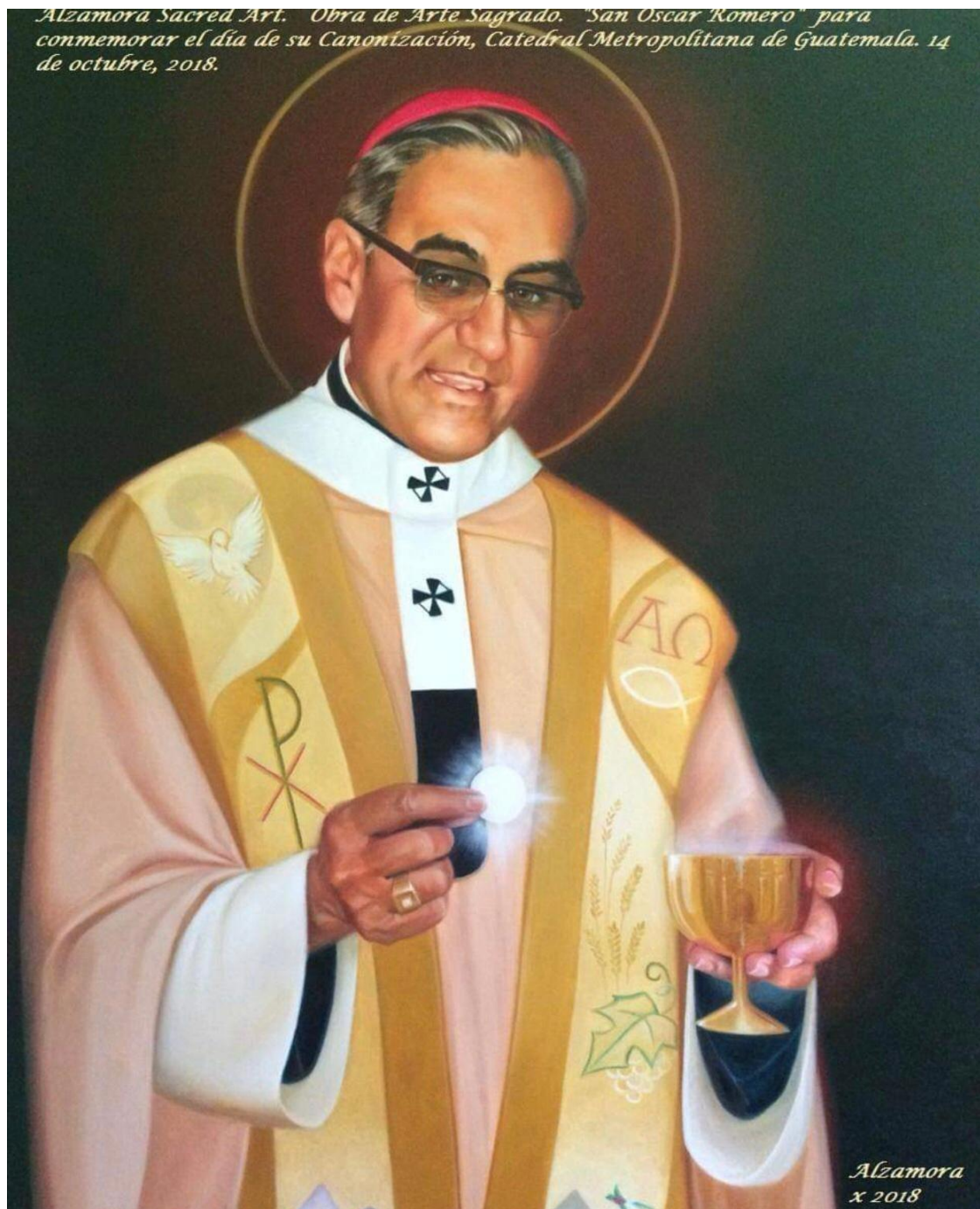


# Romeronews

Issue 24: January 2020

Registered Charity no. 1110069

## 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Romero's Martyrdom



## IN THIS ISSUE

Dates for your Diary

The Shrine of St Oscar Romero  
in London

Romero: An Ecumenical Icon

Book Review: November: A Novel

The UCA Martyrs  
XXX Anniversary November 2019

I

A Tribute from Congressman  
James McGovern

II

Julia and Celina – The Crucified People

III

A Pilgrim's Progress in a Land of  
Martyrs

Understanding El Salvador's Gangs

Celebrate Romero in Wales

Books and Resources

Romero Week Events Listing

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Romero Week 2020

To celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom, **Edgardo Colón-Emeric** will be in Britain for Romero Week events **from March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>** as the Romero Trust's guest speaker. Edgardo, a Methodist theologian, is Associate Professor at Duke University, North Carolina where he is Director of the Centre for Reconciliation.

**Please see back page for full details of the commemorative events.**

**Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup> 10.00am**

Romero Film "Righting the Wrong"  
St Thomas of Canterbury Church,  
Canterbury

**Saturday March 21<sup>st</sup> 12.30pm**

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass and Reception  
St. George's Cathedral, Southwark

**Tuesday March 24<sup>th</sup>**

St. Oscar Romero Feast Day  
Many local Masses and Events

**Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup> 11.00am**

National Ecumenical Service St Martin  
in the Fields Church, Trafalgar Square

## The Shrine of St Oscar Romero in London

*The statue of Oscar Romero over the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey is probably the best-known monument in Britain to the martyred archbishop. But only a mile away, just across the river, St George's Cathedral, Southwark is the home of the beautiful Romero Shrine, the twin memorial to our contemporary saint.*



*In December 2019, Archbishop John Wilson approved Statutes for the Shrine in accordance with Canon Law. This official*

*Diocesan Shrine now has a clear and explicit mission and purpose. The Shrine is not to be seen as an exotic colourful museum piece; rather as the powerful presence of courageous sanctity inspiring us to become ever more authentic disciples of Jesus Christ. In*

*following St Oscar Romero, the mission statement of the Shrine is intended to become a dynamic focus in the diocese for a prayerful spirituality which embraces an active commitment to the poor and disadvantaged. It could be said that the Statutes constitute a charter of evangelisation for the local Church. Here are the Statutes, in slightly abridged form:*

### The Statutes of the Diocesan Shrine of St Oscar Romero

The Diocesan Shrine of St Oscar Romero is situated in the Romero Chapel, off the South Aisle within St George's Cathedral, Southwark. The centrepiece of the Shrine is the three-dimensional Romero Cross, (approx. 4.3 x 3.2 x 0.3 metres) conceived by the British architect, Jonathan Louth. The faces of the cross were designed and painted by the renowned Salvadoran artist, Fernando Llort.

The Cross contains a reliquary holding a precious fragment of the blood-stained alb that was part of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom clothing as he celebrated Mass on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1980.



This is the heart of the Shrine. Displayed alongside is a zucchetto, one of St Oscar Romero's episcopal skullcaps. The Cross is overlooked by a bust of Archbishop Romero by the artist, Lado Goudjabidze.



*Reliquary with St Oscar Romero's blood*

The Shrine was inaugurated at an ecumenical service in September 2013 and formally designated a Diocesan Shrine with a decree issued by Archbishop Peter Smith on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2018, the day of Oscar Romero's canonisation in Rome.

