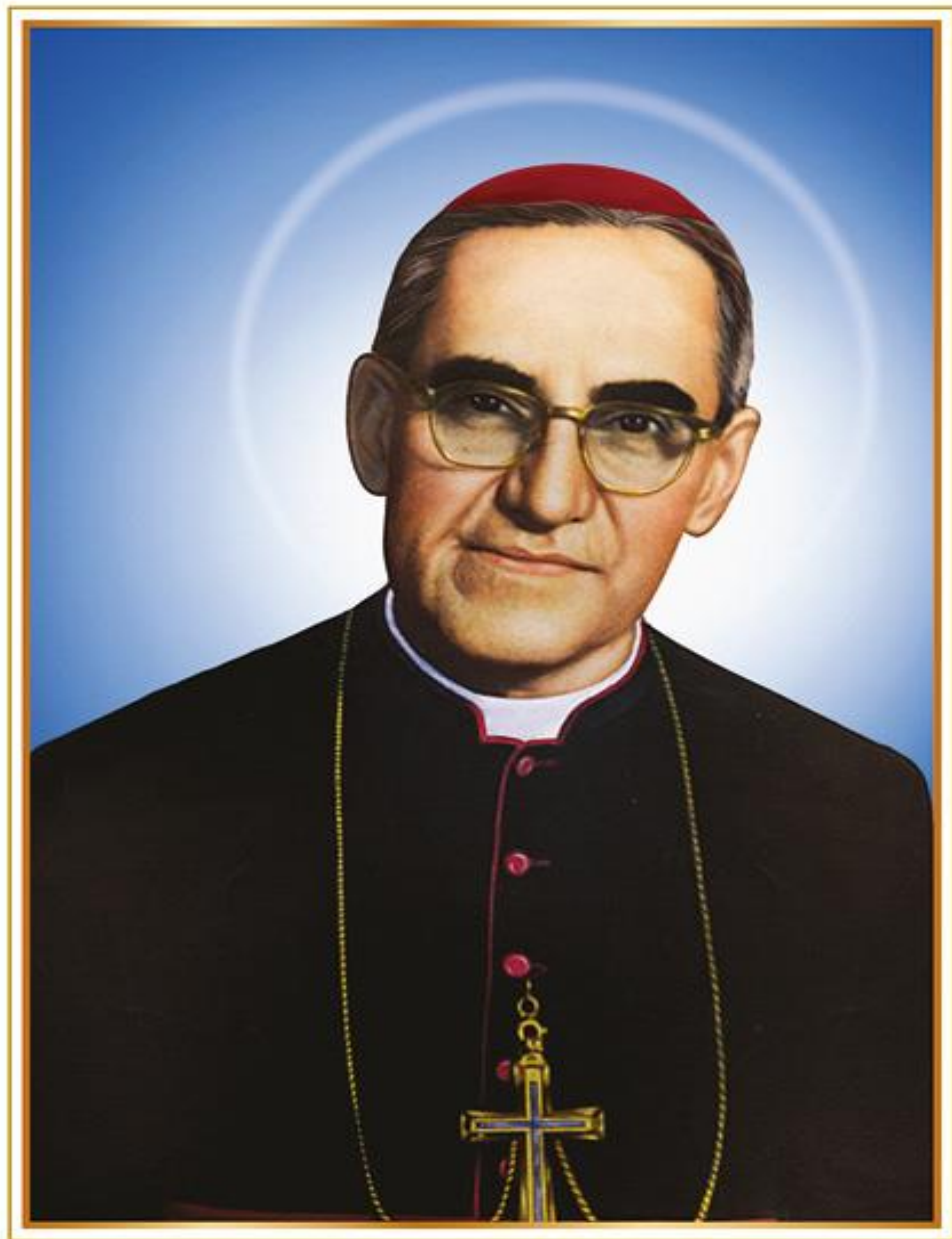


Romeronews

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ST OSCAR ROMERO
BISHOP AND MARTYR

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Romero XXXIX Anniversary

Saturday 16 March at 11.00am

National Ecumenical Service

St Martin-in-the-Fields

Trafalgar Square, London

Saturday 23 March at 12.30pm

St Oscar Romero Feast Day and

Blessing of Diocesan Romero Shrine

St George's Cathedral, Southwark

Archbishop Peter Smith to preside

Sunday 24 March at 10.45am

Mass and Blessing of Romero Shrine

Sacred Heart Church, Lauriston Street,

Edinburgh

Archbishop Leo Cushley to preside

6 – 18 November

Romero Trust Pilgrimage to El Salvador

& 30th Anniversary of the UCA Martyrs

(Anthony Coles with +John Rawsthorne,
Julian Filochowski and Clare Dixon)

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO

SAINT AT LAST!

Canonisation in Rome

14 October 2018



The day started early for the pilgrims who had journeyed long distances to be in Rome for this unique celebration. Several thousand Salvadoreans had travelled from their homeland and many thousands more from the diaspora: clearly the largest group in a crowd of some 75,000. In the words of Salvadorean Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez, “they painted St Peter’s Square blue and white”, the colours of the Salvadorean national flag. The joyful enthusiasm and emotion were palpable among the multitude of pilgrims who had started queueing from 4.00am to make sure of getting prime seats from which to gaze at the spectacle that would unfold

before their eyes. Huge portraits of the seven saints to be proclaimed that day hung from the facade of St Peter’s Basilica, with Archbishop Romero in pride of place alongside his mentor Pope Paul VI. How appropriate for them to share this ceremony: Paul VI, who had appointed Romero as Archbishop of San Salvador and gave him his full support, and Oscar Romero, whose life and work faithfully embodied the teachings of the Second Vatican Council overseen by that same Pope.



Some 150 people signed up with the Romero Trust for tickets to the canonisation ceremony, including over 30 priests and bishops who concelebrated with Pope Francis in St Peter’s Square at 10.00am on that fine October morning. Seven ART trustees and four of our patrons were present in Rome, including, very visibly, Lord Rowan Williams, leading a cluster of Anglican bishops, who was publicly welcomed by Pope Francis.

The post-canonisation crowning event was the Thanksgiving Mass for St Romero on the morning of Monday October 15th. Unusually, it took place inside the Paul VI Audience Hall rather than in one of Rome's major basilicas. But this location facilitated a Special Audience that Pope Francis granted to the Salvadoran pilgrims and those accompanying them.

In El Salvador it was still only 2.00am when the ceremony in Rome began; but all-night vigils took place at the Cathedral in San Salvador and around the country in order to take part in the joyful and emotional proclamation of El Salvador's first-ever saint. And in Britain there were national and local celebrations with BBC coverage of Mass from Leeds Cathedral. In the weeks after the ceremony in Rome, the National Thanksgiving Mass in St George's Cathedral Southwark was a great success, as was the Solemn Evensong to celebrate the canonisation in Westminster Abbey, where, for 20 years, a statue of St Oscar Romero has gazed down from his place among the XX Century martyrs above the great western door.

