

Romero news

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**** BARGAIN BOOK OFFERS ****

Romero - Thirtieth Anniversary

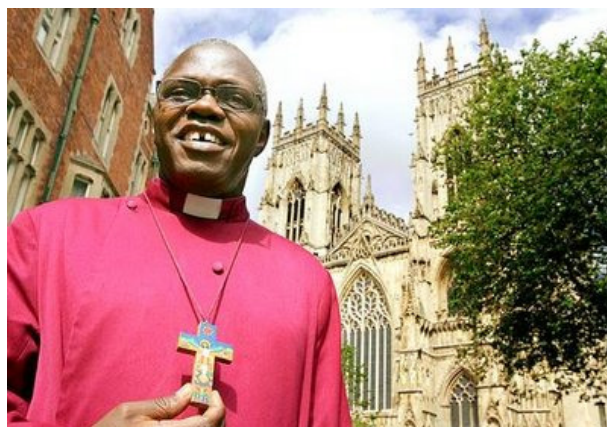
24 March 2010 marks the thirtieth anniversary of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom. Many will congregate in El Salvador for a special celebration with a new Head of State, Mauricio Funes, who has dedicated his presidency to Archbishop Romero. Meanwhile here in Britain there will be two major ecumenical liturgies and special masses in more than a dozen dioceses in Scotland, England and Wales.



Two Major Ecumenical Services York Minster and Westminster Abbey

York Minster – Saturday 20 March 2010

The Saturday preceding the anniversary, there will be a Romero Service in York Minster at 11.00am led by two Romero Trust Patrons. The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, will preach and Cardinal Keith O'Brien will offer prayers in the sanctuary. **All are welcome.**



John Sentamu, Archbishop of York and Patron of the Romero Trust, wears a Salvadorean cross in memory of Romero

Westminster Abbey, Sunday 28 March 2010

A week later on Sunday 28 March, which is Palm Sunday, there will be a special Evening Service in Westminster Abbey at 6.30pm at which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will preach, joined by fellow-Patron, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Archbishop Vincent Nichols and the Superintendent Minister of Wesley's Chapel, Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths. **All are welcome.**

More Celebrations in Many Dioceses

On the anniversary day itself, Wednesday 24 March, there will be a special Mass in **Edinburgh** Cathedral at 7.00pm at which Cardinal Keith O'Brien will preside and

Bishop Maurice Taylor will preach. In London, Archbishop Vincent Nichols will celebrate and preach at a Romero Mass in **Westminster** Cathedral at 5.30pm on the anniversary evening. Additionally, **Southwark** are planning a celebratory mass in St George's Cathedral at 12.30pm lunchtime. There will also be a special mass at 7.00pm in St Chad's Cathedral in **Birmingham**. It will be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop William Kenney, standing in for Archbishop Bernard Longley who will himself, under CAFOD's auspices, be marking the anniversary in Romero's own cathedral in San Salvador along with Bishop Arthur Roche of Leeds. **Brentwood** Cathedral too will have a special Romero anniversary mass at 7.00pm, followed by a talk on Romero. **Salford** Diocesan Faith and Justice Commission has organised a special Mass at Saint Peter & Paul Church, Pendleton at 7.30pm. In **Portsmouth** Diocese there will be a Romero Mass at 7.30pm at St James and St William parish in Reading. All of the above will take place on Wednesday 24 March 2010.

East Anglia has organised a whole Romero Week in the diocese. On Sunday 21 March at 3.30pm there will be Choral Evensong at Norwich Cathedral (Anglican) followed by short talks by Bishop Graham James and Bishop Michael Evans on Archbishop Romero. There will be an anniversary Mass on 24 March at 7.30pm in St John's (Catholic) Cathedral in Norwich celebrated by Bishop Michael Evans. On Saturday 27 March, there will be a study day in Norwich led by Bishop Michael Evans.