### The Shrine's Mission and Purpose

The Romero Shrine is erected to the Greater Glory of God and to foster devotion to St Oscar Romero and the

martyrs of El Salvador. It is established for the spiritual benefit of the People of God in the diocese of Southwark and its metropolitan area in the South of England. The Shrine will make votive materials available to assist its mission and purpose:

- a)** To be a sign for the whole local Church that the Archdiocese of Southwark accepts and seeks to embrace the prophetic dimension of its evangelising mission and the risks that that might entail in the pursuit of reconciliation and peace;
- b)** To offer an inspiring setting for private prayer for pilgrims and visitors, especially for members of parish and diocesan justice and peace groups, agencies combatting poverty, and refugee and social movements working for a better world;
- c)** To provide a focal point for special liturgies and Eucharistic celebrations which seek to underline and promote a spirituality of justice and of a poor Church for and with the poor, the ignored, the despised and the excluded - locally and globally;
- d)** To encourage and enable pilgrims and visitors to the shrine to seek the intercession of St Oscar Romero in all the

struggles and dilemmas they encounter as they work to make God's kingdom of love, justice, truth and peace more evident in our society and in our world;

**e)** To encourage pilgrims and visitors, inspired by the martyrdom of Oscar Romero, to strive to become gradually more authentic missionary disciples, returning home strengthened in their resolve to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the midst of the world;

**f)** To offer a model and an example, for emulation in the Church, of a bishop, an utterly orthodox and faithful follower of Jesus Christ, who embraced and lived a preferential option for the poor in his ministry and in his daily life;

**g)** To assist pilgrims to find affirmation and consolation from St Oscar Romero's immersion in the 'Word of God' and the 'World of the Poor', as they try to live out a prayerful spirituality together with courageous and loving service to their neighbour in need;

**h)** To break down the false barriers that too often exist between a prayerful faith-filled Catholic and action for social justice - so that love of God and effective love of neighbour are recognised

everywhere in the diocese as quite inseparable;

**i)** To foster warm relationships and coordinate liturgies with other shrines and holy places that embrace and honour the Christian martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, especially the parish of St Thomas in Canterbury and our near neighbours across the Thames at Westminster Abbey.

*The Statutes go on to set out the governance of the Shrine. The Rector of the Shrine is the Dean of St George's Cathedral, Canon Richard Hearn. He manages the Shrine as an integral part of the life of the Cathedral. Additionally, Archbishop Wilson has appointed four 'Guardians' of the Shrine to assist the Rector in fostering devotion to St Oscar Romero and promoting the mission of the Shrine. They are Mgr. John O' Toole, Canon Alan McLean, Kathleen O'Brien, and Julian Filochowski. Prior to the approval of the Statutes, the Archbishop Romero Trust transferred ownership of the relics to the diocese. The Shrine of St Oscar Romero is therefore the sole property of the Archdiocese of Southwark.*

## Romero - An Ecumenical Icon

*Archbishop Romero has long been embraced by the Anglican Church as a saint for our times. After his canonisation the Anglican magazine "Centro" last year published the following article by Julian Filochowski under the title "A Becket For Our Times".*

In October 2018, Oscar Romero was canonised in a moving ceremony in Rome. An Anglican Communion delegation, comprising 10 bishops led by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, was present in St Peter's Square. They received a special welcome from Pope Francis as the canonisation ceremony began.

This was the culmination of a prolonged process of seeking to have Oscar Romero recognised as a modern martyr and an ecumenical icon of holiness. It involved sectors of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. Happily, both traditions now increasingly see Romero as a model and an inspiration, for bishops and Christian laity alike, as they strive with wise

discernment and apostolic courage to marry a prayerful spirituality with an authentic transformative option for the poor.

To mark this great occasion of 'bifocal celebration' the Archbishop Romero Trust presented to the Anglican Centre in Rome the six-volume collection of the famous homilies that Romero delivered as archbishop. They constitute a precious legacy of our martyr's ministry - for us to study and to cherish. But beyond that they offer an opportunity for clarity as we re-examine the issue of moral discernment in the Church. The homilies can also energise us for prophetic action and effective service in support of people who are excluded and ignored in our societies, as we attempt to face up to the great challenges of this new epoch.

In Romero's time it seemed that his country, ruled by a cruel military regime, was caught up in a downward spiral of increasing violence and repression. Even his fellow bishops attacked and insulted Romero for the stances he took. Yet, despite the hateful propaganda put out to discredit both him and the social teaching of the Church which he proclaimed and

put into practice, he did not capitulate. He did not abandon his commitment to his people; he denounced human rights violations with the eloquence of the Old Testament prophets; he spoke the unvarnished truth without flinching; he rejected violent action to bring about political change whatever its source; and he invited a change of heart from the wealthy and privileged, the *de facto* oppressors of his poor. There was no 'spin'. He followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ to the very end.



And Romero, priest and prophet, was assassinated by a death squad gunman as he celebrated the Eucharist on the evening of 24 March 1980. It was a life freely given.

***The actual moment when he died was to have a profound influence on the drive to recognise Romero as a saint and on ecumenical relations between***

***Catholics and Anglicans. For 18.27 on 24 March in El Salvador was already 25 March in Canterbury. A few hours later the leaders of the Anglican Communion were to gather there for the installation of Robert Runcie as the 102<sup>nd</sup> archbishop of Canterbury in the very cathedral where his predecessor, St Thomas Becket, had been murdered in 1170.***

Amazingly, two years earlier, Runcie as Bishop of St Alban's had spoken in support of Romero in the House of Lords. He had argued with others (in the end successfully) for the cancellation of a Ministry of Defence contract to supply armoured vehicles to the Salvadoran military because they would be used against the rural workers' associations campaigning for land reform. The confluence, therefore, of Romero-Runcie-Canterbury-Martyrdom seemed to many like a sign; and a special prayer for Romero at the site of Becket's murder was introduced into the Canterbury Service. Richard Chartres, the former Bishop of London, was the crucifer at the ceremony and can witness to that.

Over the next 30 years the process for Romero's canonisation got underway in

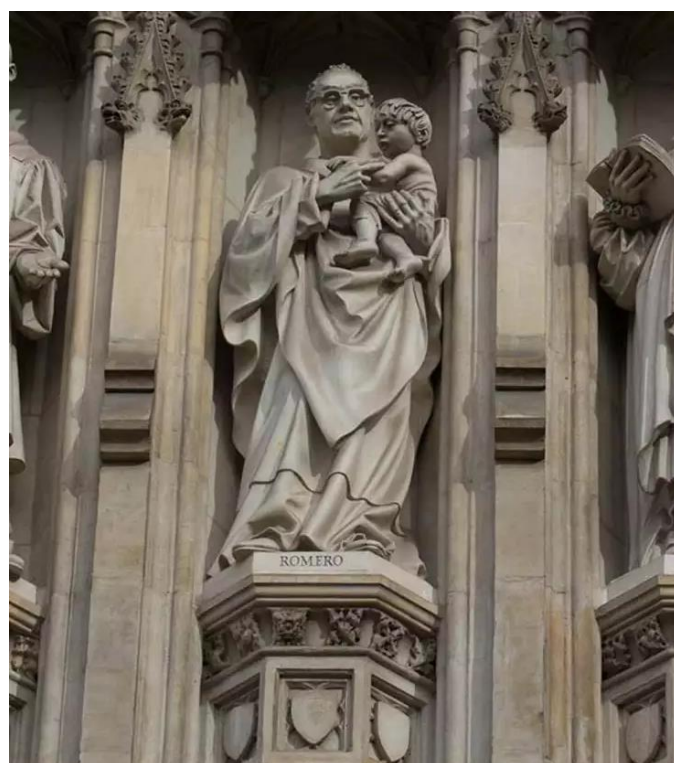


the Catholic Church but it moved exceedingly slowly. Indeed, with well-organised opposition to Romero from leading Latin American cardinals, the promoters of his Cause became disheartened, fearing that the procrastination in Rome and the obstacles placed on the path to canonisation might become a permanent block.

Meanwhile, at Westminster Abbey, the Sub-Dean, Canon Anthony Harvey, took charge of a major project to commission statues of 10 martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be placed in the niches on the façade above the Great West Door. There was lively discussion as to who should be chosen as the most appropriate and balanced representation of modern Christian faith witness from the different traditions and areas of the world. But Harvey confided that there had been only one of the 10 martyrs about whom there was no argument at all – that was Oscar Romero. The leaders of the Anglican Communion, gathered in Britain for the 1998 Lambeth Conference, attended an extraordinary Service in the Abbey, in the presence of Queen Elizabeth, for the

unveiling of those statues – which included Archbishop Romero.