FIESTA IN SAN SALVADOR

The Canonisation of Archbishop Romero in Rome was celebrated across the world, nowhere more so than in his beloved native land. With the whole of the Salvadorean Bishops Conference in Rome for the ceremony in St Peter's Square, the national celebration vigil Mass in the Cathedral of San Salvador was led by Fr Jose Maria Tojeira, former Jesuit provincial and previously Vice-Chancellor of the UCA, Central American University. Catherine Pepinster, distinguished broadcaster and former editor of the Tablet, has kindly produced this abridged version of his homily:

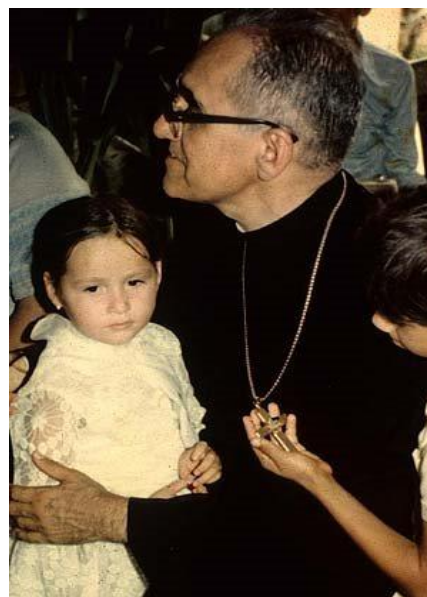


“Dear brothers and sisters: Today we celebrate with excitement the canonisation of Archbishop Romero. We knew that he was a saint from the outset and we waited anxiously for the official declaration of the Church regarding his sainthood. This is the day. And we

cannot help but begin by quoting our Lord Jesus Christ, our teacher and the teacher of Archbishop Romero. When Pilate was judging him, Jesus said, "I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37.) Today we can affirm that God sent Archbishop Romero to El Salvador to be, like Jesus, a witness to the truth.

At a time when the poor were despised, exploited, manipulated and considered inferior in our country, Archbishop Romero identified with them and their causes. His life was testimony to God's preferential love for the poorest, as he struggled alongside them, peacefully and prophetically, in pursuit of their rights. In the beatification decree he was rightly called "Father of the Poor." And this was because he demanded justice for peasants and workers, supported their demands and their popular organisation, and defended them against the hatred and violence of the powerful. But as well as siding with the causes of the poor, he lived with them in the little Divine Providence Hospital. The poorest cancer patients of our country stayed and often died there; and alongside, in poverty and simplicity, lived our martyr bishop. There

he accompanied the suffering of the sick whose only recourse was the generosity of the sisters of the Little Hospital; and he encouraged them with the consolation of a God, our God, who never abandons the weak and the afflicted. Before that, when he was Bishop of Santiago de Maria, he had opened the doors of the cathedral so that the coffee pickers, who came from far away to that region of coffee plantations, could have a roof to sleep under. The photographs of Romero with children who play with his pectoral cross leave no doubt as to his tender closeness to the poorest.



That loving closeness, along with his faith in the Lord Jesus, led him to become a prophet of justice, voice

of the voiceless, with no other force than the power of conscience, with no other law than love of neighbour, and no other patron than the Divine Saviour. His only weapon was the Word, which made

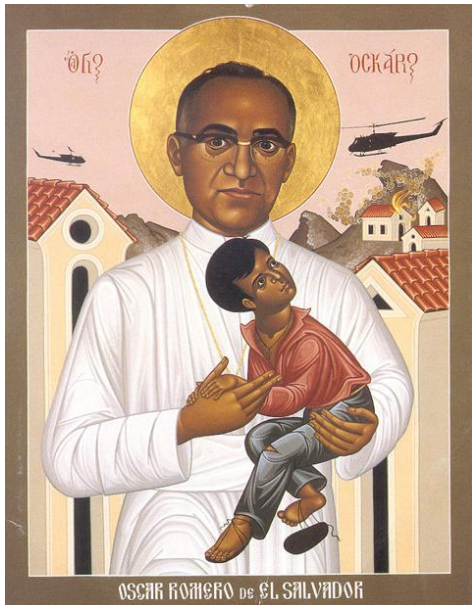
those who killed the poor, persecuted their organisations, or threatened to kill anyone who showed a firm desire for social justice writhe with rage. Like Jesus, he was hated by those who could not stand the good news of a loving God who created brotherhood. His word displeased the neutral and the indifferent and irritated the hypocritical collaborators, who masked and concealed from within the institutions of the state, the barbarism of the death squads. And in the face of hatred and attacks, he always responded with the same words from Jesus on the cross: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.) His love extended to everyone, healing those wounded by injustice and speaking the truth to the victimisers. Two classic ways of loving that are always demanded by the Church, in harmony with our God - who is love, are the call to console the victims and to be prophets facing up to those who abuse their neighbour.

Archbishop Romero recalled the terrible difficulty that those who put their hearts in riches have in entering the Kingdom of heaven. Our saint would strip the intentions of the proud with the weapon

of his word, like a double-edged sword. He reminded the rich that the idolatry of wealth was at the base of Salvadorean injustice. He reproached the powerful for using death as an instrument of power. And he reminded the popular organisations that they could not put the organisation over and above the rights of the people. Every idolatry puts the law of the strongest in first place, instead of love of neighbour and evangelical solidarity. He did not talk about giving but of sharing. Because when the rich give something, they are not giving what is theirs, but what belongs to everyone, and especially to the poorest.

Today his voice continues to resonate with ever increasing force throughout the world. From the outset, various Christian Churches expressed their solidarity with him and after his death, considered him a martyr too. Romero's name has become universal. His relics have reached remote dioceses in Africa and his image or portrait has spread to churches and cathedrals of various Christian denominations. And as if that were not enough, the United Nations has declared March 24, the day of Romero's

martyrdom, as the International Day for the Right to Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. In other words, the UN is recognising our Saint Romero as the universal patron of the victims' right to the truth. He, who was so bravely and so courageously the voice of the voiceless, is today a resurrected victim who defends the victims of history who long for and await resurrection.



Before this
sainted
Romero,
prophet,
pastor and
loving
father who
cares for
his sheep
and

protects the rights of the impoverished of our land, we Salvadoreans must carefully examine our personal and social reality. Romero took seriously the will of the Lord Jesus when he told his apostle - and us - to love one another as He has loved us. (John 13:34.) He insists that we must be self-critical and wants us to ask ourselves if we truly follow Jesus Christ

and so many generous witnesses of the faith before us who put the Gospel at the centre of their lives. He asks us, from the perspective of the Gospel, the Lord and his saints, to overcome selfishness, inequality and consumerist individualism, where the idolatry of money is concentrated today. Archbishop Romero asks us to work for a society in which a Christian, generous and fraternal spirit supersedes the desire for individual profit.

We do not want, nor can we allow, the imposition of laws that allow the poor to die of thirst, as our bishops have warned. We do not want a society in which corruption resides in economic and political power. Nor do we want a judicial system that is weak with the strong and strong with the weak, that continues, as Romero said, biting only the foot of the one who walks barefoot. This is judicial corruption, as our saint Romero once told the Supreme Court. Our holy shepherd invites us to review and increase a minimum wage that is not enough to live on. He asks us to formalise and protect informal labour, which today keeps almost half of El Salvador's economically active

population in permanent vulnerability. He calls us to demand decent schools for forgotten villages or where schools have been damaged by the passage of time, the rains and official neglect. And he asks us to overcome an unjust and obsolete public health system that gives different qualities of service to those who pay Social Security contributions and those who cannot contribute. Health, water, education, decent work and dignified housing, are the rights of all. As Saint Romero said, we have to change things from the roots upwards.