Hexham and Newcastle's Justice and Peace Commission together with the diocesan CAFOD Office have arranged a special mass on the Vigil, Tuesday 23 March, at St Joseph's, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne. Fr Jim O'Keefe will preside and preach. Much earlier, on Sunday 14 February, Bishop Michael Campbell will celebrate a special Diocesan Mass at **Lancaster** Cathedral at 10.30am to honour Archbishop Romero. It will be followed by a talk in the Cathedral Centre by Jan Graffius, Conservator at Stonyhurst College. **Liverpool's** Justice and Peace team, who have organised a Romero memorial Mass every year since the martyrdom in 1980, plan to have the 2010 celebration on Sunday 7 March at St Mary's Lowe House, St Helen's. In **Hallam** Diocese,

St Marie's Cathedral in Sheffield will host both a Romero Mass at 6.30 pm on Sunday 21 March and an Ecumenical Service on Tuesday 23 March at 7.00 pm. Post-anniversary Romero events are being planned over the weekend of 23 to 26 April in **Wrexham** diocese. **Arundel & Brighton:** Tuesday 23 March, 6:45pm - Vigil Service at St Peter's Church, Shoreham-by-Sea,; Wednesday 24 March 9:00am - adoration with prayers for peace & justice at St Joseph's Church, Redhill, followed by Mass at 10:00am; Wednesday 24 March, 6:45pm - Romero Stations of the Cross at St Peter's Church, Shoreham-by-Sea. **Shrewsbury:** On 24 March there will be a Romero Mass at St Mary's Hooton.

We hope as many of 'Friends of Romero' as possible will be able to attend an anniversary service to salute our 'Servant of God' Oscar Romero as we wait and hope and pray for further news of his beatification cause.

**Pilgrimage to El Salvador in November 2010
BOOK NOW!**



One of the beautiful volcanoes that marks the Salvadorean landscape

We are happy to announce that bookings are now open for the Archbishop Romero Trust Pilgrimage to El Salvador which will take place in November 2010. Over ten days the pilgrimage will give the opportunity to visit the "holy places" associated with Archbishop Romero and the martyrs of El Salvador and to meet with people who lived through the troubled times and are now working to rebuild their society and country. It involves departure from London on Wednesday 10 November and a return into London Heathrow on Sunday morning

21 November. It is arranged in conjunction with the experienced Travel and Pilgrimage Organizer, Anthony Coles, who will accept bookings and provide full details of the planned journey and programme.

The pilgrimage will include a morning at the Carmelite Hospital where Romero lived, mass in the Chapel there where he was assassinated in 1980 and a visit to the Cathedral where he preached his famous homilies and where he is buried. We shall go to the place where four US religious women were raped and killed in that same year and we shall spend time at the University where the six Jesuits and their housekeepers were gunned down in November 1989. We shall travel outside the capital city to Ciudad Barrios, Romero's birthplace, to Aguilares, the site of Fr Rutilio Grande's murder and to El Mozote, a remote village in the east of the country where one of the worst massacres of the civil war took place.



The El Mozote memorial honours victims of the 1981 massacre

Additionally we shall see the lakeside town of Suchitoto and make a trip to La Palma in the north where the beautiful painted handicrafts are made. Museum visits and lunch by the Pacific Ocean are also included in the schedule. There will be a visit too to one of the poorer, troubled areas of the capital city in the company of one of the religious team working there. Talks, special masses and prayer services are included in the programme.

Clare Dixon and Julian Filochowski together with Anthony Coles will accompany the pilgrims and the group will not exceed thirty persons in all. We are booked to stay at the Loyola Centre in San Salvador, run by the Central American Jesuit Province. The centre

provides guest accommodation in simple furnished en-suite single and twin-bedded rooms. The cost of the pilgrimage will be **£1,395** per person inclusive of flights to and from London, accommodation, meals and the full programme in El Salvador. For further information and to make a booking or to reserve a place on the pilgrimage please contact: **Anthony Coles**, 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SX. Tel: 020 7431 3414. Fax: 020 7794 7803. Email: arctc@btinternet.com

Cardinal Keith O'Brien comforts victims of Hurricane Ida

In November 2009 Cardinal Keith O'Brien, a Patron of the Archbishop Romero Trust, was in El Salvador for the anniversary of the UCA Martyrs. His visit coincided with the devastating floods and landslides caused by Hurricane Ida. Clare Dixon travelled with him to deliver relief supplies to the affected communities.