By 2010 canonisation prospects in Rome still looked bleak. During his visit to Britain that year, Pope Benedict took part in Evensong at Westminster Abbey, entering in procession through the Great West Door. The Dean, Dr John Hall, accompanied the pontiff into the Abbey, but halted the party below the portal and pointed up to Oscar Romero there, above the Abbey entrance.



Pope Benedict nodded and, just conceivably, took on board this gentle advocacy for Romero's recognition. He reopened the cause two years later.



These events could be seen as the Anglican canonisation of Romero. It was certainly applauded as such by Roman Catholics as well as by many Christians of different denominations. Monsignor Ricardo Urioste, Romero's former Secretary, travelled to Britain a couple of years later and was invited to Lambeth Palace by Archbishop Rowan Williams. Urioste, full of emotion, wanted to thank the Anglican Communion, through Rowan Williams, for the immense joy and consolation given to the Salvadoran people through this wonderful recognition of Romero's martyrdom - which his own Church at the time was still far from accepting. With characteristic wit and self-deprecation, Rowan Williams responded: "Just occasionally, the Anglican Church gets it right **before** the Catholic Church". Happily, in the days running up to the Romero canonisation in Rome in 2018, a senior official of the Roman Curia was heard to exclaim: "Well, we must humbly recognise that the Anglicans got here first!"

The anniversary of Romero's martyrdom, 24 March, is now designated in the Anglican calendar as the *Feast of Oscar Romero and the Martyrs of El Salvador*,

and it includes a special Collect Prayer in the Lectionary. In 2015, seven painted stone statues of martyrs by the artist Rory Young were installed in the medieval nave screen of St Albans Cathedral. They include Oscar Romero alongside St Alban himself.

In 2013 Pope Francis had intervened dramatically and moved Romero's paralysed cause into the fast lane towards sainthood. Beatification followed in 2015 and canonisation three years later.

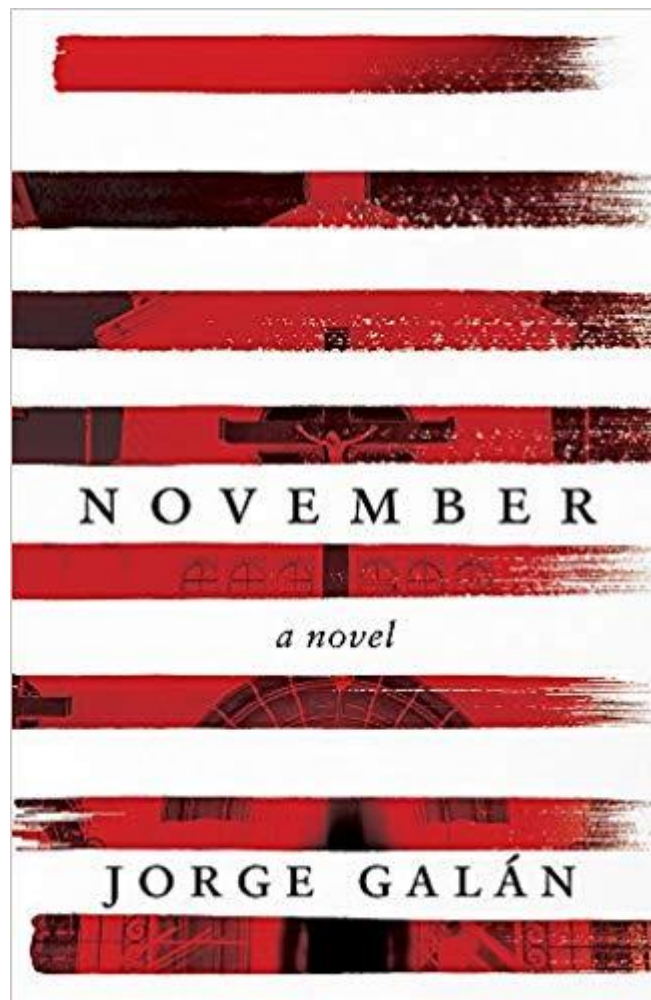
Romero has also been embraced within the wide ecumenical community; and he is often spoken of in the same breath as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. To the astonishment of many, in 2010 the United Nations General Assembly voted to designate 24 March, the anniversary of his martyrdom, as the 'International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims'. The UN decision was taken explicitly in recognition of Romero's action in defence of human dignity and fundamental rights. It constitutes a spectacular secular affirmation of Romero's global standing.

Romero was utterly radical and utterly orthodox. He inhabited and was inhabited by the Word of God and the world of the poor. The hope is that St Oscar Romero, admired by both liberal and conservative sectors of the Church, embraced by Catholics and Anglicans alike, might become a patronal figure in the next stages of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) dialogues. His ministry and martyrdom might then perhaps serve as an inspiration for a new phase of ARCIC deliberation on moral discernment and to foster creative inter-church collaboration that would reflect an authentic ecumenical option for the poor.

**Book Review**  
**November – A Novel**

The assassination of the six Jesuit priests in El Salvador 30 years ago was the last great crime of the Cold War. On November 16, 1989, a week after German protesters began demolishing the Berlin Wall an elite Salvadorean military unit moved into the University of

Central America, or UCA, campus where the priests lived. The soldiers forced the men in their nightclothes into the garden outside their residence and executed them, along with their housekeeper and her daughter.



The order to kill came from the Salvadorean military high command. The chief target was Ignacio Ellacuría, Vice-Chancellor of the University whose work, in support of the efforts of Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas, to sue for peace and reconciliation, made him

a threat to the military government. The murder of the Jesuits marked the beginning of the end of the ten-year civil war in El Salvador.

The murder of the Jesuits and its destabilising legacy is brilliantly evoked in “November” a quiet and disturbing novel by Salvadorean writer Jorge Galán. Published to acclaim (and death threats) in Spanish in 2015, the new English translation recreates the events of 1989 with intimate detail and imaginative sympathy.

Neither a polemic nor investigation, “November” is a meditation on atrocity and martyrdom, written with the prose of a poet and the pace of a detective novel.

The detective is José Maria Tojeira, the Jesuit Provincial and the most senior Jesuit in the country. Tojeira, is a real person and a great friend of the Romero Trust. When Tojeira heard the news that his friends and colleagues had been slaughtered, in Galán’s telling, “the ground under Tojeira’s feet seemed to shift as if he were in a pine forest where tangled roots lay concealed under a thick layer of needles, ready to trip the

unwary.” Tojeira feels no choice but to accept the burden of seeking justice, knowing full well the power of the criminals he will have to confront.



*José María Tojeira*

As Tojeira investigates, Galán weaves in other characters whose lives were shaped by the violence.

In 1992, the government and the guerrillas finally forged a peace agreement to end the war. “Perhaps without realising it, in murdering Ellacuría, the army had struck a blow that gave the peace process new impetus,” Galán writes. But the army had also laid down the law of impunity that pervades Salvadoran society to this day.

When the soldiers withdrew from the UCA campus, Galán writes:

“There was an enormous silence in San Salvador, as if an unwanted truce was in force. A few birds were singing, they had not flown away, and had not emigrated to higher ground where nothing happens. Without anyone noticing, morning dew had fallen on to the silent city, on to the marching soldiers’ bodies, on to the bodies of the assassinated Jesuits, and on to the roofs those sleeping unaware of what had happened. The sixteenth day dawns. It is November. Light suffuses men and beasts.” *Adapted from the review by Jefferson Morley published in The Intercept, November 2019*

## The UCA Martyrs XXX Anniversary November 2019

16 November marked 30 years since the army massacre of six Jesuits and their two women co-workers at the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador. Thousands of Salvadoreans and visitors from around the world attended the celebrations in a week-long series of commemorative events.

