

# Romeronews

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## ART is honoured as a 'Friend of El Salvador'

Last month, the Archbishop Romero Trust was delighted to receive a special award from the Salvadoran government, recognising the organisation as a *Friend of El Salvador*. At a ceremony held at El Salvador's London embassy, the foreign minister, Hugo Martínez, presented the Trust with a special medal and scroll. To mark 200 years since Central America's independence from Spain, the Salvadoran government has bestowed

this honour on associations and individuals outside El Salvador who have contributed to the welfare of the Salvadoran people.

In a moving speech, Mr Martinez praised the Trust's work in fostering understanding of Archbishop Romero's life and legacy. He described Romero as one of the great heroes of Salvadoran history.



From left to right, Salvadoran foreign minister Hugo Martinez, Salvadoran ambassador to London Werner Romero, Chair and Secretary of ART, Julian Filochowski and Clare Dixon.

Julian Filochowski and Clare Dixon received the award on behalf of the Trust. They took the opportunity to praise President Mauricio Funes for his public recognition of the Salvadoran state's role in Romero's assassination and his commitment to the memory of Romero in his presidency.



The medal honouring the ART as a *Friend of El Salvador*

## Meeting the Victims and Falling in Love

A reflection by Dean Brackley SJ



We publish this article written by our much loved friend, Dean Brackley SJ, who died last October. In 2009, the Archbishop Romero Trust was honoured to receive Dean as the guest speaker for our Romero lectures. He worked at the Romero Centre of the UCA, the Jesuit-run university in El Salvador. In this article, he reflects on how foreign delegations “fall in love” when they visit El Salvador for the first time.

Waves of foreign delegations have come to El Salvador during recent years. The pilgrims de-plane a little anxious, vaguely dreading what awaits them. They know that the people are very poor. They have heard of massacres and bombings of the past and the hunger and sickness of the present. They fear, half-consciously, that these poor people will lunge for their wallets, or that when they, the visitors, arrive at their first poor community, they will suffer a massive Irish-Catholic --or Jewish or Methodist --guilt-attack and at the very least they will have to sell their VCR when they get back home.

As happens with most of our fears, it doesn't turn out that way. On the one hand, the visitors spend

much of their time in El Salvador wondering why these poor people are smiling. The people are glad they came and receive them with open arms. On the other hand, if the pilgrims listen to the stories of flight from the army, torture and death squads, and since the war, of unspeakable hardship and premature death, the victims will break their hearts. And that, after all, is the main reason the pilgrims have come. It is an experience of extraordinary richness, if the visitors muster the courage to take it in.

The encounter stops the visitors short and focuses their attention. "My God!" they cry. "Half their children die from preventable disease. The powerful steal from them at will. There is no justice. And what has my government been doing here in my name?" The poor bring the visitors face-to-face with evil; and the visitors respond with horror. Not that the poor are all saints. (Hardship brings out both the best and the worst in people, the D'Aubuissons and the Romeros.) They just obviously do not deserve what they have to suffer. The injustice clashes strikingly with their humanity.



Dean Brackley SJ

This presses in upon the visitors, and it can shake them to their roots. As the poor draw deeper into their own reality, the newcomers pass from observers to participants. The more they allow the poor to crash through their defences, the more

unsettled they feel. They begin to see their own reflection in the eyes of their hosts, and they say to themselves, "Hey, these people are just like us!"



Visitors at the Romero Centre where  
Dean Brackley received international delegations

They sense a gentle invitation to lay down the burden of their own superiority (of which they are mostly unaware) and identify with these humble people, despite the differences between them. They begin to feel smaller and more "ordinary." A sweet shame comes over them, not bitter remorse but more like the shame one feels when falling in love. The visitors feel themselves losing their grip; or better, they feel the world losing its grip on them. What world? The world made up of important people like them and unimportant poor people like their hosts. As the poet Yeats says, "things fall apart;" the visitors' world is coming unhinged. They feel resistance, naturally, to a current that threatens to sweep them out of control. They feel a little confused -again - like the disorientation of falling in love. In fact, that is what is happening, a kind of falling in love. The earth trembles. My horizon is opening up. I'm on unfamiliar ground, entering a richer, more real world.

We all live a bit on the periphery of the deep drama of life, more so, on average, in affluent societies. The reality of the periphery is thin, one-dimensional, "lite," compared to the multi-layered richness of this new world the visitors are entering. In this interchange with a few of their representatives, the anonymous masses of the world's poor emerge from their cardboard-cut-out reality and take on the three-dimensional status of full-fledged human beings.