Six o'clock in the morning and the working day was already well under way below a hot bright sun. Lorries, pick-ups and trucks formed a motley caravan as they lined up outside the chapel of the Romero Pastoral Centre in the campus of the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador. A troop of eager volunteers passed packages along a human chain to load supplies of vital provisions onto the vehicles, ready to be ferried to the survivors of the floods and landslides which a few days previously had ravaged central El Salvador. After days of heavy rain brought by Hurricane Ida, in the space of only four hours, more than fourteen inches of rain had poured down, leaving 180 dead and tens of thousands of people homeless. Worst hit was the area of San Vicente where whole villages had been engulfed when a huge swathe of the slopes of the volcano,



Cardinal Keith O'Brien in El Salvador

weakened by the torrential downpour, broke away and tore down into the lowlands as a raging torrent of mud, rocks and trees destroying everything in its wake and wiping out roads, villages and crops.

Immediately after the news of the disaster broke the UCA radio station broadcast an appeal for help for the victims of the mudslides. Within half an hour the first contributions started to arrive at the radio's offices. On occasions like this, the solidarity and community spirit of people in El Salvador really shine through: just two days after the emergency, to get into the radio's HQ we had to climb over piles of rice, beans, cornmeal and other staple foods and sacks of clothes, blankets and basic utensils which had been donated by people scarcely better off than the victims of the floods themselves.



Hurricane Ida brought days of torrential rain and mudslides

Amongst the UCA volunteers, Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, did his bit to help. The Cardinal had flown into El Salvador late the previous night to be present at the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the Jesuit martyrs of the UCA. The Jesuits had been murdered along with two women co-workers just yards from where we now stood, their tombs in the chapel bedecked with flowers brought for the feast of All Souls.

As our caravan of vehicles struggled along rutted roads which had only just been reopened, after mudslides had cut off all the access routes, the Cardinal gave radio interviews to the UCA journalists broadcasting live to the whole country: "When I see just how you all take care of each other, I can see the values of love, of dignity, of

solidarity, the spirit of Monseñor Romero and our dear Jesuit martyrs are truly alive today".

It's the Pope! - cried the people in astonishment as the imposing scarlet-robed figure made his way through the rubble and devastation to greet and hug and bless and pray for the community as their surprise turned to tears of joy.

As we arrived in the devastated village of Mirafior, people were still trying to dig out their houses from under ten feet of mud. As food and clothing supplies were unloaded to the parish centre where refuges for the homeless had been organised, Cardinal Keith rushed to embrace and comfort the families who had lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods. "Es el Papa!", - It's the Pope! - cried the people in astonishment as the imposing scarlet-robed figure made his way through the rubble and devastation to greet and hug and bless and pray for the community as their surprise turned to tears of joy. "I am a Cardinal from Rome, and I bring you the blessing of the Pope who stands with you in your times of suffering."

Under the sweltering sun, Cardinal Keith walked around the communities for hours, bringing with him a sense of hope and renewing the energies of people whose lives had been turned upside down. Yet they smiled and clapped and cheered as he led them in prayer for their loved ones and for a better, safer future. As one woman cried and hugged the Cardinal, her words said it all: "God saved us from the landslides but you have saved us from our sadness".



Villages and towns devastated by Hurricane Ida

President Funes recognises state responsibility for atrocities and asks for forgiveness

On 16 January 2010 - the eighteenth anniversary of the ending of civil war in El Salvador - President Mauricio Funes made a historic speech, recognising the role of the Salvadorean state in the human rights atrocities of the past and asking the victims for forgiveness. An extract from his speech, translated into English, follows.



President Mauricio Funes asks victims of violence for forgiveness

"In the name of the Salvadorean state, I recognise that agents belonging to the state, including the armed forces and public security bodies, committed grave human rights violations, including massacres, forced disappearances, torture, and other forms of repression, carried out mainly against defenceless civilians unrelated to the conflict. I recognise publicly the state's responsibility for these deeds, as much by action as by omission, given that it was and is the state's obligation to protect its citizens and guarantee human rights."