*The special guest of honour was Cardinal Michael Czerny, close adviser to Pope Francis and Secretary of the Amazon Synod celebrated in Rome last October.*



*In 1989, Fr Michael Czerny SJ answered the call of the Jesuits in El Salvador to come to the*

*UCA and fill the roles held by the murdered priests. Michael, now Cardinal Czerny, worked as the head of the University’s Human Rights Institute in some of the country’s darkest times before taking on responsibility for Jesuit social works across the world and now as the Under-Secretary for Migrants and Refugees in the Vatican.*

*Amongst the countless tributes to the UCA Martyrs we reproduce here just two: the first by the US Democrat Party Congressman James McGovern, a lifelong campaigner for justice and human rights in Central America and the second by Jon Sobrino SJ.*



## **A Tribute from Congressman James McGovern**

My very first visit to El Salvador was in 1983. My boss at the time, Congressman Joe Moakley, had a meeting with activists back in Boston, Massachusetts who were pleading with him to protect Salvadoran refugees who had come to our country fleeing violence of the Civil War. I was 23 years old, I had just started working for him, and I knew very little about the conditions on the ground here in El Salvador. At the time, the United States government was supporting the Salvadoran military. Most people in the U.S. said that the money we were sending to El Salvador was to fight communism and protect the people of El Salvador. Of course, we now know that nothing could have been further from the truth.

**On that first trip, I had the opportunity to meet with Fathers Ellacuría and Martin-Baró right here on campus. I asked Father Martin-Baró “what should I tell people about the realities of El Salvador?”**

**He told me: “remember that we, too, are human beings.”**

During that first visit with Fathers Ellacuría and Martin-Baró, they taught me about the brutal realities of the Salvadoran civil war. They told me about the dead, the displaced, and the disappeared. As I tried to make sense of what was happening, they helped me to understand America’s role in the war. I felt shocked, and angry, and ashamed. Fathers Ellacuría and Martin-Baró helped me work through these feelings. They talked to me about the work of the UCA and about their ideals of peace and social justice in the midst of such violence and horror and war.

We talked about the mission of the church – and, indeed, the mission of this university –to stand with the poor and the oppressed. We talked about Archbishop Romero – now a saint for the Salvadoran people and all the world. We talked about the four American churchwomen who were murdered for their work with Salvadoran orphans, youth, and people forced to flee their homes because of violence.

What they taught me that first visit not only strengthened my faith, it changed the way I view the church altogether. Back then, my faith had become too much about ritual – going to church, kneeling and standing, taking the eucharist. What they taught me was something different. They taught me that faith without works is empty. They taught me that putting our beliefs into action required taking into account the gospel's preference for the poor in our own everyday lives.

In fact, Father Ellacuría believed that that was the mission of the UCA. He believed that was the mission of the church. At the end of the day, that's why he was killed. It's why they were all killed. Because they stood with the poor. The mission and message of the Jesuit martyrs did not die with them. Their message is needed here in El Salvador, in the United States, and throughout the world. We must heed their message because harsh realities can be changed. But they can only be changed if like-minded people come together to demand change.

So many of the problems that plague El Salvador – and frankly, the United States – are political conditions that we can do

something about. Because right now, we are all suffering from the political acceptance of a status quo where there are haves and have nots in the world.

We are suffering not only from the violence of bullets and guns, but also from the violence of hunger, and of not knowing whether there will be food on the table for your children. We are suffering not only the violence of displacement and disappearance, but also the violence of not having a place to live, or any kind of decent roof over your head. We are suffering not only the violence of slavery, but also the violence of working to the point of exhaustion, often at more than one job, and still not being able to afford food or shelter.

There is dignity in work – and there's violence in the destitution that comes with poverty and working until your knuckles are bare just to make ends meet. And by the way – in case there's any confusion, these problems exist here in El Salvador AND in the United States. Too often, in both countries, when we take a stand against such violence, and speak out in support of the fundamental rights of our brothers and sisters across

the world, we are met with resistance and oppression.

It's then I remember the words of Archbishop – now Saint –Oscar Romero:

***“I am glad, brothers and sisters, that our church is persecuted precisely for its preferential option for the poor [...]***

***“What good are beautiful highways and airports, beautiful buildings full of spacious apartments, if they are only put together with the blood of the poor, who are not going to enjoy them?” (July 15, 1979)***

I often tell people that a lot of my politics and a lot of the way I think about things were influenced by the Jesuits at the UCA. When I was applying to colleges – which was quite a while ago – I think I was rejected by every Jesuit college and university that I applied to. But I was lucky. I got one of the greatest Jesuit educations that anyone could ask for by my interaction with the Jesuits at the UCA – and the many Jesuits I've been honoured to know in the U.S. and around the world.

And I remember, most especially, the lives of Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina, who were at the UCA that night in order to be safe because it was too dangerous to walk home in the dark during the military offensive. They were murdered because they were present the night the Jesuit priests were killed and even while they hid, they heard the sounds of this heinous crime.

Each of their lives brings inspiration to my life and all of our lives. Each of them died because they believed love and compassion are greater than hate, prejudice, arrogance and avarice.

And for too long, the United States has failed to acknowledge our own obligation, given our history in the region. Each day, we have a chance to change this reality. Each day, we have a chance to live our lives fully in service to others. Each day, we can stand up for justice. Each day, we have another chance to dedicate our lives to the teachings of the Jesuit martyrs. Each day, we are given a choice to help alleviate the suffering and violence too common in the lives of so many Salvadorans, especially the poor and the marginalised.

Individually and together, we can end the hopelessness that drives people from place to place inside El Salvador, and that drives so many to leave their homes forever.

This weekend, like every November 16<sup>th</sup>, we honour the memory of the Jesuit martyrs. But if that's all this is, then it's meaningless. Their lives were about more than just a dedication to the poor and to the suffering. Their lives were about more than faith alone. Their lives were a call to action. Not just here in El Salvador, but in the United States and around the world. And today, I will leave here with a renewed sense of urgency to address the problems of my own country.

We must demonstrate compassion, not hostility, to the thousands of Central Americans and others who come to the southern border of the United States seeking asylum and safe haven. We must stand with those who struggle for justice and against the forces of racism and sexism and bigotry that plague our nation. And all of us – in El Salvador, America, and around the globe – must fight against the materialism and greed that are eating away at our common

humanity and taking precedence over the common good.

Let us rededicate ourselves to lifting up the poor and the suffering, feeding the hungry and fighting alongside those who thirst for justice. Let us work to build neighbourhoods and campuses and communities not just inspired by the mission of the Jesuits but ignited by the call to action that each one of them sounded before their lives were ended too soon.

Even when it's hard – especially when it's hard – let us remember that our work is not the cause of one day, or one month, or one year – it is the work of a lifetime.

And let us recommit ourselves to the teachings of the Jesuit martyrs.

Scripture tells us: “Show me your faith *apart* from your works, and I will show you my faith *by* my works.” And just as the martyrs worked God's will here on Earth, let each of us pray for the wisdom and strength to pick up where they left off, knowing that here on Earth, God's work is in our hands.

**Thank you.**



## Julia and Celina The Crucified People

*Father Jon Sobrino lived in the same community as the murdered Jesuits but by chance he was out of the country at the time of the massacre. Here he pays tribute to two lesser known UCA victims.*



Two women were murdered with the Jesuits: Julia Elba Ramos, 42, a cook in a community of young Jesuits, poor, happy and intuitive, and a worker all her life. And her daughter Celina, 15 years old, lively, a student and catechist. She and her boyfriend had planned to get engaged in December 1989. The two women stayed overnight at the Jesuit residence, as they felt more secure there. But the criminal order was "to leave no witnesses". The photos show

Julia Elba's gesture of defending her daughter with her own body when the killers found them in the room where they sought safety.

There are tens or even hundreds of millions of men and women like Julia Elba in our world. They are the immense majorities who perpetuate a history of centuries: in the America conquered and depredated by the Spaniards in the 16th century; in Africa enslaved already in the 16th century and systematically plundered by Europeans in the 19th century; in the planet suffering today from oppressive globalisation under the aegis of the United States. They die the quick death of violence and repression, and above all the slow death of poverty and oppression.

"There is more wealth on earth, but there is more injustice. Africa has been called "the dungeon of the world", a continental "Shoah". 2.5 billion people survive on Earth on less than \$2 a day and 25,000 people die of hunger every day, according to the FAO. Desertification threatens the lives of 1.2 billion people in a hundred countries. Migrants are denied fraternity, and the ground beneath their feet".