Actually, there are more than three dimensions here. The eyes of the victim beckon. They are like a bottomless well in which something infinite draws me on. In their welcome, peace sweeps over me. I feel almost at home in this strange place. Although an accomplice to the world of important people like me and unimportant people like them, I feel accepted, forgiven --even before I have cleaned up my act with them or billions like them.

After reflecting on these issues for some years, it only gradually dawned on me that I belong to a peculiar tribe. The middle-class cultures of the North are newcomers to world history and have only existed for about 200 years. We're not all bad people. We're just a tiny minority under the common illusion that we are the centre of gravity of the universe. The poor can free us from this strange idea.

Don't get me wrong. The middle-class cultures have made extraordinary advances in civilization. True; many came at great cost to the despoiled nations and races. Still, these are historical achievements. And I'm not even talking about ambiguous technological progress. I mean the spiritual, cultural and political breakthroughs: the unheard-of opportunities, political liberties,

democracy, the critical consciousness of the Enlightenment, and all that. No need to demean these gains.

The problem for us is that the new freedoms and economic security have distanced the non-poor from the kind of daily life-and-death struggle that has been the daily fare of the poor of all times right up to today. Maybe 90 percent of all the people who ever lived have struggled every day to keep the household alive against the threat of death through hunger, disease, accidents and violence.

By distancing the non-poor from the daily threat of death, the benefits of modernity have induced in us a kind of chronic low-grade confusion about what is really important in life, namely life itself and love. Besides, superior technology and the communications media induce us to think of our culture and perspective on life as the norm, and basically on track. The encounter with the poor stops us short; it recollects us. When we come out on the other side, we realize that the marginalized are actually at the centre of things. It is we, in Washington and Paris, who are on the fringe.

These people shake us up because they bring home to us that things are much worse in the world than we dared to imagine. But that is only one side of the story: If we allow them to share their suffering with us, they communicate some of their hope to us as well. The smile that seems to have no foundation in the facts is not phony; the spirit of fiesta is not an escape but a recognition that something else is going on in the world besides injustice and destruction. The poor smile because they suspect that this something is more powerful than the injustice. When they insist on sharing their tortilla with a visiting gringo, we recognize there is

something going on in the world that is more wonderful than we dared to imagine.

It seems that the victim offers us the privileged place (although not the only place) to encounter the truth which sets us free. The poor usher us into the heart of reality. They bring us up against the world and ourselves all at once. To some extent, we all hold reality at arm's length –fending off intolerable parts of the world with one hand and intolerable parts of ourselves with the other.



Dean celebrating Mass at the UCA chapel

The two go together. As a rule, our encounters with the world place us in touch with internal reality, as well. In particular, when the world's pain crashes in upon us in the person of the victim, the encounter dredges up from within us the parts of ourselves that we had banished. The outcast outside us calls forth the outcast within us. This is why people avoid the poor. But meeting them can heal us. We will only heal our inner divisions if we are also working to heal our social divisions.



The victims of history - the destitute, abused women, oppressed minorities, all those the Bible calls "the poor" - not only put us in touch with the world and with ourselves, but also with the mercy of God. There is something fathomless about the encounter with the poor, as we have said - like the opening of a chess game with its infinite possibilities.

If we let them, the poor will place us before the abyss of the holy Mystery we call God. They are a kind of door that opens before that Mystery and through which God passes to get at us. Clearly we need them more than they need us. Small wonder that people keep returning. Something has happened, a kind of falling in love, I think.

**Universal Justice versus National Impunity**  
**Andreu Oliva speaks about "the Jesuits' case"**

The brutal massacre of six Jesuit priests and their two women employees at San Salvador's Central American University in November 1989 outraged public opinion across the world. Yet in El Salvador, only a few low-ranking soldiers were ever tried for the crime and were subsequently released.

Nearly 22 years later, in May 2011, a Spanish judge Eloy Velasco used Spain's universal jurisdiction law to pursue the case. He charged 20 Salvadoran soldiers, including two former Defence Ministers, with responsibility for the massacre, asserting the principle of universal jurisdiction that some crimes are so serious, they can be tried anywhere.

Romero News has interviewed Andreu Oliva SJ, the Vice-Chancellor of the UCA, about the case.

Andreu is a successor to Ignacio Ellacuría SJ, one of the eight victims of the 1989 murders.