We do not venerate a corpse but someone who is alive. Alive with God and in the hearts of all Christians who want to follow the Gospel radically. Our Saint congratulates us today and is happy with his Church because it has pressed for an increased minimum wage, because it has promoted the banning of metal mining in El Salvador, and because it continues to press for water to be protected by everyone and provided to all. But he also asks us to work intensely to overcome and defeat the existing climate of violence, which causes so much pain and suffering. Repeating the words of the prophet Isaiah that he liked

to cite, he demands that we turn weapons into instruments of work (Isaiah 2:4); he encourages us to promote decent work for all, and especially for the young. Only this way, with young people trained for such work with a just wage, will we overcome the violent plague inherited from the madness of a fratricidal civil war and worsened later by inequality and social injustice.



Our saint was right to say that there is a violence superior to the arms of the

guerrillas and the tanks of the army: it is the violence that one does to oneself against every temptation to killing, exploitation, abuse or revenge. Without brotherhood, there is no future. And that is why Romero asks us to nurture the family as a source of peace, generosity and service. Demanding protection, support and services from the state for families in poverty and vulnerability prevents violence. Archbishop Romero talks to us more about rehabilitating

criminals than dealing with them with an iron fist. He demands decent pensions for our elderly and denounces the terrible marginalisation that women suffer when their efforts to take the family forward are ignored and they are denied the right to a pension as proper compensation for the work they do at home.



Jesus of Nazareth tells us, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12.) Archbishop Romero is a luminous martyr, the light of a new society in which the poor recover their dignity and raise their voices. The Pilates, the Herods and the Caiaphases who murdered Jesus, are now mere memories of dark, weak people condemned to historical insignificance. The same goes for those

who killed Romero. While they, the killers, pass to the dark pages of ignominy and oblivion, he shines as defender of the rights of the humble, an increasingly powerful voice that invites us to defend the life and dignity of all. And not only in El Salvador, but in Rome and throughout the world.

Archbishop Romero was killed while celebrating the Eucharist. Even before March 24, they had tried to eliminate him by putting a bomb under the altar of the Sacred Heart Basilica, where he was going to celebrate Sunday Mass. There was an obvious hatred of Archbishop Romero's priestly service. But the assassins did not realise that by killing him during the Eucharist they were definitively uniting him to the blood shed by the Lord. Jesus gave himself to us as food in the Eucharist, asking us to remember his death and his resurrected presence among us in the bread and the wine. When we celebrate Mass again today, excited at this historic moment for our people, let us not doubt that the presence of the Lord is always with us. He is with us in the bread of the word of God and in Romero's firm word. He is also with us in the life of Romero, united

to the resurrection of Christ and shared with us. Jesus, the Christ, is in the lives of all the martyrs and victims of El Salvador, even the anonymous and forgotten ones. Together with Romero, they celebrate in heaven the strength of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, who has enlightened the mind and heart of our Pope Francis to give to the universal Church, and to the Salvadorean people, the proclamation of our Saint Romero of the Americas as a saint, martyr and model of life. May this Eucharist, joyful now on earth and united with the joy of the martyrs in the Kingdom of God, unite us with all the poor and afflicted of the world. That it may renew, in them and in us, hope for a more just world. And may it also unite us to the Universal Church in which holiness always flourishes when we open our hearts to our brother or sister who is in need.

Long live Archbishop Romero!



A PILGRIM'S TALE

Maria Elena Arana, CAFOD's Campaign Coordinator, tells how she is inspired by Saint Romero



Oscar Romero spent his life standing up for justice. During a violent civil war, he did everything he could to support the suffering people of El Salvador. Everything, including risking his life.

Standing in St Peter's Square for Romero's canonisation, surrounded by pilgrims from all over the world, I was reminded that the values Romero lived by transcend age, race or borders. Compassion, peace, love, justice... For every person standing there, these values meant something.

Romero did all he could to support the suffering people of El Salvador. During his time as Archbishop he was known as the “voice of the voiceless”. Through his sermons – which were broadcast across the country via his radio station – he spoke out against what was happening around the country: deaths, violence, and disappearances. And the whole country listened.

Throughout these years CAFOD stood in solidarity with the Archbishop. When Romero’s radio station was bombed several times, CAFOD paid for it to be rebuilt. And today CAFOD continues to support much of the work that Romero began.

Romero has been an inspiration to me during the 27 years I have worked at CAFOD. As Romero said: “We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us.”

The words of Saint Oscar Romero will continue to inspire and challenge me in everything I do.

CELEBRATING SAINT ROMERO WITH HIS PEOPLE

Journalist Mark Dowd celebrated the canonisation in the rural village of Arcatao, in the former warzone of Chalatenango, near the border with Honduras; a parish often visited by Archbishop Romero

“What are you doing here? Why aren’t you in Rome?” These were the persistent questions that encircled me in Arcatao, northern El Salvador on the eve of Blessed Oscar Romero’s canonisation. After a journey from Manchester via Atlanta, Mexico City and San Salvador which took up more than twenty one hours, I must confess it was a question I was also asking myself!

I’d never set foot in Oscar Romero’s beloved El Salvador until 2014. I was now in semi-retirement after years of hectic journalistic pursuits in radio and TV. I was feeling restless and unfulfilled. Then a series of chance conversations and emails had found me arriving in the parish of San Bartolomé in the tiny town of Arcatao (population 3,500) to help resuscitate a fledgling radio station which had been constantly attacked during the civil war in the 1980s.

My point of contact was a Jesuit priest: Fr. Miguel Vasquez and over four years, I'd worked with him and local youngsters to get Radio Farabundo Marti 98.1FM up and running again. Throughout these four years, we'd chatted endlessly about Romero, his legacy, his visits to Arcatao and the change of heart ushered in by Pope Francis and the "unblocking" of his canonisation cause.



Direct from Rome – the canonisation ceremony beamed to San Bartolomé parish in Arcatao

It seemed almost surreal (it may have been the jet lag and chronic sleep deprivation), but at 2am in the morning on Sunday 14th October, I was gathering inside the parish church with all these people to celebrate something we thought we'd never see: live TV images from St Peter's Square beamed onto the church walls of hundreds and hundreds of Salvadoreans taking their places for a

ceremony which would make Oscar Romero one of seven new saints in the universal church.

The parishioners in Arcatao were unbelievably excited: "Oh look, there's Father Tilo" yelled one elderly woman. "He's got a seat right near the front." As Pope Francis appeared, the camera images cut between him and the images of Romero's serene face hanging gracefully in the columns of St Peter's Basilica behind the Argentine Pontiff.

Earlier, we had celebrated mass and during the consecration, a succession of rockets had been unleashed into the night sky. But as canonisation edged ever nearer, the stream of rocket fire became incessant...and ear-splittingly *noisy!* As the words of canonisation were uttered, there were loud cheers in the church among the four hundred or so people gathered.

But as I sat there and admired all the faces, what moved me was a spirit of vindication and recognition. Romero's long and tortuous journey since his assassination in 1980 to be rightfully

acknowledged as a holy martyr was not only his story, it was *their* story too.