These words of Pedro Casaldáliga are from 2006. Neither the G-7, nor the G-8, nor to my mind the successive G-, have done anything significant to reverse this history. To remember today the ideals of the millennium is a mockery and an offence to the poor. In one year, the number of hungry people has increased by 100 million, and every five seconds a child dies of hunger, murdered, points out Jean Ziegler, because it is very possible to eliminate hunger.

They are "the suffering servant of Yahweh" in our days; "the crucified people". Unknown are the five million men and women who have died in the Congo, in a war designed and manufactured so that coltan would end up in the world of abundance in the mega-companies of missiles, telephony and computers. And they die defencelessly. Seriously, who knows these people, who defends them, who risks something important to bring them down from the cross?

It may seem absurd, but I have asked myself who is more of a martyr, Ellacuría or Julia Elba, who reproduces the cross of Jesus more? Jesuit martyrs express best the decision and freedom to risk life,

and usually also express most the cruelty of the moment of death. But they express less the darkness of daily injustice, the difficulty of simply living, the cruelty of powerlessness. The death of the murdered majorities, on the other hand, expresses less the active character of struggle, but expresses more an historical innocence, since they have done nothing to deserve death, and the defencelessness, since they have had no physical possibility to avoid it. These majorities are the ones who bear most of the sin that has annihilated them little by little in life and ultimately in death. They are the ones that best express the enormous suffering of the world. Without intending it and without knowing it, they "complete in their flesh what is lacking in Christ's passion". And we must bear in mind what an enlightened exegete told us: "completing" here does not mean "adding" something fundamental to the passion of Jesus of Nazareth, but it does mean "reproducing" it.

The Jesuits of the UCA were not killed out of Kantian fidelity to universal ideals of truth and justice, but to defend these crucified people. And without remembering these millions of crucified

people, they are not understood. It would be like wanting to understand the cross of Jesus without remembering the wretched poor whom Jesus helped in his prostration and whom he defended from Pharisees, scribes, Herodians and high priests.

"With one and the other, Jesuit martyrs and crucified people, God passed through El Salvador". Maintaining that passage of God is the ultimate truth of the martyrs' legacy.

### **A specific legacy: A university of Christian inspiration**

My final word on the legacy of the martyrs for those who work and study at the UCA is for us to creatively maintain the university they told us about. And what is that today? We can honestly say that we don't know.

My suggestion is to deepen the Christian inspiration of the University. This is what the martyrs are calling upon us to do. Whoever lives and works in this way at the university will have enough creativity to reinvent what we must do and how to do it in the UCA's work of teaching, research and social outreach.

\*\*\*

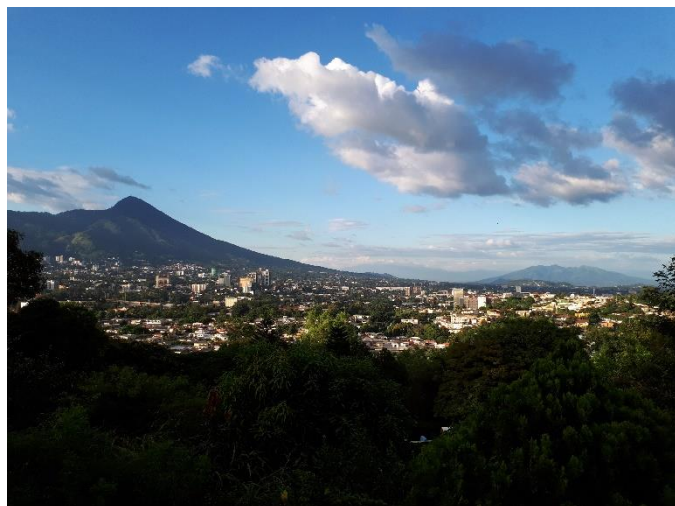
## **A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS IN A LAND OF MARTYRS**

*Peter Stanford travelled to El Salvador in November 2019 with the Romero Trust Pilgrimage. Peter's travel diary was first published in the Christmas edition of The Tablet.*

### **Tuesday November 5:**

El Salvador, the *Economist* helpfully informs us on the eve of our departure, has the highest death rate per head of the population of anywhere in the world. "By some measures," it adds, not entirely reassuringly.

### **Thursday November 6:**



Prompt start at the spartan Jesuit Retreat Centre in San Salvador (the sight of an armed guard on the gate helped us sleep).

To the chapel, looking down on the city and out onto the volcanoes that surround it, for prayers and to meet our pilgrim group. We are well blessed with priests (two – one from Minnesota) plus a retired bishop, and a deacon. Then there is what we come to call an “embassy” from Ireland (two sisters plus two friends), a pair of retired special needs teachers, an NHS nurse who works with the homeless, a Quaker ex-social worker, and a group of five from CAFOD, some of them staff, some volunteers, amongst our group of 30 pilgrims.



*Romero, St Ignatius and Rutilio Grande  
Centro Loyola San Salvador*

Everyone is slightly apprehensive, but our leader, Clare Dixon, long-serving Head of CAFOD’s Latin America programme and secretary of the Romero Trust, gets us all talking happily by sharing a thought on “reverse mission” – the idea that by bringing those from the wealthy West to stand alongside the poor in the developing world, our cosy, complacent lives will be forever “ruined”. It should sound brutal, but we are, individually and collectively, inspired.

First stop is *El Hospitalito*, the Divine Providence Cancer Hospital, run by Sr María Julia Garcia, one of a long line of remarkable women on the front-line of the Church who we meet in El Salvador. Here, on Monday 24 March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered by an army hit squad as he stood saying Mass at the altar. Our other group leader, Julian Filochowski, retired director of CAFOD, stands where Romero stood that day as he explains how his friend flinched slightly when he spotted the gunman pull up in a car outside the chapel and aim his gun down the aisle. He realised what was going to happen, but he didn’t run or duck or hide.



He had always made it plain that when those who wanted to silence him as voice of the voiceless came, as he knew they would, he didn't want others around him to lose their lives in a hail of bullets as the assassins sought to catch him. His courage in the face of death is even more awe-inspiring when you stand in the precise spot where he stood that evening. How he must have had to curb the instinct of every bone in his body to duck.

### **Friday November 8:**

We are in La Chacra, a notorious shantytown in San Salvador, so riven by violence between two of the many gangs in this country that most people instinctively give it a wide berth. Gang culture has flourished since El Salvador's civil war ended in uneasy peace in 1992, fuelled by the huge number of guns lying around on the streets, and by the abject failure of successive governments of Right and Left to tackle the poverty and injustice that drives young people to despair. Some head, legally or not, to find work in the United States, others join gangs. Neither is a happy choice, but it is the activities of rival gangs that explain

the top-of-the-table death rates in El Salvador.

Here in La Chacra, two gang territories are divided by the rickety bridge over a river full of sewage. Undaunted by the daily threat to life, Sister Mark Hollywood, a Poor Clare from Warrenpoint in the north of Ireland, established a school here which offers local youngsters a viable alternative. We meet kids with potential and dreams who are being helped to channel it for the good – including in a show they put on for us of music, dance and marching bands. Sister Mark points out one 15-year old in a golden shirt on stage. He has just been “rescued” from a gang, she explains, which he joined after his mother committed suicide. She had numbed the pain for many years with alcohol but, when she was persuaded to stop drinking, she could see more clearly than ever how hopeless life could be in La Chacra and so she drank rat poison.

Sister Mark – and the lay leaders who now run the school – provides hope and paths forward to college and careers and contentment. The same imperative radiates out from the school. Down by the bridge – instinctively my hand goes up to

my nose as I cross, but I stop myself – we meet some of the mothers and grandmothers of La Chacra, who with the help of Sister Mark and CAFOD, are engaging with psychologists to address past traumas that still shape their lives a quarter of a century after the brutality of civil war officially gave way to a peace that for them has been just as crushing.