*A candlelit procesion on the anniversary of the UCA martyrs*

*What was your personal reaction to the news of the Spanish courts' action?*

"I have the deepest respect for the actions of Spain: they have acted impeccably. At the same time, as Jesuits here, we have always wanted to see justice for our martyrs delivered in El Salvador itself, through the Salvadoran courts. This would mean a break with the past, ending the impunity and corruption of the legal system and state institutions."

*When he was elected in 2009 President Funes said he wanted to build a government based on justice and truth: the kind of government which Archbishop Romero dreamed of. How has the Salvadoran government reacted to Spain's demand?*

"We are angry at the response of the government and the legal establishment. They have given the soldiers protection and even allowed them to take refuge in military barracks. The Supreme Court has rejected the demands from Spain and Interpol to detain the accused and their rejection of the case has been riddled with falsehoods. It is an orchestrated and politically-motivated attempt at a cover-up."

*How do you explain the government's position?*

"Clearly there is no coherence between what the president and the government have said and their actions. We believe this is because of pressure from the military and the powerful groups responsible for these crimes. The President and the ruling party are already thinking of the next elections and are intimidated by the possibility of conflict from the armed forces."

"Our hopes are faint, but we shall continue to insist because if this case is resolved, it will strengthen our national institutions. The task of bringing justice for the victims, full and speedy justice, is the duty of our national authorities. The Salvadoran people keep on calling for justice, because this is the only way of overcoming impunity and building true peace throughout our nation."

### **President Obama visits Romero's tomb**



*Obama visiting Romero's tomb in March 2011*

In a historic visit to El Salvador in March 2011, President Obama paid homage to Romero, lighting a candle at his tomb in the cathedral crypt. Accompanied by the current Archbishop of San Salvador, José Luis Escobar, he then closed his

eyes, seemingly in prayer. Obama's visit took place almost 31 years to the day after Romero was killed by a death squad linked to the US-sponsored Salvadoran military. The Salvadoran newspaper, *El Faro*, echoed widespread public sentiment by describing Obama's homage to Romero as a "truly extraordinary" gesture.

### **"We're people on a pilgrimage" Remembering + Michael Evans**

*Sarah Smith-Pearse remembers Bishop Michael Evans, one of the Romero Trust's founders, who died in July.*

I first met Michael in 2005 when we travelled to El Salvador for the twenty fifth anniversary of Romero's martyrdom. Michael was representing the Romero Trust and I was working as a translator for a CAFOD-Caritas Europe group.

Michael had long been inspired by Romero's life and message. Romero's embracing of the Option for the Poor and his radical appeal against injustice and oppression was mirrored by Michael's own commitment to international development and campaigning. I understood how fundamental Romero was in Michael's spiritual formation when he told me that, as a seminarian, he had a Romero poster stuck on his wall.

Now on his first visit to El Salvador, Michael was moved to be able to retrace Romero's footsteps and celebrate Mass at the altar where Romero was gunned down.

Alongside the more official Romero events, including an open air Mass in the company of the

Salvadoran archbishop and other clergy, he came with us to visit marginal communities working with CAFOD in farming and health projects.

As the Bishop of East Anglia, his presence was a powerful symbol of international solidarity. Yet he was still new to his role and seemed almost bashful when he introduced himself to farmers and slum dwellers as - yes, could they believe it? - an English bishop. I enjoyed translating for him in those moments of personal encounter.



Bishop Michael Evans  
celebrating Mass at the altar where Romero was killed

Soon after we returned from El Salvador, Michael learned that he had cancer. I heard snippets of news, that he was ill, that he was looking better, that he sent his regards... Over the following five years and more, he faced his illness with courage and resilience.

When it seemed he was losing his fight with cancer, he was invited by the BBC to speak about his approaching death. He explained: "People don't talk about death anymore. And yet, at the very heart of our Christian faith, is the whole idea of dying and rising to something better." He added,

"I'd like to see more smiles. We're people on a pilgrimage."

Michael's visit to El Salvador was perhaps part of his own personal pilgrimage. It is with sadness and love that the Romero Trust remembers him, one of our founding trustees, who died on 11 July 2011.

### Pilgrimage to El Salvador in November 2012



One of the beautiful volcanoes that marks  
the Salvadoran landscape

The Archbishop Romero Trust would like to announce a second pilgrimage to El Salvador, which will take place in November 2012.

Over ten days, we will have the opportunity to visit the holy places associated with Archbishop Romero and other 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.