Mark with friends in Arcatao parish

Little El Salvador, known throughout the world as that tiny country the size of Wales with a terrible reputation for homicide rates and repression, and violence was for this day, the centre of the church's attention. You have only to spend time with Salvadorans and get them talking about Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez to watch their eyes fill with tears, their faces undergo a transformation of gentleness and to feel that spirit of *identification*. Romero had placed these people and their thirst for justice at the forefront of his prophetic ministry. So, when his life is hailed and his witness sanctified, it is as though the global Catholic communion is explicitly

saying to these people: "We know. For some time we got this wrong. We got YOU wrong. *Mea culpa*."

Even though it was 40'clock in the morning when all the festivities ended and I needed matchsticks to prop my eyelids open, I stared around that church and seeing those unforgettable, beaming faces, I knew that I had made the right decision. There was nowhere else on the planet more appropriate to spend these vital hours than with the humble campesinos of Arcatao. This location, some three miles from the Honduran border had suffered enormously during that murderous twelve-year civil war. But not even the allure of St Peter's Square and all the majesty of events in Rome could make up for being here on this special night. A night when hundreds of forgotten folk had been "unforgotten" and taken their rightful place in the gloriously redeemed suffering of God's pilgrim Church.

Would you like to visit El Salvador?
Pilgrimage November 2019
Sign up now!! See pages 21-22

SAINT ROMERO DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH?

As Pope Francis is petitioned to declare Saint Romero a Doctor of the Church Julian Filochowski explains the significance in this presentation prepared in collaboration with Carlos Colorado, a leading expert on Saint Romero, and the creator of the excellent SuperMartyrio blog.

After a struggle over 30 years, and with the indispensable intervention of Pope Francis, in May 2015 we witnessed with enormous joy the beatification of Blessed Oscar Romero, as ‘a martyr killed out of hatred of the faith’.

Three years later, more quickly than we ever dared hope, he was canonised by Pope Francis, at a magnificent ceremony in Rome, as St Oscar Arnulfo Romero. The Christian communities in Central America had long ago canonised him in their hearts as Saint Romero of the Americas, and they longed for his sanctity to be formally recognised by their Church. That hope and yearning spread to every corner of the globe and there grew up what could be described as a ‘*sensus fidelium*’, a spiritual intuition

flowing from faith, that Archbishop Romero merited canonisation. Those prayers were answered in October 2018 when Romero was acclaimed a Saint of the Universal Church. His Feast Day remains March 24th, the anniversary of his martyrdom.

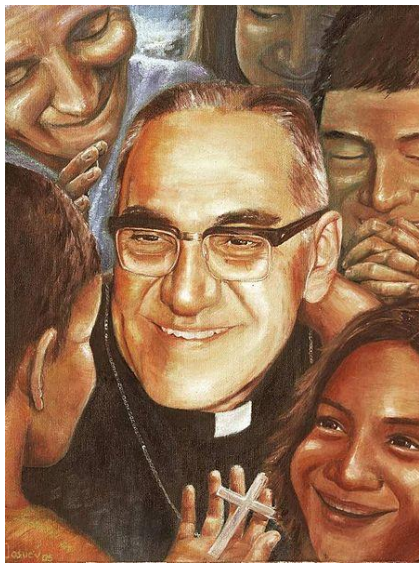
As canonisation approached, it was suggested that Archbishop Romero, frequently described as a ‘Father of the Latin American Church’, might be put forward to become a *Doctor of the Church*. At a Special Papal Audience, the day after the canonisation, the current San Salvador archbishop, José Luis Escobar, asked Pope Francis to authorise the opening of the process for St Romero to be declared a *Doctor of the Church*. This would be a rare honour as, since the first such proclamations back in 1298, only 36 *Doctors of the Church* have been named. It has been described as “almost a new canonisation, since it is the recognition of one who has not merely edified the Church by their life and labours, but of one who has taught the Church Universal”.

Since the *Doctor of the Church* title does not carry the same weight or significance as *Saint* or *Blessed* in the worshipping

community, Archbishop Escobar's petition might not find particularly strong echo amongst the rural poor of El Salvador. Nevertheless, he made the case succinctly:

"Romero's highly valuable teachings and testimony of life will be a beacon of light that will illuminate the present world which sadly suffers from darkness – on the one hand a lack of faith, and on the other serious social injustices that cause very grave violations of human rights and the dignity of persons".

There are, it seems, three requirements



to become a *Doctor of the Church*: eminent doctrine, eminent sanctity, and the solemn declaration of

the Roman Pontiff. For Romero, the critical issue to be proven probably relates to eminent doctrine. This is not about some abstract and unchanging standard of doctrinal excellence - but means that his teachings should have exercised considerable influence on the

thought of the Church for a considerable period, and that his teaching had both contemporary pastoral relevance and perennial value. Since this is not a snapshot of a given moment in history, it is unlikely that any such process would conclude quickly. If history is any guide, it would take several decades.

We must also bear in mind that no martyr has ever been proclaimed *Doctor of the Church*; and that is probably because *Martyr* is already a higher liturgical rank than *Doctor*. One authority suggests it would be like awarding an Olympic Silver Medal to someone who has already won Gold for the same performance! Pope Francis would almost certainly have to confirm Romero's eligibility for the title.

There are nevertheless good reasons to back this *Doctor* petition. But we must first disavow the suggestion that this amounts to an excessive pursuit of honours for a much-loved saint, a kind of spiritual capitalism! We do not simply admire Romero, but we continually seek to learn from him and to imitate him within our own context. Opening a doctoral process for Romero would operate as a valuable protective measure to highlight the importance of his teachings and

prevent his prophetic message from being overlooked or ignored by the wider Church.



The fundamental case is that Oscar Romero is precisely the new kind of *Doctor* that the Church urgently needs today, one whose doctrinal eminence arises out of solidarity with the voiceless. Recognising him in this way would thus signal a 'preferential option' for the teaching authority of the poor and marginalised.

When the *Doctor* petition was put to him by Archbishop Escobar, Pope Francis' facial expression gave absolutely nothing away. Perhaps in 2019 we will find out from the Vatican whether this proposal can be accepted for consideration at all. *Oremus.*

APOLOGIA AND ATONEMENT

The canonisation of Saint Romero was an opportunity for the Church to recognise the grave damage that had been done to his reputation.

Saint Oscar Romero suffered during his life and after his death from slander and abuse. In October 2015 Pope Francis lamented to a visiting delegation from El Salvador “The martyrdom of Monseñor Romero was not fulfilled at the moment of his death—it was a martyrdom of witness, of prior suffering and prior persecution up to his death. But even afterwards, following his death—I was a young priest and a witness to this—he was defamed, slandered, his memory despoiled, and his martyrdom continued also by his brethren in the priesthood and in the episcopate”.

Three years later, on 28 October 2018, in the Cathedral of San Salvador, Archbishop Jose Luis Escobar of San Salvador made this public apology on behalf of the Church:

“We celebrate our thanksgiving to God for the canonisation of our beloved Archbishop Romero. Thanks also to Pope Francis for his great love for him and for canonising him.



Archbishop Escobar

Here is a phrase that has been fulfilled in our people: “The Lord has truly been great with us” (Ps 125:3.) by granting us the canonisation of our Pastor, Bishop, Martyr, and now Saint Oscar Arnulfo Romero. In the midst of this joy, I wish to carry out an act of justice:

I publicly ask for forgiveness on behalf of that part of the Church that mistreated Archbishop Romero and defamed him; among them his brother bishops, priests and lay people who abandoned him and attacked him in

an anti-evangelical attitude. And not only in life, but even after his martyrial death. We ask the holy people of God forgiveness for all the scandal caused by that unjust attitude”.