*Community members of La Chacra*

### **Saturday November 9:**

We have our war cemeteries and memorials to harness the power of shared memory to build something good going forward. They are quiet, dignified spaces. In El Salvador they have a long, marble wall in a park in the centre of the capital that lists those who died and disappeared during the Civil War here. It

took until 2003 to establish it, but the 30,000 plus names it contains, listed year-by-year, is being still being expanded, as the bodies of those abducted and killed during the civil war (90 per cent of them by the army and National Guard, 10 per cent by left-wing guerrillas) continue to be unearthed.

Our guide, Chepe, worked for many years for Tutela Legal, the human rights office that Oscar Romero set up, and he continues the fight for justice with a passion. He has none of the British reserve around remembrance. On a makeshift altar in front of the wall, he has laid pictures of those victims that only their families remember, men and women snatched off the street for reasons no one has ever quite fathomed. Standing next to it he leads us in uplifting, insistent songs, half hymn, half protest tunes, all the time accompanied by his colleague on guitar and his son on harmonies. Other park-users hardly raise an eyebrow. Such exuberance is evidently the norm in El Salvador, and so our reserve quickly drops away. Soon we are thumping the air as we belt it out as determinedly as Chepe. Memory, he

insists, belongs to victims. It cannot be written or owned by the powerful and therefore has its own unique force. And, even more importantly, the memory of the martyrs is timeless and still drives the fight for social justice in what remains a country of a tiny number of wealthy people – sometimes referred to as the “14 families” - and several millions who are poor, marginalised but – thanks to the popular Church (some bishops are not supportive, rather as in Romero’s day) - never forgotten.

### Monday November 11:



*Mural to Romero & Rutilio Grande in El Paisnal*

After Oscar Romero, the Jesuit Rutilio Grande is the other “name” among El Salvador’s martyrs, said to be the next in line for beatification by an admiring Pope Francis, also of course a Jesuit. The miracle demanded by the official process

is, locals say, Romero himself, for it was this priest’s assassination by the National Guard in 1977 that prompted the then newly-installed archbishop to speak out forcefully for the first time against the rising tide of extra-judicial murders.

We are north of San Salvador in the village of El Paisnal, where Fr Grande was born and died, and where - as part of the kind of base Christian community that characterised the better part of the Latin American church at the time - he helped the local landless *campesinos* who worked on the sugar cane plantations to demand justice rather than starvation wages, dignity not exploitation. “We gave them the gospel,” his colleague, Sister Eva Menjívar, tells us, “and the landowners responded with bullets”. Undeterred, she continues the work to this day with a quiet courage.

### Wednesday November 13

We wake up in an eco-lodge, a couple of miles from the border with Honduras, in the mountains of El Salvador. “Isn’t it beautiful,” I gush from the porch of our eco-hut as Clare Dixon passes by. “So much beauty and so much blood,” she replies thoughtfully.



*Scene of the El Mozote massacre*

I only fully understand what she means later when we travel a few miles to the rural village of El Mozote, scene in December 1981 of the worst single massacre to happen in all of Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century. Not heard of it? Me neither, to our collective shame.

We stand with some of the survivors and their families as they describe how, between December 10 and 13 that year, the Salvadorean army, guided by US military advisers sent by President Ronald Reagan to stop the country going the revolutionary way of next door Nicaragua in “America’s backyard”, massacred some 1000 old men, women and children. It was part of a “scorched earth” policy – to terrify the rural

population into refusing to support the guerrillas. The old men were told to lie down on the ground and were shot (the younger ones were away, some with the guerrillas, others fleeing the war). Infants were torn from their mother’s arms and bayoneted. Older children forced into the presbytery, gunned down as they cried out for their mums, and then the building set alight. The women were raped and murdered. A profound silence falls over the place as we listen. What human beings can do to others when they are indoctrinated to hate them is too shocking and inhuman for tears. I vow quietly to myself never again to say the word “hate” about anybody.

Those who describe what happened – and the subsequent cover-up - do so, remarkably, without rancour, without tears, without anger. They want justice. They want the truth about who was behind the massacre. They want it never to happen again. And, for that to come about, the world has to know about it. So they thank us for coming and listening. Briege, a retired headteacher from Manchester, now a CAFOD volunteer, speaks for us all when she



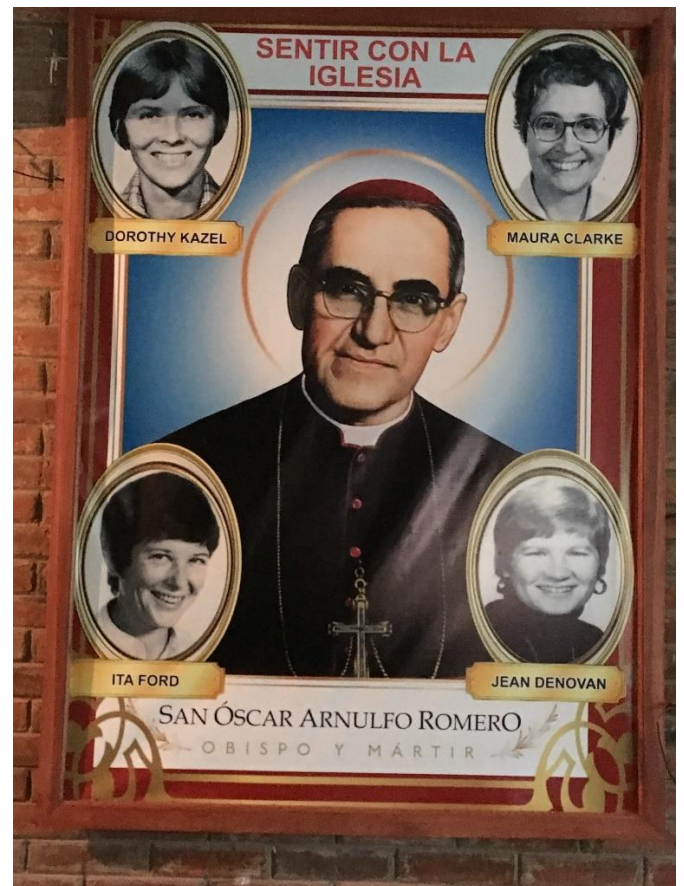
addresses the survivors, through our interpreter, and promises to do everything in her power to make their story better known.

### Thursday November 14

The rain beats down on the corrugated iron roof of the simple brick and concrete chapel in San Pedro Nonualco, to which we have driven down from the mountains and towards the Pacific Ocean. It marks the spot where, on December 2, 1980, American nuns Maura Clarke, Ita Ford and Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan, were raped, murdered and dumped by the military.

Why did the army kill them in this way, we ask Paul Schindler, who meets us at the church? This Cleveland diocesan priest had worked with the poor of El Salvador alongside the women in the late 1970s, was the first to identify their bodies, and has in retirement returned here to continue to serve unto death. “Why?” he repeats. “Because they could”. Once, in this most Catholic of countries, archbishops, priests and nuns had believed themselves a target too far for those conservative forces who wish to

maintain the status quo by fear and repression. But from 1977 onwards that no longer applied.