The trip is arranged in conjunction with the experienced Travel and Pilgrimage Organizer, Anthony Coles.

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 Father 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.

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 will accompany the pilgrims, together with Anthony Coles, and the group will not exceed 30 people in all. We will be staying 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 in the region of £1,500 per person inclusive of flights to and from London, accommodation, meals and the full programme in El Salvador.

For further information and 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](mailto:arctc@btinternet.com)

## Warm Welcome to our New Trustees

The Romero Trust is delighted to welcome three new trustees, Judith Rees, Bishop John Rawsthorne and Jan Graffius.



Judith Rees



Bishop John Rawsthorne



Jan Graffius (left) at Romero's home in San Salvador

## Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

There are now around 400 *Friends of Romero* who belong to our solidarity network. If you can afford to do so, please send us a cheque for £10 to help cover our costs.

Even better, please sign the Standing Order and Gift Aid forms which are printed at the end of this newsletter and return them to us at 8 Dean's Mews, London W1G 9EE.



## Romero Events March 2012

A note for your diaries: Romero Week, 17 – 25 March 2012. Events include:

**Study Day: Archbishop Oscar Romero: Utterly Radical and Utterly Orthodox, a Saint for the twenty first Century.** Julian Filochowski and Michael Campbell Johnston SJ will be running a Romero study day at the Jesuit Centre in Mount Street, London W1, on Saturday 17 March, from 11.00 am to 4.30 pm.

**Ecumenical Service:** a service in memory of Archbishop Romero will be held at 11.00 am on Saturday 24 March, at St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. Peter Price, the Anglican Bishop of Bath and Wells will give the address.

## Romero's Homilies and more .... on the Romero Trust website

Why not take a look at some of our excellent resources available on the Romero Trust website?



[www.romerotrust.org.uk/](http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/)

Here you can find the English translation of all of Romero's homilies as Archbishop between 1977 and 1980, as well as the audio recording of most of

them, so that you can read Romero's words whilst listening to his voice.

New additions to the website include the 2011 Romero lecture delivered by Cardinal Peter Turkson at Notre Dame University in the USA.



Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome. His 2011 Romero Lecture, delivered at Notre Dame University, is available on the Romero Trust website

## ***Brendan Callaghan SJ reviews***

**Archbishop Oscar Romero,  
a Disciple who Revealed the Glory of God,  
by Damian Zynda**

*"This book is about Romero. It is the witness of how Romero could not say no to God, regardless of what God desired for him or from him...."*

This is how Damian Zynda puts it in her introduction. But this is a very particular study of Archbishop Romero, because it makes careful use both of a distinctive theology – that of the second century theologian, St Irenaeus, and of a good measure of psychology from the twentieth and twenty first centuries. The consistent attempt to respond to grace acting on our limited humanity gives rise to what Irenaeus called "master disciples". For Zynda, Romero is a powerful and inspiring example of this. Alongside the more public struggles that led up to Romero taking the

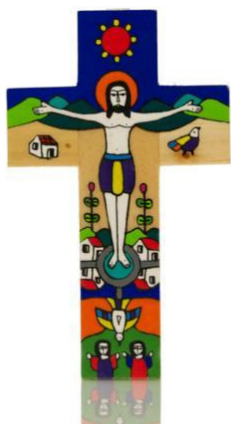
Gospel stance which culminated in martyrdom, the reader learns of the more private struggles of an obsessive-compulsive man set free by grace.

This is not a light read: the academic origins of this detailed study are clear. This is a book for those who want to get a deeper sense of the ways in which God's love-in-action transformed a rule-bound cleric into the beloved "Monseñor" and of how Romero's fidelity to God – his inability to say no to God – made him open to this transformation.

This is a book about Romero, but it is also a book about how God can work with each of us in our real limitations and draw us towards being fully alive.

### Salvadoran Handicrafts

#### Hand-painted Romero Cross



*£3.75 including p & p*

These beautiful Salvadoran crosses are hand-painted by Lázaro Rodríguez and his family, who work from their home in the northern border town of La Palma. The back of the cross shows the date of Archbishop Romero's birth and martyrdom and includes a quote from one of his homilies. Height: 4 inches (10 cms).