"In the name of the Salvadorean state, I ask for forgiveness from the boys and girls, men and women, old and young, religious, farmers, workers, students, intellectuals and human rights activists and all those who have been unable to stop grieving because they do not know the whereabouts of their loved ones. May this forgiveness serve to dignify the victims and contribute to the healing of the country's wounds and the building of a future filled with hope."

He ended his speech with a reference to Romero:

"I reaffirm today my preferential option for the poor, as it was expressed by our martyred bishop and the spiritual guide of the nation, Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero."

The People in the President's Palace

Dean Brackley SJ of the Romero Pastoral Centre reports on the ceremony at which the Government of El Salvador awarded posthumous honours to the Jesuit martyrs of the UCA, on the twentieth anniversary of their deaths in November 2009.

"Never, not even in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would set foot in the President's House", Niña Carmen said to me. Monica repeated it: "I never dreamt I could be in this place...I can't believe it."

Both of them were part of a group of fifteen villagers from the village of Jayaque, attending the ceremony in which President Mauricio Funes awarded the highest honours of the Republic to the Jesuits assassinated in the UCA twenty years ago. The Society of Jesus wanted these villagers from Jayaque to represent the poor communities whom the Jesuit martyrs had served, in the name of the vast majority of the people of El Salvador.



Members of the Jayaque village choir sing out for freedom at the Presidential Palace

The special guests from the village of Jayaque rose to their feet amongst government ministers, religious and church leaders and well known figures from Salvadorean society, and broke into a popular song:

**There will come a day when
As we raise our gaze
We all will see a view
Which spells out freedom**

These villagers from Jayaque had worked closely with their parish priest, Ignacio Martín-Baró, who served in

Jayaque for the last three years of his life. In those hard times pastoral agents had suffered persecution. "We were afraid to sing this song in Jayaque. We only dared sing it after the Jesuits arrived", Josefina Ramos confided to me. On this 16 November they sang it in the President's Palace:

**Brothers and sisters, take my hand
As we go forward together
And hurricanes of fear will give way
In the face of freedom**

The choristers recalled that dark day of the massacre, twenty years before. In the midst of fighting they risked everything to travel from Jayaque to the capital, covering many miles on foot, to be able to attend the funeral of their pastor and the other murdered Jesuits.

**We will follow that road
Already travelled
Striving to raise up
Those who had fallen
In their quest for freedom**

The rest of us present that day in the President's Palace joined in with their song which was the crowning touch to the event. It recalled with deepest feeling the dignity and undying hope of the victims and of the freedom which, little by little, we had struggled to build: the victory of truth and hope over lies and death.

**May you be like the wind
Which tears up weeds
So that truth can grow
And clear the way forward
After centuries of plunder
Against the quest for freedom**

The delegation from Jayaque spoke with faith and profound humanity. They are the people who, with countless others, inspired our martyrs, leading them to live and to die for truth and human dignity. They gave their lives for a better future.

**And the deserted fields
Will burst forth once more
With golden wheat
To make that bread which
For long centuries
Was never shared with all of those
Who did all they could
To walk the path to freedom**

The martyrs believed that not only another world was possible: they believed that, with Jesus, it had already begun and that, like him, it is unstoppable. "This is an

historic event", was the comment of Miguel Calles. And so it was, because of the posthumous award to the murdered Jesuits, and so it was too, because of the fifteen neighbours from Jayaque who, on behalf of all Salvadoreans, were able to sing out for freedom.