*The Chapel built on the spot the US missionary women were murdered.*

First Rutilio Grande, then Oscar Romero, then these four women. Sister Ita, he remembers with gruff fondness, was a “tough, little woman”, unafraid of taking on the generals when they detained and killed those she knew, outspoken even after her name appeared at the top of a list of “communists” that was plastered by the military onto the façade of the

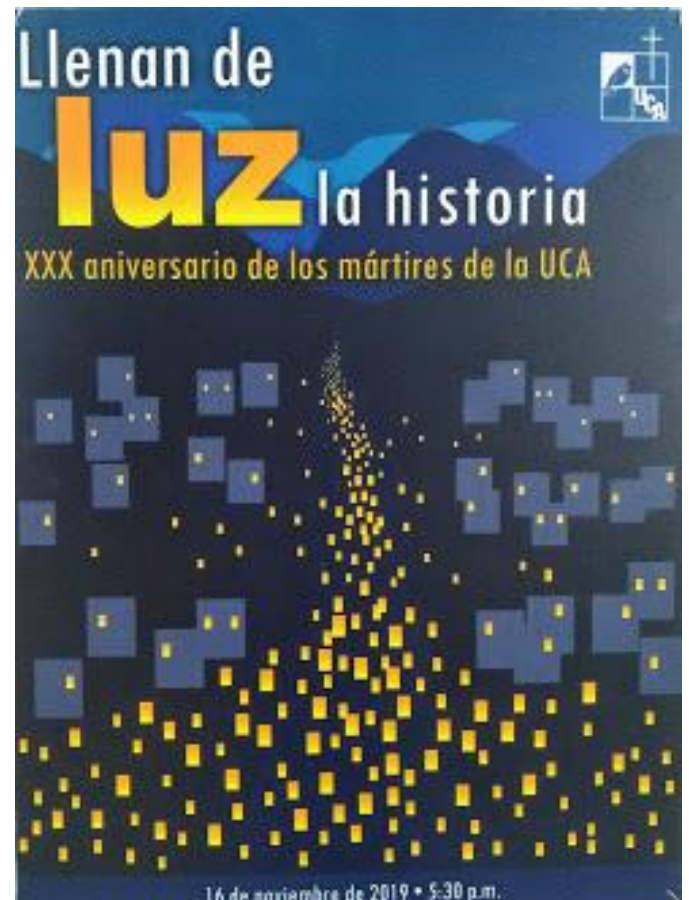
cathedral in Chalatenango. Like Romero, she did not flinch.

At our Mass in their church, Dale Korogi, our priest from Minnesota, sums it succinctly and perfectly, as is his way, with a reference to Dorothy Day and the idea she espoused of a mission to accompany those in need. “When they come for the innocent without crossing your body,” he reports her as saying, “cursed be your religion and your life.” That is the wisdom to be drawn from the martyrs of El Salvador, too.

### **Saturday November 16**

Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder by soldiers in 1989 of six Jesuits regarded by hardliners in the government as subversives – Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Joaquín López y López and Amando López - as well as their housekeeper and her daughter (Julia Elba and 16-year-old Celina Ramos). It happened at their house on the campus of the Jesuit University of Central America in San Salvador. It was another naked, cowardly act of carnage, but for once one that made international headlines and brought the US and its

allies in the Salvadorean government into disrepute around the globe.



### *They fill history with light*

In the afternoon, we arrive to find that the roadway that runs around the campus of the “UCA”, as everyone calls the university, has been decorated with vivid pictures, made in coloured sand, that record and celebrate the lives of these eight martyrs. As dusk falls like a curtain, on the dot of six, a crowd gathers and we join a colourful, chaotic, candlelit procession that – curiously and counter-intuitively - involves us walking over the pictures.



*The "carpets" around the UCA campus*

It must be 40 years since I last went on such a procession, at Lourdes. Then it made me feel uneasy but here I discover for the first time how affecting and transcendent such communal acts of devotion can be when carried out in near darkness. You somehow feel part of a whole that is limitless, and links earth and heaven. It is, I reflect, as we head over later to the sports field for a huge mass to mark the anniversary, part of being ruined.

**And I am grateful.**

## Understanding El Salvador's Gangs

For many people El Salvador has become synonymous with gangs and violence, but what lies behind this phenomenon?

To understand why and how gang warfare has become the scourge of the country read this excellent article from the 10<sup>th</sup> January Guardian. Be warned, the first half of the piece is both graphic and gruesome but the analysis in the second half is well worth a read:

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/jan/10/how-the-us-helped-create-el-salvadors-bloody-gang-war>

## Celebrate Romero in Wales

**7-8 August 2020**

The annual celebration of Latin American solidarity organisations will focus this year on El Salvador in the beautiful Welsh countryside of Machynlleth:

<https://elsuenoexiste.wordpress.com/upcoming-events/>



## ROMERO RESOURCES

Did you know that a range of inspiring documentaries and feature films are available, free to view, on the Romero Trust website? We particularly recommend:

### **Righting the Wrong:**

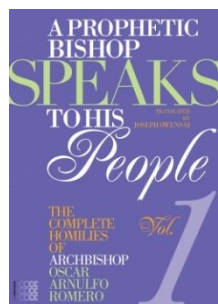
DVD now available to purchase £10 (incl.p&p)

*This documentary provides an excellent overview of Romero's life and martyrdom, and the long drawn out process after his death leading to his canonisation by Pope Francis in 2018. The Romero Trust shares the view that this is the best Romero film currently available.*

**Find all the videos on:**

<http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/videos>

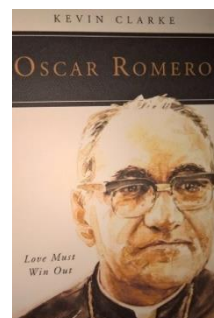
## BOOK OFFERS



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

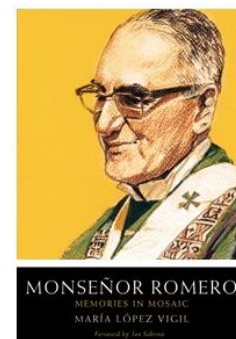
Readers encounter Romero the way ordinary Salvadoreans did—through his sermons, which are brought to a startling

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 2019** 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!



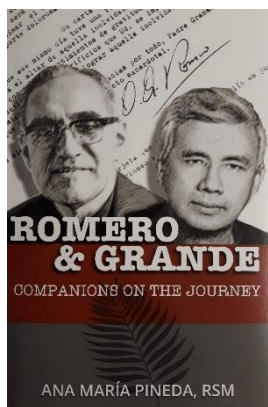
**Oscar Romero – Love Must Win Out** by Kevin Clarke. An excellent and very readable short introduction to the life and times of Archbishop Romero.

**£8 (incl. p&p).**



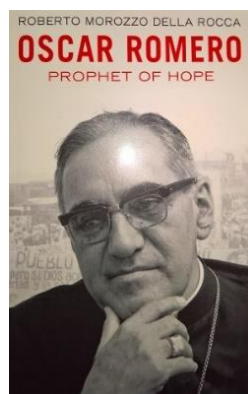
**Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic** Romero remembered by the people who worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him.

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



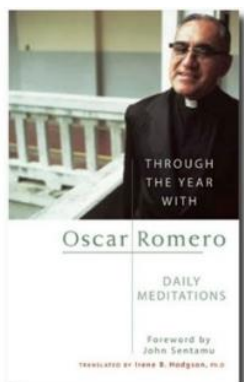
**Romero and Grande – Companions on the Journey** by Ana Maria Pineda. According to Pope Francis one can't understand Romero without Rutilio. This

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

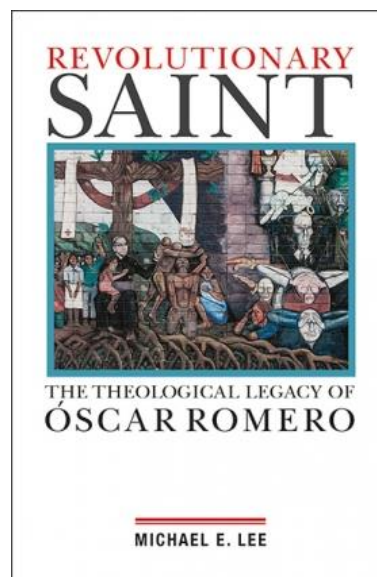


**Oscar Romero - Prophet of Hope** by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca

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)**



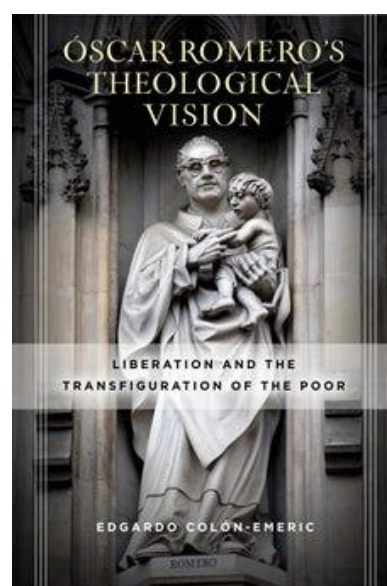
**Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations**  
Powerful and moving selections from Blessed Romero's broadcast homilies. **£9 (incl. p&p)**



