

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST - Oscar Romero and the Joy of the Gospel
An Ecumenical Service for the 34th Anniversary of the Martyrdom
of
Archbishop Oscar Romero
(15 August 1917 - 24 March 1980)

22 March 2014



Rio de Janeiro 2013

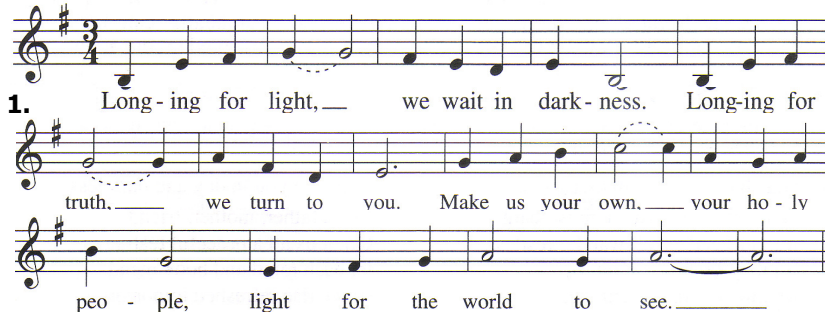
Salvadoran music is played as the congregation gathers and the clergy procession enters ...

Welcome - The Revd. Richard Carter :

What brings you to this Romero Anniversary Service? When were you the first or the last?

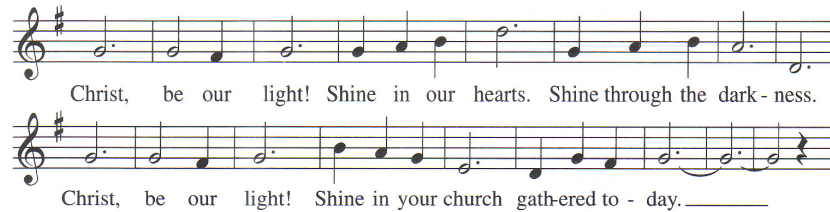
Members of the congregation are invited to share their responses with the person sitting in front of them ...

Gathering hymn : Christ be our light, *Bernadette Farrell*



1. Long-ing for light, — we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
truth, — we turn to you. Make us your own, — your ho - ly
peo - ple, light for the world to see. —

Refrain :



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the dark-ness.
Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gath-ered to - day. —

2. Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. **Refrain**
3. Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come. **Refrain**

Penitential Rite – The Revd. Richard Carter: I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. Let us therefore bring our sin, and the sin of the world into Christ's light and love, singing:

From the Misa popular Salvadoreña (Guillermo Cuellar)



Estribillo re m la m Mi⁷ la m
Se - ñor, ten pie-dad. Se - ñor, ten pie - dad de tu
re m la m Mi⁷ la m *Fin*
pue - blo; Se - ñor, Se - ñor, ten pie - dad.

In a world of abundance and riches where many go hungry, in a nation where privilege is taken for granted and so much is wasted, in a city of such wealth where the last are never first :

Have mercy, O God! Have mercy, O God! On your people, have mercy; have mercy, O God!

In a world where we witness suffering, conflict, violence and great poverty, but turn away from the consequences:

Cristo, ten piedad; Cristo, ten piedad; de tu pueblo, Cristo; Cristo, ten piedad.

In a world where fear creates scapegoats, prejudice and hatred; where the stranger is so often alienated and abandoned, and crucified peoples struggle :

Have mercy, O God! Have mercy, O God! On your people, have mercy; have mercy, O God!

In lives touched by the lives of others and the life of Jesus Christ, moved to generous offering and costly love, yet so often falling short of that call :

Señor, ten piedad; Señor, ten piedad; de tu pueblo, Señor; Señor ten piedad.

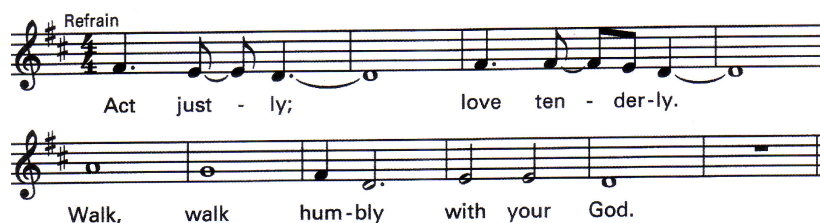
Prayer - The Revd. Richard Carter

Loving God, you called your servant Oscar Romero to be a voice for the voiceless poor, and to give his life as a seed of freedom and a sign of hope: Grant that, inspired by his sacrifice and the example of all the martyrs of El Salvador, we may without fear or favour witness to your Word who abides, your Word who is Life, even Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be praise and glory now and for ever. **Amen**

From a homily of Archbishop Oscar Romero (5 November, 1978) - Sister Eileen McLoughlin SHJM

Jesus himself offers a powerful denunciation of official religion and the abuses and vanities that surround religion. The Gospel demands authenticity We would be very mistaken to think that the greatest institution in the world is the Church. Unfortunately, many view the Church in this way. They see the Church as incapable of sin, immaculate and untouchable. The Church of the poor is a criterion of her authenticity. The Church is not a Church of classes and I am not saying the Church despises the rich, but if the rich do not become poor in spirit, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The true preacher of Christ is the Church of the poor who finds in the midst of poverty and misery, in the midst of the hope of those who pray in their shacks, in the midst of those who suffer and are not heard - the Church finds in these situations a God who listens and draws near to these voices so that she might also experience God. With Christian honesty, I ask all of you, and include myself here, to allow ourselves to be converted by this powerful diatribe of our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. This is the beginning and in this consists the greatness of an individual. The greater an individual is the more authority a person has - none of this should be manifested by phylacteries or tassels or garments. Greatness and authority should be demonstrated by service and simplicity - by being the first to offer oneself.