On the other hand, I publicly acknowledge and express sincere gratitude to all those who did know how to respond to that historic moment of salvation by giving a faithful testimony of their faith alongside Archbishop Romero. First of all, our martyrs, priests, religious and laity who gave their lives for the faith. We also recognise and thank all those who, although they did not have to shed their blood, have witnessed their faith with fidelity. They are true confessors of the faith. Likewise, I also want to thank the Carmelite Sisters of St. Theresa; our beloved Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas (of holy memory); our beloved Cardinal Gregorio Rosa and all the priests; the Society of Jesus; the Christian Base Communities; all the religious women and men, to the holy people of God; to all the churches and diverse creeds of the whole world that have witnessed the sainthood of Romero. We are immensely grateful to all of you.

ANGELITA MORALES AND POPE FRANCIS

Gianni Beretta, an Italian journalist and film-maker of the latest documentary on Saint Romero reports on a touching scene from Rome.

With the highlight of his canonisation, the year just ended, 2018, can be considered the “*annus mirabilis*” of Archbishop Romero. Pope Francis completed the process of making amends to Monseñor on behalf of the institutional Church: making him a saint alongside Pope Paul VI, the Pope who supported him all along.

The German Jesuit theologian Martin Maier recently stated: “the canonisation of Monseñor Romero is the paradigm of Francis’ papacy”. Because through this action he symbolically affirmed the full teachings of the second Vatican Council. And this was made manifest, apart from the ceremony in St Peter’s Square, in what was apparently a minor act by the Latin American Pope, at the end of the special audience for the Salvadorean pilgrims, on the day after Saint Romero

was raised to the altars. An act which we will recount here:

Angelita Morales is a woman who was amongst the closest and most trusted people working with Monseñor Romero for the last eight years of his life, until the day of his assassination. Her story is told in the Swiss TV documentary “Righting the Wrong” in which she has a starring role.



Angelita with Pope Francis

Through a series of unfortunate circumstances Angelita now lives, poor and forgotten, in a slum on the outskirts of San Salvador, with her daughter Claudia. A group of friends of several nationalities thought that she, more than anyone, deserved to be at the ceremony of the sainthood of “her” Romero in

Rome. And so, we clubbed together to pay for her fare and accommodation. At the same time, we sent a brief letter to the Pope, telling him about her, in case he might have the chance to dedicate a few words to her and embrace her. Of course, Angelita knew nothing of this.

What happened in the Paul VI Audience Hall on 15 October surpassed all our expectations. The Holy Father concluded his speech with the following words: “The people loved Monseñor Romero, the People of God loved him. And you know why? Because the People of God can sniff out holiness. And here, among you, I should thank so many people. But how can I thank you all? So, I have chosen one person, a person who was very close to him, who accompanied him and followed him; a very humble person from amongst his people, Angelita Morales: For me she can be this representative of the people of God.” And then Pope Francis called Angelita to his side amid huge applause from all the Salvadoreans present, and through her he made real the atonement towards Monseñor Romero and to his martyred people.

HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR JAN GRAFFIUS

Many congratulations to Jan Graffius who was awarded a University of London Doctor of Divinity ‘honoris causa’ by Heythrop College in December 2018.

Jan Graffius, the conservator at Stonyhurst College and one of our Trustees has received an honorary doctorate in recognition of her work for the Romero Trust and for Stonyhurst.



Jan is responsible for the conservation of the Romero relics in his little house in the Divine Providence Cancer Hospital in San Salvador. This is an incredibly prestigious award to be added to Jan's own PhD which is due to be completed in the new year. **AD MULTOS ANNOS!!**

ROMERO SHRINES

Now that Archbishop Romero has officially been declared a saint by the universal Church we can expect to see a number of shrines and places of remembrance dedicated to him.

Preparations are moving ahead for the 23rd March 2019 dedication of the Diocesan Shrine in St. George's Cathedral in Southwark. Just next door, at CAFOD's offices, Romero House, Bishop John Rawsthorne blessed the Romero commemorative plaque after the National Thanksgiving Mass in October, and on 24th March there will be Mass and blessing of the Romero shrine at the Sacred Heart Church in Edinburgh holding a relic of Romero's bloodstained alb.

St Ignatius parish in Stamford Hill, North London celebrated a Novena from 5th to 13th October which opened with the unveiling of the beautiful portrait by Peter Bridgman of Archbishop Romero and his great friend, Fr Rutilio Grande, and closed with the unveiling of the Romero bust by Rory Young. Two copies of the portrait were dispatched to San Salvador

in August under strict instructions that they be kept under wraps until after the official unveiling in Stamford Hill. One was delivered to Sister Maria Julia García and the Carmelite Sisters in the Divine Providence Cancer Hospital where Saint Romero made his home. The second went to the Romero Centre at the Jesuit University, the UCA. The Director of the Centre, Fr Rodolfo Cardenal, is an expert on Rutilio Grande and chief advisor to the Vatican on Rutilio's beatification Cause.



The Great Amen by Peter Bridgman

It goes without saying that in El Salvador itself there is hardly a parish or community which does not have its own shrine, altar, statue, mural dedicated to Romero, their Patron Saint, and the greatest Salvadorean in history.

ROMERO PILGRIMAGE

6-18 NOVEMBER 2019



Crystalline lakes, sapphire skies, verdant landscapes, smoking volcanoes, colonial villages, colourful art. These are features that remain in the visitor's memory, alongside the tragic history and the challenging present of the tiny country known as the "Tom Thumb of the Americas".



Pilgrims in 2017 outside the old church in Ciudad Barrios, Romero's birthplace

Now that Saint Oscar Romero has been recognised by the universal church, many friends of Romero have asked if we could organise a fourth pilgrimage to El Salvador after the highly successful visits in 2010, 2013 and 2017. "Romero Pilgrims" who have already made that journey with us have been inspired by the warmth and resilience of its people, the beauty of the countryside and the chance to visit the holy places and meet with close friends and colleagues of Romero. Some feedback from our 2017 pilgrims tells its own story:

"I could never have anticipated the power of the journey we have had."

"Wonderful gift and grace: absolutely loved it: marvellous experience."

"An opportunity for growth, and food for reflection for a long time and spells a new phase in my life."

"I knew it was going to be a journey of a lifetime, but this experience has far exceeded my expectations"

The November 2019 visit will be led and accompanied by Trustees of the Romero Trust, Julian Filochowski, Clare Dixon, Bishop John Rawsthorne and our pilgrimage organiser Anthony Coles.

Are you inspired by Romero? Interested in becoming a Romero pilgrim? Our twelve-day trip in November 2019 will coincide with a special time in the country: the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Martyrs of the UCA, the six Jesuit priests and their two women colleagues killed in 1989.

The all-inclusive cost of the visit is £1,895 covering flights and accommodation, all meals and local transport.

Once again, our excellent pilgrimage and tour organiser, Anthony Coles, will be taking bookings. For full details please visit the Romero Trust website:

<http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/news/romero-pilgrimage-2019>

or contact Anthony Coles on:

arctc@btinternet.com

Tel: 020 7431 3414

BUT HURRY AS PLACES ARE LIMITED!!



