justice in our own contexts.

By making the materials from the retreats available, we hope many more people will use them to inspire their own journey to justice.

You can access the retreat materials from this CAFOD webpage:

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Campaign-events>

200,000 SALVADOREANS TOLD TO LEAVE US BY 2019

As 2018 dawns, nearly 200,000 Salvadoreans suddenly face expulsion from the United States. The Trump administration is cancelling permits allowing nearly 200,000 people from El Salvador to live and work in the US. They must leave the country by September 2019 or face deportation. The humanitarian programme, called Temporary Protected Status (TPS), was granted in the wake of the earthquakes that rocked El Salvador in 2001. TPS is a US immigration permit given to people from countries declared to be unsafe or where the country would be unable adequately to handle the return of its nationals. There are 435,000 from ten countries in the TPS scheme. President Trump this week declared that the US will not renew TPS for the 200,000 Salvadoreans with that status, many of whom have lived in the US for many years, and with over 190,000 children born there with US citizenship. In 2017 Nicaragua and Haiti lost TPS status. Individuals are given a deadline to return home and, in the Salvadorean case, this

is eighteen months from now – that is by September 2019 and conditional upon individual Salvadoreans registering to take advantage of this so-called grace period.

Massive lobbying from Central America and within the United States has failed to prevent this decision; and it has been reported that in comments in the White House apparently referring to El Salvador and Haiti, President Trump said “Why are we having all these people from s**t-hole countries come here?”. The Churches in the United States have protested volubly describing the decision as cruel, outrageous and unconscionable and will do all they can to have the decision reversed before the deadline. If carried through, besides provoking family division and causing suffering to the people directly affected, the decision will cause massive economic and social disruption in El Salvador which remains one of the most violent countries in the world and whose economy is hugely dependent on the remittances from overseas Salvadoreans to the families at home.

There will be campaigns across the globe in support of the Salvadoreans and the Trust will highlight initiatives launched in Britain.

SLOW PROGRESS FOR JUSTICE

Clare Dixon reports on the latest developments in the pursuit of justice for the UCA martyrs, and the mercy shown by the Jesuits.



The names of the UCA Martyrs.

Photo: Michael Woodward

On November 15th, the eve of the 28th anniversary of the 1989 massacre of six

Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the UCA University, hopes were raised for some progress towards justice in the case.

The United States Supreme Court rejected a last ditch effort by former Salvadorean Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano to stay his extradition from the US to Spain where he is a defendant in a court case against the military officers behind the massacre and its cover-up. At the time of the massacre, Montano was Vice Minister of Defence for Public Safety, in command of the National Police, the Treasury Police, and the National Guard.

Montano had been fighting his extradition case for two years while in US federal prison for immigration fraud. He had earlier been convicted for lying when he first entered the US in the years following the Salvadorean civil war. Spanish authorities sought his extradition, and the Obama and Trump administrations have cooperated.

The action by the US Supreme Court means Montano was sent to Spain at the end of November. The remaining

defendants named in the case in Spain, however, are safely sheltered in El Salvador where El Salvador's Supreme Court has twice rejected attempts to extradite them to Spain for trial in the case.

Meanwhile, there has been no visible progress on a possible prosecution in El Salvador of the military officers involved. Such a prosecution would be possible following the nullification of the 1993 amnesty law and is being sought by the Jesuit fathers, but does not yet appear likely. Earlier this year, a Salvadorean appeals court ratified the 30-year sentence of Colonel Alfredo Benavides for his role in the Jesuit murders. Benavides was originally found guilty in a trial in 1992, but was released as a result of the 1993 Amnesty Law. When the Amnesty Law was declared unconstitutional in 2016, Benavides' sentence was reinstated. In view of his advancing age and ill-health, the Jesuits have appealed for his release on humanitarian grounds.

WORLD'S FIRST MINING BAN

In March 2017 El Salvador's National Assembly unanimously passed legislation banning metallic mining, including gold mining in the country. According to the UN, El Salvador is the second most environmentally degraded country in the Americas, after Haiti.

The new law follows a years' long struggle against mining companies by environmental activists, and makes the country the first in the world to enact a nationwide ban on metallic mining. Strong endorsements of the legislation by Catholic Church leaders and by the Jesuit-run University of Central America appeared to create the additional momentum needed to make the bill become law.