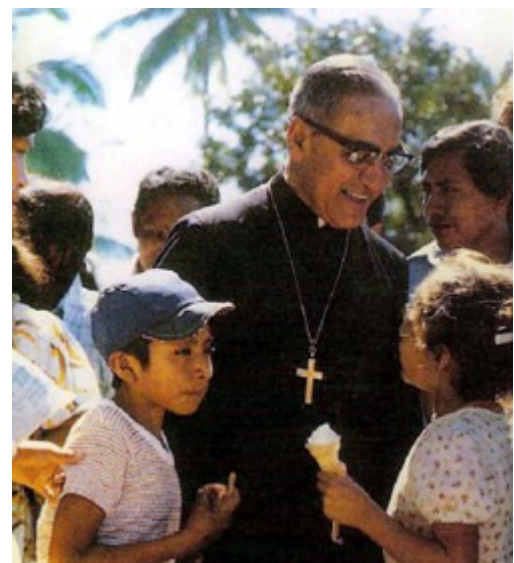


Symbolising hope, one of the sawdust 'carpets' made by students at the University on the twentieth anniversary of the Jesuit martyrs, 2009

Oscar Romero, Father of the Salvadorean Church

*Abridged version of an article by Jon Sobrino sj,
published in 'Carta a las Iglesias' in 2009*

The expression "Father of the Church" is not new. In the first centuries of the Church, this name was given to prominent Christians who "gave birth" to the Church, mainly through the teachings of faith. Some of their names are well known to us: Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Basil... they were a numerous group and some of them were bishops.



Romero, "Father of the Salvadorean Church"

At that time, four things were required of Fathers of the Church - a holy life, to explain the Word of God with knowledge and benefit, to direct the Church according to the signs of the times and to be accepted, in their teaching and leadership, by the community. These Church Fathers were greatly revered and still are in our liturgy and theology.

A generation of bishops gave birth to a new Church in Latin America. That generation of bishops was a true miracle.

Around Medellín in 1968, something similar occurred. A generation of bishops gave birth to a new Church in Latin America. They insisted that they were led and instructed by the people, but it is important to remember their example today, when the Church's outlook as an institution has become gloomy. They include Hélder Câmara, Leonidas Proaño and Sergio Méndez Arceo. Some of them are martyrs like Enrique Angelelli, Juan Gerardi and Monseñor Romero. That generation of bishops was a true miracle.



In Monseñor [Romero], the four requirements mentioned above were entirely fulfilled: evident holiness and eminence in his everyday and ministerial life; knowledge of the Word of God and of faith in his homilies and pastoral letters; lucidity and leadership to set the Church in its historic context according to the signs of the times;

acceptance and affection from poor people – and like Jesus – repugnance by those who held power. Let us look briefly at the characteristics of the Church to which Monseñor gave birth, as “Father of the Salvadorean Church”.

A Church as a follower of Jesus with the people

After that mass in Aguilares in June 1977, many things happened: massacres, persecution, a coup and military governments. In the street you could read, “Be a Patriot, Kill a Priest”. The signs of war were on the horizon, and also the growth of grassroots organisations and of the *grassroots Church*, a name that became anathema. Monseñor was in the middle of all of this. He could have become frozen by fear or by ecclesiastical prudence, or he could have taken just small steps. But he went forward with increasing purpose like an absolved follower of Jesus, and shaped the Church as a follower of Jesus. His mission was to serve the kingdom of God and he put the Church at the service of that kingdom; that is to say at the service of people who were poor, oppressed and victims. His option for the poor was total. To them he announced the good news of liberation and of a liberating God. In them he saw the crucified Christ. In them he heard the voice of God. And amongst them he became incarnate. That is what changed everything.

Ellacuría wrote: “what had been an opaque, amorphous and useless word became a torrent of life, which people approached to quench their thirst”.

A Church of prophecy

The theologian Karl Barth used to say that it was necessary to preach with the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Monseñor preached with the bible in one hand and with reality in the other. And as he preached, he was immersed in reality. The day before his assassination, he said, “During the week, as I gather up the cry of people, the pain of so much crime and the awfulness of so much violence, I ask the Lord to give me the right words to console, to denounce and to call out for repentance.” (Homily of 23 March 1980)

Monseñor preached with the bible in one hand and with reality in the other. And as he preached, he was immersed in reality.