ROMERO -THE COMMUNICATOR

One of the key events in Rome to celebrate the canonisation was organised by SIGNIS – the World Catholic Association for Communication. Julian Filochowski gave the following presentation:

Dear Friends of Oscar Romero

Gustavo Gutiérrez, the great Latin American theologian, once said that if Jesus Christ, the Word Made Flesh, was the homily of God the Father; then Archbishop Romero could be described as the homily of Jesus, his Son, whom he followed so faithfully and so courageously.

I would add that the late Mgr. Ricardo Urioste, and Dr María Julia Hernandez, both of happy memory, alongside don Gregorio, our Cardinal Rosa Chávez, here with us today, and together with Romero's devoted Postulator, Mgr. Rafael Urrutia, and my very good friend, the Jesuit Jon Sobrino, should, each one, be described in a similar fashion, as the homily and echo of this great contemporary Saint, Oscar Romero.

They have doggedly communicated Romero's ministry and martyrdom, his words and his legacy, to the Church and to the world over 38 long and difficult years. Romero-phobia had the upper hand for a very long time. It is appropriate therefore that at Romero's sanctification here in Rome, we pay tribute to them. We owe them a colossal debt of gratitude. From 1977 onwards, Romero as archbishop became known as the voice of the voiceless poor.



He wanted the Church to articulate the suffering and the desperation, the hunger for bread and the thirst for justice of so many of his people who had no voice. Therefore, week in week out, after prayerful contemplation, with phenomenal discernment, with pastoral wisdom, and above all with apostolic courage, this self-effacing bishop, this instrument of God, spoke the unvarnished truth in a land of cover-up and lies.

There was no 'spin', no exaggeration, no populism, no hidden agenda. His words of truth were authentic Christian social communication. And in speaking that truth with integrity from the pulpit, from his cathedra, via his radio station and his newspaper, he gave hope to his people.



It earned him enormous credibility as a witness for the whole world, through the international media, a witness to the oppression and violence being experienced by his people and being documented by the diocese.

With massacres and disappearances, with six priests and dozens of lay catechists assassinated, churches occupied as military barracks, and tabernacles smashed he was led to describe his Catholic country, El Salvador, named after Christ the Saviour, as 'resembling the dominion of hell'.

That is why they killed him: because he spoke the unblemished truth, disregarding threats to his life from both the right and the left. It is important to remember that paradoxically Oscar Romero was killed 'in odium fidei' - out of hatred of the faith - by self-declared Catholics. He is a martyr to the option for the poor, a martyr to the whole Magisterium of the Church; but in a very special way he is a martyr to authentic social communications in the Church; and a worthy and keenly appropriate Patron Saint for SIGNIS.

Throughout his priestly life Romero embraced a frugal and simple life-style; he was close to the people; he was a prayerful and a cultured man with a wonderful capacity to write and to use the microphone - and with a spectacular talent as a preacher.

He was not technically-speaking a journalist. But he was a great communicator which was evident even from his colourful letters home in the 1930s from the Pio Latino seminary in Rome. He became Director of three separate Church newspapers. First in San Miguel where from 1945 to 1967 he was in charge of 'El Chaparrastique', the

diocesan paper; then in San Salvador he was made Editor of 'Orientacion' the archdiocesan weekly, and in Santiago de Maria, as Bishop he founded 'El Apostol' as the diocesan paper. He was a true believer in the church media as the 'Voice of the Church' communicating and elucidating the doctrine and practices of the Church, conveying news from the Church, and fostering popular religiosity. And indeed, he removed those columnists who wanted to tackle the great social issues of the countryside!

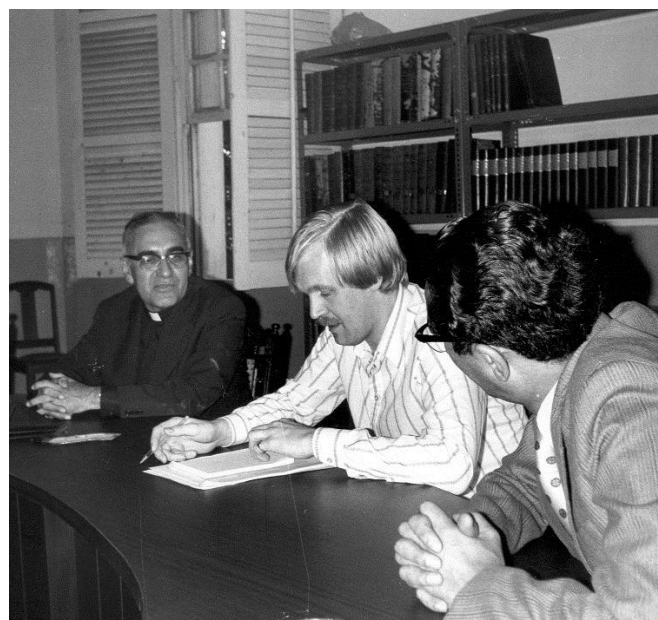
But as he became archbishop, his approach to the church media was transformed, matching his new understanding of evangelisation, gleaned from Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and reflecting his changed personal approach to spirituality. Romero's spirituality gradually evolved away from one which saw holiness equated with perfection and rigid observance of spiritual and ascetic practices - to a dynamic, faithful and prayerful searching for what God was really asking of him; and he gradually began to identify the God of Jesus who lived in the suffering people of El Salvador. With the circumstances he

found in the archdiocese in 1977, and his decision to look at things as Jesus of Nazareth would, he put his great capacity to use the means of communication at the service of his pastoral mission.

Archbishop Romero provoked ferocious opposition from the traditional media owned by, and at the service of, the privileged economic sectors. It was, on the one side, a pastor determined to anchor the Word of God in the reality that his people were living, up against, on the other side, a social group who had abandoned their faith in Jesus Christ and their duty to give true news - and instead defended unjust privilege. The perverse irony was that the one who rejected violence - either to maintain or to overturn structures of injustice - was labelled as the source of conflict.

The episode of the single Mass (*Misa Unica*), in March 1977, in response to Rutilio Grande's killing, provoked the anger of the wealthy classes and they turned completely against the one they had imagined was their 'little subservient bishop'. But this prophetic action of Romero, like his subsequent boycott of the presidential inauguration, was highly effective social communication. The

statement he was making was that the national communion had been ruptured in the death squad killing of a priest – and, to restore communion, impunity to the crime must be lifted.