Many people around the world celebrated this achievement. In tiny El Salvador, with limited water resources free of contamination, the threat of environmental degradation from mines was seen as too great. Add to that, most believed that the economic benefits

would only go to the multi-national companies which own and operate the mines.

But an article in The Guardian reminds us that there is another class of gold miners in El Salvador. "Artisanal" gold miners, who dig for gold by hand from small, older mines, will soon be put out of business by the new law. As The Guardian reports:

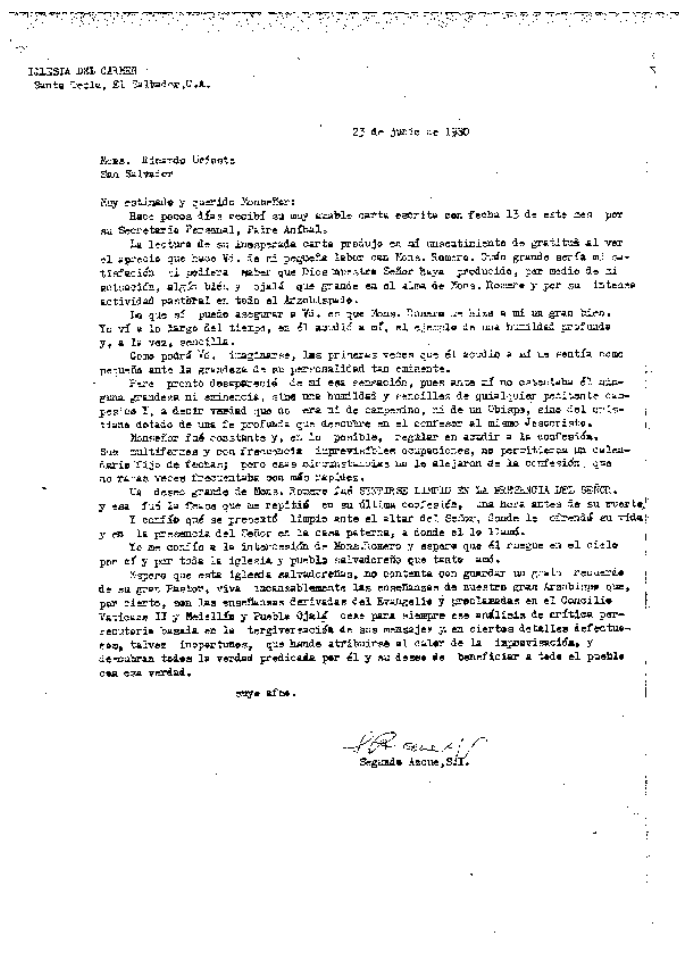
"There are weeks when we don't find any gold," he says. Soza has worked all his life as a small-scale, artisanal miner. He works five days a week inside an underground mine, dragging carts filled with heavy rocks or dealing with the hazards of mercury, yet he barely makes enough money to support his wife and two children. But Soza doesn't complain. "I like the work here," he says. "I'm my own boss. We built the mine with our own hands and we know it's safe. We don't use any bad chemicals. There are no jobs in this area. If they take mining away from us it will be a disaster."

The article points out that the law prohibiting mining has a two-year transition period for small-scale miners. After that, they will be out of a

job. In a country where jobs are scarce and rural poverty is high, those who won the victory over gold mining need to advocate for support programmes for the artisan miners of El Salvador.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

We are fortunate to have sight of a letter written by Romero's confessor, Fr. Segundo Azcue SJ, to Mons. Urioste, three months after Romero's martyrdom.



Iglesia del Carmen

Santa Tecla, El Salvador, C.A.

23 June 1980

Mons. Ricardo Urioste

San Salvador

Dear beloved Monseñor,

I received your kind letter dated 13th of this month a few days ago, delivered by your Personal Secretary, Father Aníbal.

Upon reading your unexpected letter, I felt gratified by your appreciation of my humble work with Mons. Romero. How great would be my happiness if I could know that through my action our Lord God had intervened for good in some way, and how great the happiness of Mons. Romero's soul, for his intense pastoral action throughout the Archdiocese.

What I can say is that Mons. Romero did me a great good. I was able to perceive his example of a deep and simple humility over the time that he came to me.

As you may imagine, the first few times he turned to me, I felt tiny before the greatness of his eminent personality.

But I quickly lost that feeling, because he showed me no such greatness or eminence, only the humility and simplicity of any poor peasant. And to tell the truth, not even that of a peasant, nor of a Bishop, but of a Christian graced with a profound faith who discovers Jesus Christ in his confessor.