**Revolutionary Saint – The theological Legacy of Oscar Romero**  
Michael E. Lee.  
Orbis Books.  
Reviewed in last Romero News:

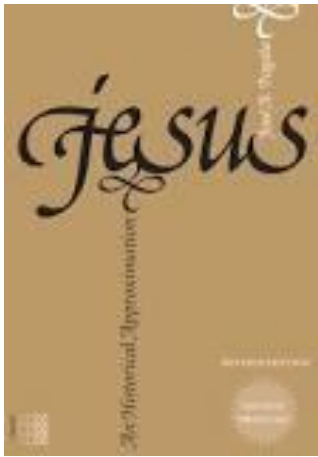
Highly recommended! Available in bookshops at £20: from the Romero Trust at the special price: **£13 (incl. p&p)**

**Oscar Romero's Theological Vision**  
by Edgardo Colón-Emeric: the Romero Trust's guest speaker for 2020 Romero Week. Throughout this remarkable book the author takes us ever deeper into the



theological development of the martyr bishop Saint Oscar Romero. Special price of **£30 (incl p& p)** instead of full price of £42.50.





## **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. **£20 (incl. p&p)**



## **BOOKS AND RESOURCES**

All available from

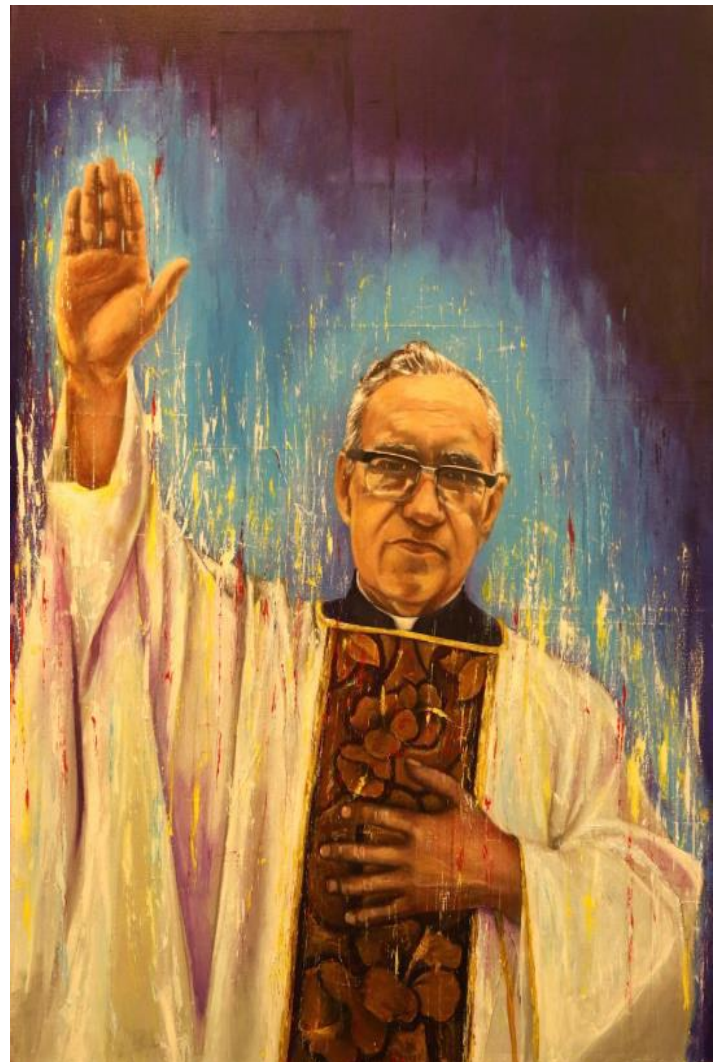
[romerotrust@gmail.com](mailto:romerotrust@gmail.com)

or by post

**Archbishop Romero Trust**

**PO Box 70227**

**London E9 9BR**



## FRIENDS OF ROMERO

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

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

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

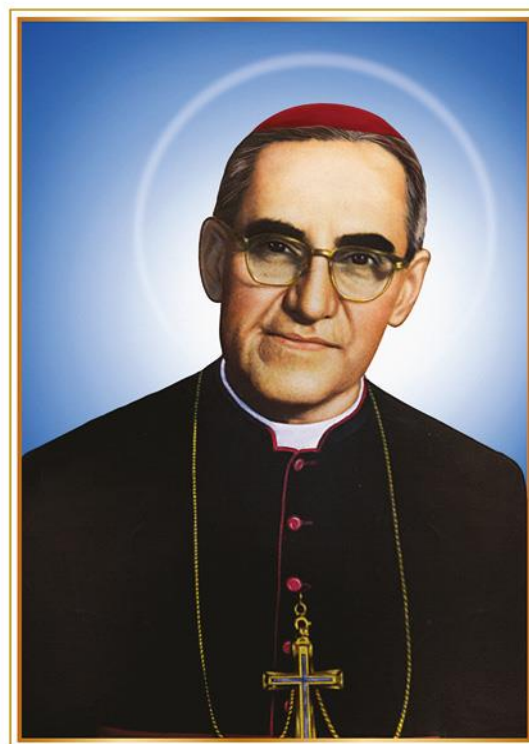
**Patrons:** Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop Leo Cushley, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Lord Rowan Williams, Archbishop John Sentamu, Sister Pamela Hussey, Sister Maria Julia García, Mons Rafael Urrutia, Rev Dr John Hall

**Photo credits:**

Sophie Stanes  
UCA media centre  
National Catholic Reporter  
Peter Stanford  
Pauline Carberry  
Clare Dixon

## ST OSCAR ROMERO PRAYER CARDS AND PORTRAIT

The beautiful, official portrait of Saint Oscar Romero 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.

For more than 1 copy the p&p is £5.

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

# St Oscar Romero 40 Years On

## Romero Week 2020 – Full Listing of Events

### Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup> 10.00am

Romero Film '*Righting the Wrong*'  
followed by Q&A  
St Thomas of Canterbury Church,  
**Canterbury**

### Saturday March 21<sup>st</sup> 12.30pm

Mass for 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Romero's  
Martyrdom  
St George's Cathedral, **Southwark**  
Celebrant and Preacher: Archbishop  
John Wilson  
Followed by Reception in Amigo Hall

### Tuesday March 24<sup>th</sup>

St Oscar Romero Feast Day –  
Many local masses/events?

### Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup> 11.00am

*Microphones of God - Romero 40 Years  
On*  
National Ecumenical Service for 40<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of Romero's Martyrdom  
St Martin-in-the Fields Church, Trafalgar  
Square, **London**.  
Preacher: Edgardo Colón-Emeric

### Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup> 8.00am

*Passion Sunday and Romero*  
Radio 4 Sunday Service broadcast  
Wesley's Chapel, City Road, **London**.  
Preacher: Edgardo Colón-Emeric

### Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup> Afternoon

Talk/Lecture '*Romero 40 Years On*'  
St Mary's University, **Twickenham**  
Speaker: Edgardo Colón-Emeric

### Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup> Late Afternoon

Lecture: '*Joy and Hope for the 2020s –  
Romero 40 Years On*'  
Newman University, **Birmingham**  
Speaker: Edgardo Colón-Emeric

### Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup> Early Evening

Gethin Abraham-Williams Memorial  
Lecture with CYTUN  
'*Romero 40 Years On – an Ecumenical  
Inspiration*'  
**Cardiff or Swansea** to be confirmed  
Speaker: Edgardo Colón-Emeric

### Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup> All-day Pilgrimage

'*Microphones of God – Romero 40 Years  
On*'  
Ecumenical Service, Romero Film,  
prayer and picnics! Plus:-  
'Oscar Romero - Portrait of Courage'  
Contemporary Dance Performance.  
**Lindisfarne, Holy Island** - arriving by  
coach or car from Newcastle,  
Middlesbrough and Edinburgh by  
10.30am  
Speaker: Edgardo Colón-Emeric