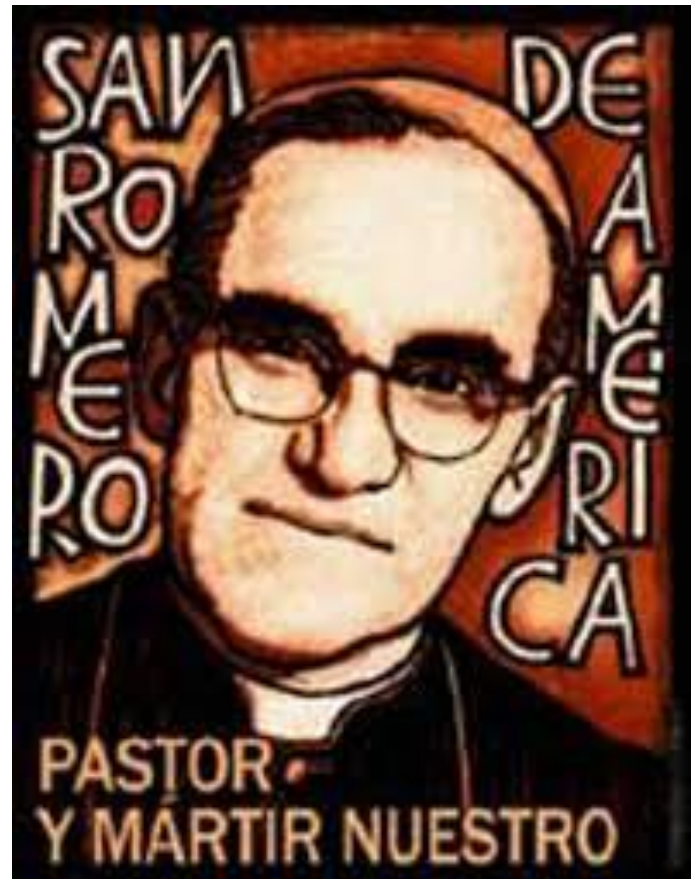


Archbishop Romero with Lord Chitnis and Julian Filochowski during a UK parliamentary delegation

Romero became the moral compass of the nation - and for the international press the 'arbitrator' of national life. He had won their trust. I prepared Archbishop Romero for his press conference with the international media at Puebla, Mexico, in 1979. He was very nervous beforehand, but he acquitted himself brilliantly and was given an ovation by the packed media hall - who in that way reinforced his commitment.

At home, the oligarchic press cut Romero's news, his declarations and his actions out of their columns; and almost all reference to the Church was tendentious reporting, filled with slander. They insulted Romero mercilessly and vilified him with hateful articles, labelling him a communist, a guerrilla fighter, a puppet and an agent of Satan. The traditional media became an ethics-free zone, a no-go area for morality. You may think 'fake news' is a phenomenon of the Trump era. But it was there, already alive and well, in the 1970s Salvadorean media. 'Ghost' organisations, fictional Catholic groups, placed adverts attacking Romero's orthodoxy and his ministry. The dialogue between the archbishop and the press was constant and intense. Romero used harsh words, which you can read in his homilies, – in this 'servile and misleading press', he said, there were 'tongues fed with lies' and 'pens for sale'. The most shocking and disgusting of all the manifestations of hatred appeared on the pre-Twitter social media - in the form of car bumper stickers with the message 'Be a Patriot: Kill a Priest'.

It is possible to argue that the traditional Salvadorean media were an accessory to Romero's assassination by creating the conditions, in the frenzied atmosphere leading to civil war, where such a magnicide became conceivable and do-able - and in the end we know that it was celebrated with fireworks and champagne in the wealthy barrios of the capital city.



The Christian communities in Latin America immediately canonised Romero in their hearts, as San Romero de America.

But, as don Gregorio has reminded us, he is now to become San Romero del Mundo. He is to be canonised here on Sunday as a Saint of the universal Church, a model of a Christian and a bishop, the option for the poor incarnate. His words and his deeds, his homilies and his social communications, crowned by his martyrdom, are already inspiring the Church across the globe.

His sometimes-disturbing words are a real challenge to bishops, priests and layfolk alike. It is a challenge to strive for holiness and, in so doing, to ask God, through the intercession of Oscar Romero, to be granted the necessary apostolic courage, to listen intently to the poor, to seek justice for the excluded in our midst, and to speak the truth of their plight faithfully - even when we are criticised and insulted as naïve and ignorant do-gooders. Romero said: “We would be false to our mission as shepherds, if we were to reduce evangelisation to mere practices of piety and disincarnate sacramentalism”. I believe Pope Francis is saying much the same.

The challenge to the Christian media now is to avoid the temptation to present

to the Church a decaffeinated Romero, a milk and water saint, a charismatic prayerful guy who got hit by a bullet from a crazy gunman whilst celebrating Mass! No, Archbishop Romero was killed in a deliberate planned attempt to silence the voice of truth in a society fed on a diet of distortions and lies. The voice of the voiceless was assassinated at the altar. He was in the end executed like Jesus of Nazareth. So please tell the story like it really was.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. San Oscar Romero – Presente!

San Oscar Romero – Presente!



HOMAGE TO FERNANDO LLORT IN MEMORIAM



The digitally-reproduced image is projected onto San Salvador's Cathedral

Fernando Llort, the world-renowned artist who created the naïve art style which has come to represent the beauty of El Salvador, died suddenly in August. His famous mural on the facade of the San Salvador cathedral returned virtually at the end of 2018. Lovers of the mural arranged to have it projected on the plain white facade of the cathedral, still blank and featureless seven years after the Archbishop ordered it to be torn down to the dismay of the artist and outrage of the Salvadorean government.

No satisfying explanation for the decision to remove the mural has ever been given.

Fernando Llort's art, and particularly the Salvador cross, is deeply religious symbol, inspired by Oscar Romero and his messages of justice, unity and reconciliation.

In September 2013, the artist came to London with his wife for the unveiling of his artwork on the four-metre, three dimensional painted Salvadorean Cross, installed in St. George's Cathedral in Southwark, London, which contains a fragment of Archbishop Romero's blood-stained alb and his zucchetto. The Cross is the centrepiece of the Diocesan Shrine which is to be blessed and dedicated to Saint Oscar Romero on 23rd March 2019.



BEFORE

AFTER



Fernando Llor's Southwark Cross

**RISE THEATRE ROMERO DVD NOW
AVAILABLE**



The stage set for "Romero – Heartbeat of El Salvador"

A professionally filmed performance of
RISE Theatre's original theatre

production, 'Romero - Heartbeat of El Salvador' is now available to purchase on DVD from August 2018. DVDs will cost £15 + standard UK postage and will be available to purchase from

www.risetheatre.co.uk

The play was written by RISE Theatre's Artistic Director, Charley Pinfold, in 2017 in association with the Archbishop Romero Trust to mark the centenary of Blessed Oscar Romero's birth. The production gives a moving and truthful presentation of his life and martyrdom.

Performed by 3 actors playing over 40 characters, this fast-paced production has been performed over 80 times in churches, schools and at events in the UK over the past year. The production uses an original soundtrack from James Joshua Otto and a colourful and striking graffiti set by Gage Graphics and is performed by John Bosco, Katie Krane and Jake Clifford.

The team are hoping to take it to World Youth Day in Panama, as well as offering further performances for schools and churches in 2019.

BOOK OFFERS

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

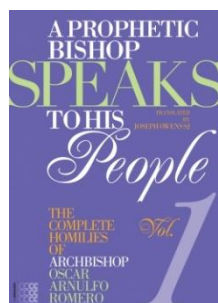
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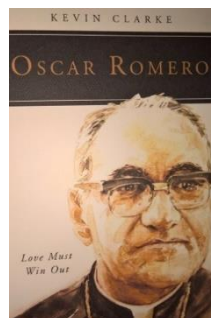
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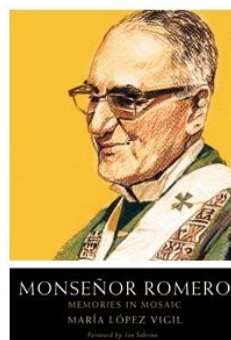


A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People: The Complete Homilies of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Volumes 1 to 6

Readers encounter Romero the way ordinary Salvadoreans did—through his sermons, which are brought to a startling new level of clarity and precision. This new set of translations, elegant and mellifluous, is a reference set that no Romero student can do without. All six Volumes are now available from the Trust at **£20 each (incl. p&p)** but we have **An Extraordinary Special Offer for 2018/19** to individuals and religious communities who are Romero News readers: **all six volumes for £60 (incl. p&p)**. In bookshops the cost would be £34 per volume!