Monseñor was constant and, in so far as was possible, regular in his confessions. His many, and frequently unplanned, activities prevented him from having regular fixed appointments, but that did not distance him from confession; often he would confess with even more frequency.

Mons. Romero had a great desire to FEEL CLEAN IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. This was the phrase that he repeated in his last confession, one hour before his death.

I trust that he was clean when he stood before the altar of the Lord where he gave his life, and in the presence of the

Lord in the Father's home, where he had been called.

I trust in the intercessions of Mons. Romero and I hope that he is praying in heaven for me and for all the church and the Salvadorean people who loved him so much.

I hope that this Salvadorean church is not content with a pleasing memory of a great Pastor, but lives out tirelessly the teachings of our great Archbishop which, without doubt, are teachings taken from the Gospel and proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, Medellin and Puebla. May there be an end once and for all to this persecution through critical analysis based on a misinterpretation of his messages and certain, perhaps unfortunate and weak, details, which should be attributed to the heat of improvisation. May everyone discover the truth that he preached, and his desire that this truth should benefit all people.

Yours sincerely,
Segundo Azcue, SJ

PILGRIMAGE 2017 IN PICTURES

Michael Woodward made the Romero Pilgrimage in November. This is his photo story.



The beautiful view over San Salvador from our base, the Loyola Retreat Centre. The peace was frequently nuanced by the sound of a helicopter: an echo of the terrible Civil War that cost 75,000 lives.



The Divine Providence Hospital chapel where Romero was shot on March 24th, 1980.



The Wall of Memory in a San Salvador park, bearing many of the names of those murdered and disappeared between 1977 and 1992. Sr Anne Kelly lived in El Salvador for many years and knew Jean Donovan, the lay companion of the three American nuns raped and murdered in December 1980.



We had the opportunity to pray at Romero's tomb in the crypt of the Cathedral, accompanied by musicians of the association of Base Communities.



We met so many impressive people. Anita Ortiz, the sister of the first priest that Romero ordained as a bishop, who was murdered by the army in January 1979, had a profound effect on all of us when she spoke at San Antonio Abad. She lost all five of her brothers in the war, but spoke about peace and forgiveness without a trace of bitterness.

We visited UCA, the Jesuit University, where Clare Dixon was honoured with a special presentation and we were able to meet Fr Jon Sobrino, here pictured with Fr Eamonn O'Brien who woke him in Thailand to tell him the terrible news of the November 1989 massacre of his community.





It was lovely to get out to the countryside, and we had a delicious Sunday lunch in a beautiful hotel in Suchitoto...



...before a stunning boat trip on the nearby lake.



The El Salvador word I take away with me is 'and': Romero and the 75,000; the 6 Jesuits and their housekeeper and her daughter; Fr Rutilio Grande and the old catechist and the teenage boy. The three are buried in front of the altar at El Paisnal.



We were blessed with a wonderful, diverse group of pilgrims from U.K., N.Z., Ireland, Congo, Kenya. The mural art crops up everywhere!



We heard many uplifting and many terrible stories. Our visit to the village of El Mozote, site of a ghastly massacre of more than 1000 people (including 250 children) in December 1981 was the most harrowing. Our guide was in a house missed by the death squads, who obliterated her village.



It is good to finish with young residents of the resurgent El Mozote. Poignantly, Maria (not her real name) is the age of many of those named on the memorial wall. But she has an education and a potential future in this place of past sorrow. She also patiently and efficiently sold all her bracelets. I was left with hope for her and her friends, and for the future of the beautiful country of El Salvador.

NEW PATRON FOR ROMERO TRUST



Photo supplied by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Reverend Dr John Hall pauses to show Pope Benedict XVI Romero's statue as they enter Westminster Abbey 17 September 2010.

The Dean of Westminster Abbey, Very Rev Dr John Hall, has graciously agreed to become a Patron of the Archbishop Romero Trust. Appointed Dean over a decade ago, John Hall has become a great admirer of Blessed Oscar as one of the great Christian martyrs of the 20th century whose statue has stood over the Great West Door of the Abbey since 1998. He demonstrated a great commitment to Romero's Cause when, during Pope Benedict's visit to the Abbey for Evensong in 2010, he paused the procession into the Abbey to point out to

the Pope the statue over the entrance facade honouring Archbishop Romero.