Song: Act Justly, *Bernadette Farrell* (In memory of Mildred Nevile MBE, 1927-2012)



2. People, lift up your voices; by your actions make choices.
In this time, the only time we have, show us the way to live. **Refrain**

3. On this planet of plenty, lives and futures lie empty.
In this world, the only world we have, show us the way to live. **Refrain**

From The Joy of the Gospel, Francis, Bishop of Rome - David Skidmore

If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, "those who cannot repay you" (Luke 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, "the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel", and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them. Let us go forth, then, to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ (*tune: Llanfair*)

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory.
Help us listen to your voice. Speak your word among us.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke (16.19-31)
Julian Filochowski, Pat Gaffney, & Francis McDonagh.

Narrator: There was a rich person who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich one also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out:

Rich Person: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames!

Narrator: But Abraham said:

Abraham: Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.

Rich Person : Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house - for I have five brothers – that he may warn them, so that they will change their ways and not also come into this place of torment.

Abraham : They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them. They have taught them to show compassion.

Rich Person : No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

Abraham : If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!

Narrator : If you have ears to hear, then hear.

All: Open our ears, hearts and minds to hear these words of truth!

The Address is given by Martin Maier SJ

Song : Inspired by love and anger, *John Bell & Graham Maule* (tune: Sally Gardens, Irish Trad.)



2. From those forever victims of heartless human greed,
Their cruel plight composes a litany of need:
"Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?"
3. To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,
We offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:
"When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous to all instead of some?"
4. God asks, "Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?"

Oscar Romero has become a focus of unity across people of all beliefs and none, calling us to profess all that gathers us in common values, rather than in the things which may divide us, and so we affirm :

All: We believe in God, all-loving, Creator of the heavens and earth;
Creator of all people who are made in God's likeness.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord God made flesh for all humanity;
God made flesh in love and grace for all creation.

We believe in the Holy Spirit through whom the living Christ makes his presence known to all peoples and gives power to become a new creation, sharing in the gifts of God.
We believe in the Church which must be a sign of God's love and the coming of God's reign.

We believe in the reign of God when all creation will bear the fruits of God's love, and all people will sing the harmony of heaven.
And because we believe we commit ourselves to love, to dream, to pray, to reach out, to build, until the day when that hope becomes a reality. **Amen.**

A Romero Litany of Intercession

Clare Dixon

As the Spirit of God brings the community of faith to life, each and every day, so may that same Spirit renew in us the historic memory of Oscar Romero, Bishop and Martyr, strengthening us to work for justice and solidarity, reconciliation and peace. And so we acclaim: **Presente!**

Romero of the Americas - **Presente!**
Bishop, prophet and martyr - **Presente!**
Homily of God's Beloved - **Presente!**
Option of the poor incarnate - **Presente!**
Scourge of injustice - **Presente!**
Zealous pastor the little ones - **Presente!**
Unfaltering courage - **Presente!**
Voice of truth amidst cover-up and lies - **Presente!**
Defender of human rights - **Presente!**
Voice of the voiceless in life - **Presente!**
Named of the nameless in death - **Presente!**
Greatest Salvadoran of them all - **Presente!**
Father of the Latin American Church - **Presente!**
Ecumenical shepherd - **Presente!**
Patron of justice and peace - **Presente!**
Credible witness of the Resurrection - **Presente!**

Intercessions

Anthony Coles

That lasting peace and justice might prevail in Syria and the Middle East, the Ukraine and Russian Federation. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

That poverty and violence may be transformed into well-being, harmony, and reconciliation in El Salvador. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

That the people of God, pastors and people, will heed the call of Oscar Romero to be servants, one of another, so that the last shall indeed be first. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

That the inspiration of Oscar Romero will encourage work for unity amongst Christians and build up the common good with all people of good will. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

That the work of the Archbishop Romero Trust and the ministry of this Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, in favour of the poor and dispossessed, will be strengthened by the solidarity and commitment of everyone here today. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

That the concerns of our hearts may be laid before God in some moments of silence
Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Prayer - The Revd. Richard Carter

Always faithful God, may those who surrender to the service of the poor through love of Christ live like the grain of wheat that dies. As we remember your martyred Bishop, Oscar Romero, may the harvest of our prayers come to bear fruit just as the grain that dies will spring to life. May every effort to bring forth justice, to speak for those who have no voice, to challenge all forms of oppression, discrimination, and hatred, be signs that your reign is close at hand in us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

A Word of Thanks - **His Excellency Werner Romero, Ambassador of El Salvador to the Court of St. James**

Dismissal & Blessing

What do you take away - a memory, a pledge and commitment?

Members of the congregation are invited to share their responses with the person sitting in front of them ...

The blessing is said by all:

May the blessing of the God of Sarah and Abraham, the blessing of the Redeemer, born of Mary, the blessing of the Spirit, brooding over us as a mother over her children, be with us all, now and for ever. Amen

Recessional: Tell out, my soul, *Timothy Dudley-Smith*

1. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.
2. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age to same;
his holy Name--the Lord, the Mighty One.
3. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.
4. Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

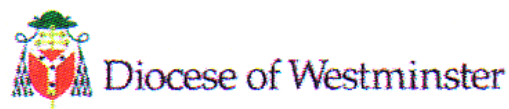
The Archbishop Romero Trust is grateful to St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church for hosting today's Service, to the Officiant - the Revd. Richard Carter; to our preacher, the Rev. Martin Maier SJ, and to other clergy representing Methodist, Roman Catholic, and United Reformed Churches.

There will be a retiring collection for the work of the Archbishop Romero Trust.

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