### Salvadoran Nativity Scene

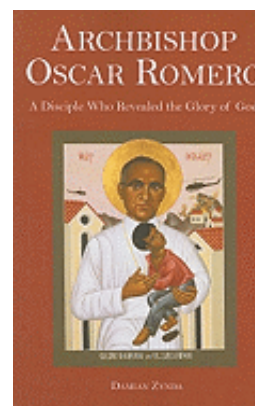


*£15.25 including p & p*

Also made by Lázaro and his family, each nativity scene is hand-painted in typical Salvadoran style. Height: 6 inches (15 cms).

### Bargain Book Offers

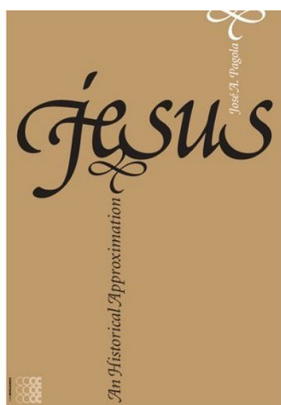
#### Archbishop Oscar Romero, a Disciple who Revealed the Glory of God,



*Special price of £10, reduced from £12.99  
(incl. p & p)*

A serious book for those who want to get a deeper sense of the ways in which God's love-in-action transformed a rule-bound cleric into the beloved "Monseñor".

## Jesus, an Historical Approximation



£24 (incl. p & p)

A Spanish best-seller, now available in English. Author Msgr 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.

## Oscar Romero and the Communion of the Saints

OSCAR ROMERO  
and  
The Communion of Saints

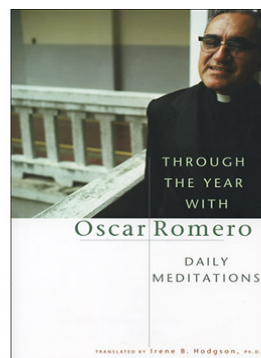


SCOTT WRIGHT

(£10 incl p & p)

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.

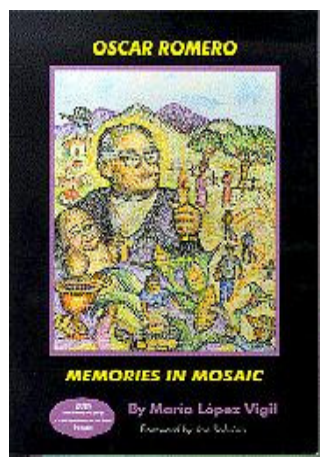
## Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations



(£9 incl p & p)

In these powerful and moving selections from his broadcasts, Romero invites us each day to move into the 'intimate space' of our conscience and then to go out to create a more just world.

## Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic



£10 (incl. p & p)

The story of Archbishop Romero, told by those who worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him. One of the best books on Romero.

**The books and crafts may be ordered from the Archbishop Romero Trust, 8 Dean's Mews, London W1G 9EE or by email: [romerotrust@btinternet.com](mailto:romerotrust@btinternet.com)**

Trustees: Julian Filochowski, Clare Dixon, Bishop John Rawsthorne, Rev Richard Carter, Frank Turner SJ, Tony Lester OCarm, Judith Rees, Jan Graffius. Treasurer: Stephen Lloyd. Membership: Madge Rondo. Romero News Editor: Sarah Smith-Pearse.

### Standing Order Mandate

You may use this form to set up a standing order in favour of Archbishop Romero Trust. Take it to your bank or write to your bank, or use internet or telephone banking.

Your name	
and address	

I would like to set up a **standing order** in favour of **Archbishop Romero Trust** (registered charity no 1110069),  
8 Deans Mews, London W1G 9EE

**Bank Account No 65149773; Sort code 08-92-99.**

Your bank details:

Bank Name:			
Bank Address:			
Account Name:			
Account Number:			
Sort Code:			
Amount in words			
Amount in figures			
Date of first payment	/	/	
And thereafter:	Monthly or	Annually	Delete as appropriate

Signed:	
Date:	

### ARCHBISHOP ROMERO TRUST

8, Dean's Mews  
London W1G 9EE

### Gift Aid Declaration

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

I am a UK taxpayer and would like the Archbishop Romero Trust (registered charity no 1110069) to claim the tax on *(please tick as appropriate)*:

- ( ) current and future donations  
( ) past donations for the last 6 years and current and future donations

This Gift Aid declaration can be withdrawn at any time by notifying the Archbishop Romero Trust.

Signed.....

Date.....

If you pay tax, all contributions to this charity qualify for Gift Aid, and The Archbishop Romero Trust can recover related tax. As a taxpayer, you must pay income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that is reclaimed on your gifts in a tax year.

**Please inform us if you change name or home address.**