Dr John Hall becomes the ninth Patron of the Trust - alongside Archbishop John Sentamu, Lord Rowan Williams, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Sister Pamela Hussey, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Sister Maria Julia Garcia, Archbishop Leo Cushley, and Mgr Rafael Urrutia.

CLARE DIXON HONOURED BY THE UCA

During the Romero Trust pilgrimage to El Salvador last November, Clare Dixon - Secretary of the Archbishop Romero Trust - was honoured for her outstanding service to the people of Latin America over these past 40 years.

A special ceremony was arranged at the Jesuit University in San Salvador, which is known as the UCA. The University was awarding to Clare the **José Simeón Cañas Medal for Extraordinary Merit** in recognition of her commitment and work in support of the people, the Church and the Society of Jesus in El Salvador and Central America.

For this grand occasion a crowd of pilgrims from Britain joined the Rector of the University and his colleagues, together with Jon Sobrino and other close friends from the Jesuit community, to celebrate and to congratulate Clare on receiving this singular honour.



Fr. Juan Hernandez Pico SJ, Marielos Torres, Fr. Andreu Oliva SJ, Clare Dixon and Fr. Jon Sobrino SJ

Clare has been Head of CAFOD's Latin America programmes since 1978 - and she has been Secretary of the Romero Trust since its inception in 2005.

The medal - which is a very special distinction - was instituted in 1980; and this is only the 21st such medal to be awarded. The presentation to Clare is a beautiful and timely acknowledgment of her indomitable spirit, her generous solidarity, her courageous and discerning commitment, and her loyalty to the memory of El Salvador's martyrs, several of whom she had known and worked with.

The medal citation signed by the University Rector, Andreu Oliva and the University Secretary, Juan Hernandez Pico, highlights Clare's dedication to the poor throughout Latin America, supporting their struggles in defence of human rights and dignity; the solidarity she has shown through the support to a whole host of initiatives and programmes of the Society of Jesus in Central America; her continuous accompaniment to the UCA for more than 30 years and her contribution to the social outreach work of the University, especially in defence of the cause of the martyrs; and her exemplary faith, hope and love which she has invariably shown in her work, especially in support of Monseñor Romero throughout his time as Archbishop and latterly in the foundation of the Romero Trust in Great Britain, to make known his life, his work and his legacy.



Clare Dixon: we salute you!

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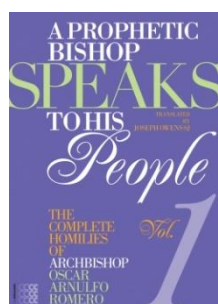
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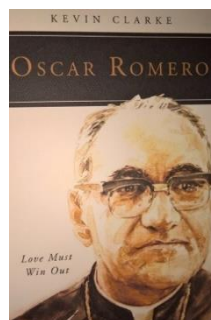
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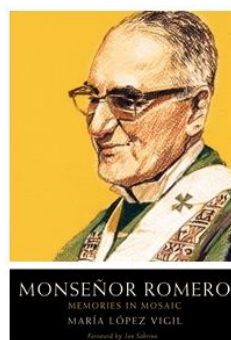


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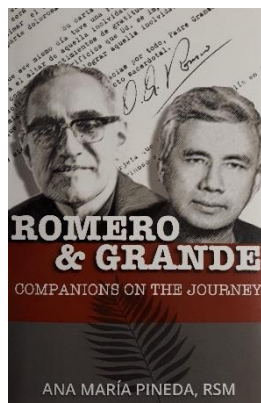
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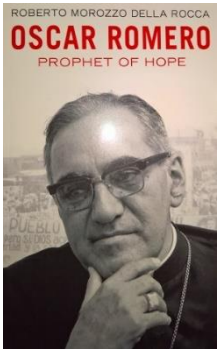
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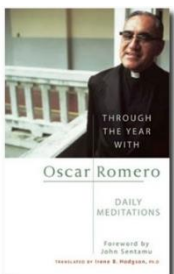
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and
The Communion of Saints



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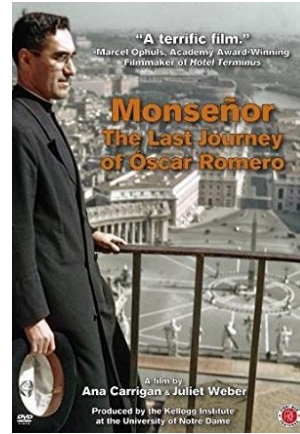
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