His last homily in the Cathedral was memorable. Addressing the army, police and National Guard, he finished with these words: "Brothers, you are from our same people. You are killing your fellow countrymen. When you are faced with a man's order to kill, God's law must prevail, the law that says "Do not kill". No soldier has to obey an order that goes against God's law. It is time now for you to redeem your conscience and obey your conscience before the order of sin. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose cries rise up to heaven more frantically every day, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!" (23 March 1980).

A Church of martyrs

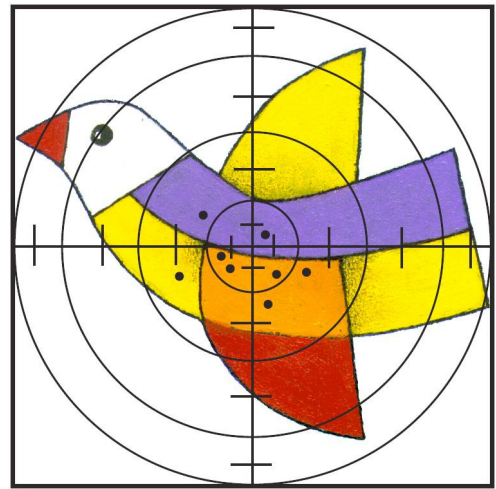
During the three years of his ministry, several priests and lay workers were assassinated. This was the *martyrdom of Jesus* of our times. There were massacres of innocent and defenceless country folk. The country itself was martyred, "the suffering servant of Yahweh". When he spoke about an assassinated priest, he explained clearly the reasons for his martyrdom: "they kill those who obstruct ... like they killed Christ" (23 September 1979).

But he also said something that wasn't commonly said:

"I am pleased, brothers and sisters, that our Church is persecuted" (15 July 1979). "It would be sad if, in a country where people are being killed so horrifyingly, there weren't also priests amongst the victims. They are the testimony of a Church that is incarnated in the problems of the people" (4 July 1979).

Monseñor encouraged the Church to be a Church of Jesus and a Salvadorean Church. In her, he lived and died. He never fled persecution, because of his consistency and solidarity. "I want to repeat what I have already told you, that the shepherd does not ask for safety when his flock are not given safety" (22 July

1979). He died like his people and died thinking of the liberation of his people. "May my blood be the seed of freedom and the signal that hope will soon become reality" (March 1980). He was a "Father of a Church of martyrs".



A Church of "liberation"

Prophecy and martyrdom were a consequence of confronting the *anti-kingdom*. But above all, Monseñor announced good news and took the consequences. The option for the poor involved a fight for their fundamental rights. It wasn't possible to be the Church of the poor and yet abandon them to their fate without taking part in their struggles. With the spirit of the poor, of the beatitudes and of Jesus, it could be the yeast that makes the dough grow and ferment. Monseñor was the "Father of a church of liberation" that offers hope that we can live in justice and fraternity, as brothers and sisters.

It wasn't possible to be the Church of the poor and yet abandon them to their fate without taking part in their struggles.

A Church of God

In the cathedral and in the villages, Monseñor was with his people. But in the "little hospital", he was alone with God. Like Jesus beside the lake or in the orchard, he prayed to God who sees what is hidden. And he announced the "good news of God".

He also spoke about that mysterious and indescribable God in his homilies. Very near the end, in the middle of

the barbarity, he cried out for justice and for an end to the violence. But with the same conviction, he said: "No man knows himself until he has met God... How wonderful it would be, dear brothers and sisters, if the fruit of this homily today might be that each of us were to find God and to live with the happiness of his majesty and our smallness!" (10 February 1980).

In the cathedral and in the villages, Monseñor was with his people. But in the "little hospital", he was alone with God.

God did not lead him to abandon history, but the very opposite, opening him constantly to greater possibilities. Transcendence did not make the events of the time detached from history, but rather made them part of history in a human way, encouraging all that was sin to be eradicated and strengthening all that was grace. That is what he said with great emphasis, as he placed great hope in people's organisations. To see God like that, and to be before God with that attitude is easy to say and difficult to do, but it flowed from him absolutely naturally.

That is the Church to which Monseñor Romero gave birth. With reason and gratitude, we can call him the "Father of the Salvadorean Church".

