

God, you raise up true disciples

*Commissioned by
The Archbishop Romero Trust
for the centenary of the birth of
Blessed Oscar Romero
1917 - 2017*

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CJ Olding



**Wheatsheaf
Music**

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About Blessed Oscar Romero

Born on 15th August 1917, Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez was sent to study for the priesthood in Rome and was ordained in 1942. He embraced a simple lifestyle; he was a popular preacher who responded with real compassion to the plight of the poor.

He was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador in 1970. Seemingly unsympathetic to the new social justice thrust of the Latin American Church, he was suspicious of the clergy and the Base Christian Communities of the archdiocese working alongside the exploited rural poor, promoting social organisations and land reform.

A brief spell back in the countryside opened Romero's eyes as he reconnected to the misery and hardship of the *campesinos* and witnessed the murderous repression being suffered at the hands of the security forces. In February 1977 he was the surprising choice to be the new Archbishop of San Salvador.

Over the next three years the social and political conflict intensified with electoral fraud blocking change, and peaceful protest being met with massacres and death squad killings. From his pulpit Archbishop Romero became the voice of the voiceless poor. There he spoke the truth of what was happening; he denounced the killings, the torture and the disappearances of community leaders; he demanded justice and recompense for the atrocities committed by the army and police and he set up legal aid projects and pastoral programmes to support the victims of the violence.

Romero, rejecting the violence perpetrated by the left as well as the right, strained every nerve to promote peaceful solutions to his nation's crisis. He was vilified in the press, harassed by the security forces and publicly opposed by several episcopal colleagues.

The death threats multiplied; Romero realised he was going to be killed. And he came to accept it. At 6.26pm on 24th March 1980, with a single marksman's bullet, he fell at the foot of a huge crucifix while celebrating Mass. Thirty five years later, he was declared a martyr of the Church, killed out of hatred of the faith, and was beatified on 23rd May 2015.

About The Archbishop Romero Trust

The Trust aims to advance the education of the public in the life and works of Oscar Romero and his principles of human rights, social justice and the relief of poverty; to advance religion by promoting liturgical celebrations including commemorations of the life of Oscar Romero and prayer for the cause of his canonisation; and the relief of poverty and the promotion of human rights and social justice in Latin America in memory of Oscar Romero.

Learn more about Blessed Oscar Romero and The Archbishop Romero Trust at www.romerotrust.org.uk

Performance notes

This hymn is supplied with an original tune, but may also be sung to any strong tune with 87 87 D metre, such as BLAENWERN or ODE TO JOY.

The hymn is suitable for themes such as discipleship, mission, justice and peace, by replacing words in the first and last verses where indicated.

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SALVADOR 87 87 D



1. God, you raise up true dis - ci - ples, teach - ers, mart-yrs deep in faith.
2. Yours the gos - pel that dis - turbs us, words that must de - mand a choice;
3. Still our broth - ers, sist - ers suff - er, help - less and a - fraid to speak,

4. In the gift of your cre - a - tion, you pro - vide for eve - ry need.
5. On the ground a seed has fall - en, crushed and bur - ied in the earth.
6. Brought to - geth - er by your Spir - it, one in you, our ris - en Lord,



1. { Like Ro - mer - o, } ho - ly peo - ple, giv - ing wit - ness to your grace.
or Men and wo - men, }
2. speak - ing to a brok - en peo - ple, hope for those who have no voice.
3. vict - ims of op - press - ors us - ing power to do - mi - nate the weak.

4. Yet we squand - er earth's re - sourc - es just to sat - is - fy our greed.
5. There it lies 'till time ap - point - ed, then a harv - est brings to birth.
6. now you send us as your cho - sen, hearts em - bold - ened, hope re - stored.



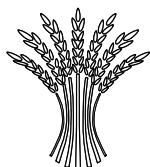
1. Let us list - en to their voic - es, speak - ing of new ways to live.
2. Stir in us your call to act - ion, rouse us from our a - pa - thy.
3. When we see in - just - ice near us, we will cry out: 'This must cease!'

4. Turn our eyes to see the an - guish on the fac - es of the poor.
5. In our strugg - ling and our suffer - ing, help us dai - ly bear our pain,
6. { Like Ro - mer - o, we will serve you } and what - ev - er may be - fall,
or We will strive to live your gos - pel }



1. By their words and by their act - ions, we may know the love you give.
2. In the plac - es lost to dark - ness, we will shine for all to see.
3. And by our ex - amp - le, turn this world from viol - ence back to peace.

4. Op - en wide our hearts and hands to help the need - y at our door.
5. as we give our lives for oth - ers so they come to know your name.
6. we'll de - vote our - selves to just - ice and the comm - on good of all.



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Notes on the text

I am honoured to be commissioned to write this hymn to mark the centenary of the birth of Blessed Oscar Romero. The words are based on transcriptions of Archbishop Romero's homilies, recorded and broadcast to the people of El Salvador, and on reflections upon what our response should be to his challenge.

"God, you raise up holy people..."

Romero referred to the active nature of the word of God *"because it enlightens, contrasts, repudiates, praises what is going on today in this society"*. It is something alive, calling on the listener to *"tear those sins out of their hearts ... out of the structures that oppress, that imprison"*, to answer that call to conversion and find a new way to live. When Romero was mocked for thinking himself to be a prophet, he said: *"God be praised! You ought to be one too"*. God sends us messengers – but are we ready to listen?

"Yours the gospel that disturbs us..."

"A gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word that doesn't get under anyone's skin - what gospel is that?" Romero knew full well that *"preaching is relatively easy, but to live out what is preached ... then the conflicts arise"*. He said that part of his task was *"to convey the word to the people and make them light of the world... to enlighten human lives ... The church feels compelled to light up the darkness."*

"Still our brothers, sisters, suffer..."

Romero lived in a place where extreme force was commonplace. *"The many abuses of human life, liberty and dignity are a heartfelt suffering"*. Violence may not be part of our daily experience but when we see oppression and *"when human authority becomes abusive of God's law ... then it is time to cry out like St Peter: We must obey God rather than men"*. But the peace that we seek is not a passive withdrawal, *"not the product of terror or fear ... not the silent result of violent oppression"* but an active engagement in the world, *"the generous ... contribution of all, to the good of all."*

"In the gift of your creation..."

"To cut down a tree, to waste water ... all that concerns our alliance with God...It is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing." We are more aware of the need to care for God's creation now than ever before, but do we realise the effects our greed? Not just of physical things like food and water, but our depriving others of freedom, justice, peace, love? *"When we speak of the church of the poor, we are simply telling also the rich: Turn your eyes to this church and concern yourselves for the poor as for yourselves."*

"On the ground a seed has fallen..."

The passage from John's Gospel about the grain of wheat that dies was read at Romero's last Mass, moments before his death. Few are called to martyrdom for the faith, but everybody who responds to Christ's summons takes on a life of sacrifice and to *"be converted into a seed that lets itself be buried. If you give your life out of love for others ... you will reap a great harvest"*.

"Brought together by your Spirit..."

We come together as the people of God to be transformed and renewed, so that we can *"go out ... with heart[s] brave and strong to face the world's difficulties"*. We do our best, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, to create *"a world without injustices, a world with respect for rights"* so that we can build the common good – *"the good that we construct together and that creates conditions of kindness, of trust, of freedom, of peace."*