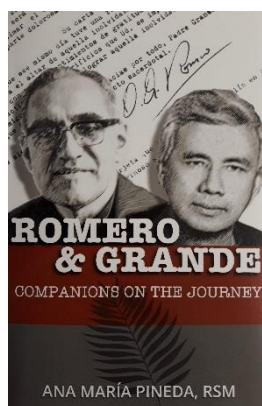
Oscar Romero – Love Must Win Out by Kevin Clarke. An excellent and very readable short introduction to the life of Archbishop Romero. **£8 (incl. p&p)**.



Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic

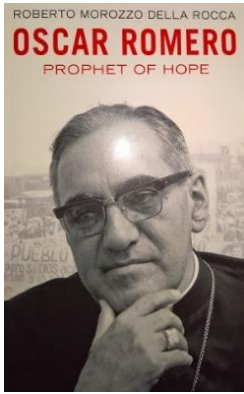
Romero remembered by the people who worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him.

Arguably the best book on Romero. Unput-downable. Highly recommended. **£16 (incl. p&p)**



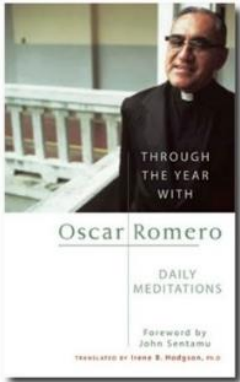
Romero and Grande – Companions on the Journey by Ana Maria Pineda. According to Pope Francis one can't understand Romero without Rutilio. This

book, imported from the US, brings together the interconnected stories of the two martyrs in a special and sympathetic manner. **£12 (incl. p&p)**



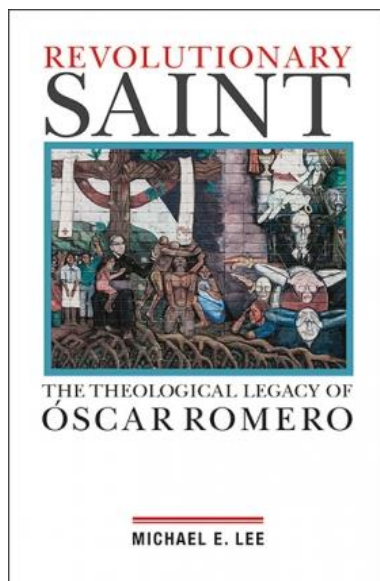
Oscar Romero - Prophet of Hope by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca

This is a comprehensive biography written by one of the authors of the documentation that secured Archbishop Romero's beatification. Well worth reading. **£9 (incl. p&p)**



Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations

Powerful and moving selections from Blessed Romero's broadcast homilies. **£9 (incl. p&p)**



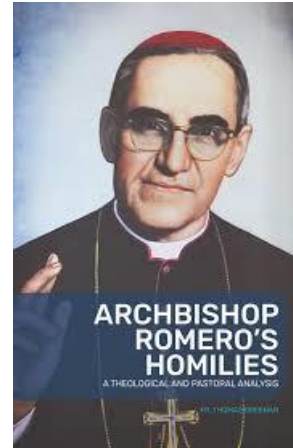
Revolutionary Saint – The theological Legacy of Oscar Romero Michael E. Lee.

Orbis Books.

Reviewed in last Romero News:

Highly recommended! Available in

bookshops at £20: from the Romero Trust at the special price: **£13 (incl. p&p)**

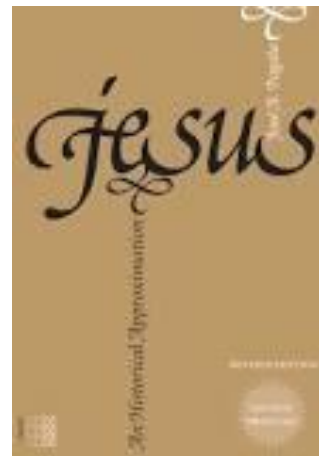


- Archbishop Romero's Homilies; A Theological and Pastoral Analysis.

by Tommy Greenan
a priest of the Diocese of St

Andrews and Edinburgh who worked many years in rural El Salvador.

£11 (incl. p&p)



Jesus: An Historical Approximation

Author Mgr. 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.

Extra special offer at **half** the bookshop price. **£15 (incl. p&p)**

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Thank you so much for your continued support. There are around 800 *Friends of Romero* who belong to our solidarity network. Your donations help produce the Romero News newsletter and put on events such as Romero Week, the Romero lecture and events to mark Romero's canonisation.

The Trust's reserves are modest, and we rely entirely on volunteers to carry out our work. If you would like to make a donation we would be hugely grateful. Please send cheques payable to the Romero Trust to our PO Box address:

**Archbishop Romero Trust,
PO Box 70227, London E9 9BR**

or give online at our website –
www.romerotrust.org.uk

Please remember that if you Gift Aid your donation we can claim an extra 25%.

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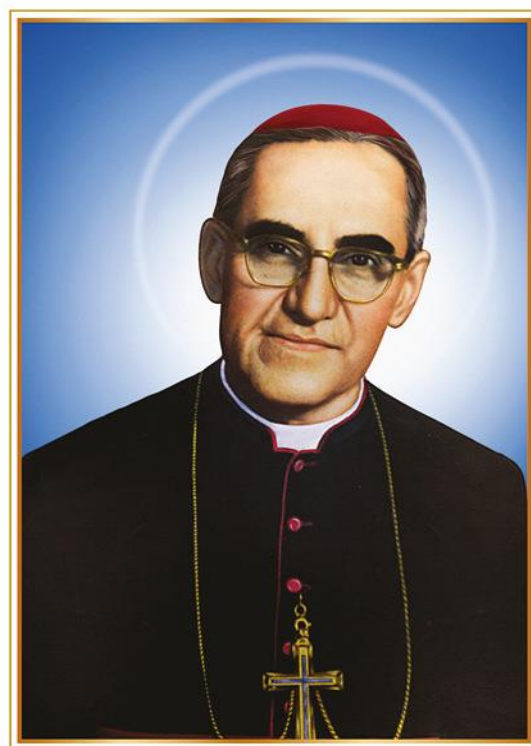
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ST OSCAR ROMERO PRAYER CARDS AND PORTRAIT

The beautiful, official portrait of Saint Oscar Romero on the cover of this edition of Romero News, is now available from the Trust.



ST OSCAR ROMERO
BISHOP AND MARTYR

Individual prayer cards are free of charge, just send us a self-addressed envelope. For bulk orders the charge is £10 for 250 cards.

The A3 size portrait, printed on high quality parchment style paper, perfect for framing, costs just £1 each + £3 postage and tube packaging.

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