An anecdote: Our Main Job in the Seminary

Anecdote from Archbishop Romero's chauffeur, Juan Bosco Palacios

Our main job in the seminary was to chauffeur him around. That was Joaquín's and my mission. You had to be somewhat thick-skinned to put up with all of the ups and downs of Monseñor Romero's personality. Joaquín ran out of patience and surrendered the steering wheel. I took over and, little by little, started to figure out Monseñor's eccentricities.

Whenever he was really tired, he'd take a little siesta after lunch. One day he had to say Mass in Apopa.

"We have to leave here at one o'clock", he advised me sharply.

I arrived at the *hospitalito* at noon and ate lunch.

"Where's the man?", I asked Sister Teresa.

"Leave him alone. He's sleeping."

"But sister, it's after 12.30. We have to wake him up. If we don't, he's going to be angry with us."

"Let him sleep a little more. He's really tired. Besides, you always drive fast anyway."



Romero's Toyota which Juan drove as his chauffeur

It was a quarter 'til one, and he was still sleeping. One o'clock – no change. Sometime after one, he woke up by himself, and when he saw the clock, he started yelling at both of us. He said we'd made him late, that he didn't like to show up late and so on and so forth. By the time we got into the car, it was 1:30 and he was totally furious.

"I don't know how you're going to do it," he said, "but I have to be in Apopa at 2 o'clock sharp!"

So I started up the car and took off in a hurry. When I stopped at the first traffic light, he jumped on my case.

"Don't stop for anything!"

When he was like that, he was a pain to drive with and it wore you out. We went on. On one of those blind curves on the way out of Ciudad Delgado, there was a

big bus in front of us that we couldn't get round because it was so big.

"Pass it!" he ordered me. "Pass it now!"



A painting of a Salvadorean town

He was acting as my copilot. "All right, I'll pass it." I thought. But when I was pulling past the bus, I saw there was a damned truck bearing down on us at full speed! I didn't think we could make it. It was practically on top of us. Son of a bitch! I pushed the accelerator down to the floor to pass the bus and get out of the way of that monster of a truck. And yes! Yes! I made it! There we were: the bus here, the truck there and me in the middle like a piece of meat caught between two teeth!

"You son of a bitch!!!" the people on the bus screamed.

"Are you trying to kill us?!"

You could see the smoke from the braking tyres of the three vehicles, and everyone in the bus was looking out the windows to see who the idiot was that had attempted such a manoeuvre... About that time, Monseñor Romero stuck his head out of our little Toyota.

"Good grief! It's Monseñor!" you could hear people yell.

Some people on the bus were raging and others were delighted to be able to say hello to Monseñor. I tried to apologise to the drivers of the other two vehicles, but he cut me off unrepentant.

"Hey, we're not getting anywhere sitting here and making a spectacle out of ourselves. So step on it! Let's get out of here!"

I took off at full speed. At two o'clock on the dot, we were in Apopa.

Extract from *Memories in Mosaic*, by María López Vigil, a collection of stories about Archbishop Romero – available from the Archbishop Romero Trust. See [Bargain Offers](#) below.

Annual Archbishop Romero Memorial Lecture June - July 2010

The 2010 Lecture will be given by Fr Thomas Greenan, a priest of the Edinburgh diocese, now living and working in the remote Petén area of Guatemala. He spent many years as a missionary priest in El Salvador before moving to neighbouring Guatemala. He has researched and written a major study which compares and contrasts the lives of Saint John Chrysostom in the 4th Century and Archbishop Romero in our own times. We hope that Fr Thomas will bring us new insights into Archbishop Romero's life and teaching.



The venues and dates are not yet fixed but he will be with us in Britain in the last week of June and the first week of July 2010 when the Romero Trust plans to organise meetings for him in Edinburgh and London as

well as in the North West and North East of England. Further details will be made available and publicised in early April.

Romero Memorial Liturgies

Many masses and ecumenical prayer services are being organised in communities and parishes across Scotland, England and Wales to mark the forthcoming thirtieth anniversary of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom.

To offer assistance to those preparing special liturgical celebrations, brief resource notes will be available on the **Romero Trust website** www.romerotrust.org.uk from the beginning of February.

Book review:

'Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints' by Scott Wright

Sarah Smith-Pearse reviews 'Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints' by Scott Wright

OSCAR ROMERO
and
The Communion of Saints



SCOTT WRIGHT

Scott Wright met Oscar Romero in 1979, shaking his hand to thank him for his inspirational presence at the Latin American bishops' conference in Puebla, Mexico. The impact on Wright of their brief, but personal encounter is expressed in the intimate and tender style

of his biography, *Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints*. The book has been published to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Romero's martyrdom and reflects on his life and spirituality as one of the greatest Church figures of the twentieth century.

Thirty years ago, when Romero was assassinated by the Salvadorean military, Wright moved to El Salvador to serve as a pastoral worker with the refugees and rural communities caught in the terror of the civil war. This experience deepened his knowledge of Romero and the Archbishop's impact on the Salvadorean people. He explains, "It's a bit daunting to tell the story of a saint. What makes it less so is remembering the people from whom I first heard the stories about Romero, those humble *campesinos* who loved and revered him, because he first loved and defended them, the poor of El Salvador".

The book is beautifully composed with testimonies from people who knew Romero, extracts from his homilies and the author's own insightful commentary into the political and social context that led relentlessly forward to the climax of the archbishop's assassination and martyrdom. One of the special joys of this biography is its inclusion of many rarely-seen photographs, taken by Octavio Durán, a Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer.

Tracing Romero's life from 1917 and his humble family origins in Ciudad Barrios, a small town in the east of El Salvador, Wright draws striking parallels with the life of Jesus. He observes, "Both were born into conditions of poverty, in the province of a small and insignificant country. Both lived a life of profound intimacy with God and prayed by night. They both learned the trade of a carpenter. For both, the assassination of a good friend became a decisive event in their lives. Both took sides with the poor and those who were socially excluded. In time, all of the important social groups were allied against them. They were accused of being traitors who tried to upset the established order. Both confronted the imperialist powers of their day, and their public life lasted a mere three years."

The book's title, *The Communion of the Saints*, refers to the Christian symbol describing the relationship between the living and the dead, as one community of memory and hope linked to solidarity. Wright offers the symbol as a way of understanding Romero's pervading spiritual presence in El Salvador, even after his death. The impact of Romero's life goes far beyond the three years of his ministry as Archbishop of San Salvador. In Romero's own words, "My voice will disappear, but my word - which is Christ - will remain in the hearts of those who have wanted to receive it."

The Communion of the Saints can be purchased from the Archbishop Romero Trust, 8 Dean's Mews, London W1G 9EE for the price of £9 including packing and postage

New film, *Romero by Romero*

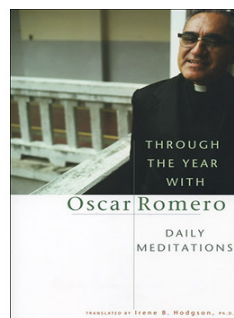


Just reaching completion, *Romero by Romero* is a reconstruction of the life of the Archbishop, based on his writings and interviews with those who worked most closely with him. The full-length feature film and accompanying edited-for-TV programme are nearing completion and will be premiered in San Salvador during the thirtieth anniversary celebrations. The Archbishop Romero Trust (ART) has provided advice and support for the film by award winning film producer Ana Carrigan, who has compiled a moving and inspirational tribute to Archbishop Romero. One of her previous works is the 1982 documentary "Roses in December" on the life Jean Donovan, one of the four US churchwomen murdered by the Salvadorean armed forces in

December 1980. Further details of UK premiere and availability will soon be on the Trust's website.

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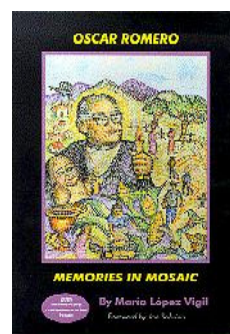
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