

Romero news

Issue no. 12: July 2013

Registered Charity no. 1110069

CONTENTS

Diary dates

September: Dedication for the Romero Cross

October: Romero Lecture Tour 2013

Thought for the Day

Romero's Canonisation Process

The Urgent Need to Return to
Being the Church of the Poor

Jon Sobrino SJ

When the Gospel Grows Feet

New book on Rutilio Grande SJ

Everyone was on Edge

An extract from Memories in Mosaic

Is your Christianity Authentic?

Romero reflection

Romero's Diary now available on ART website

Bargain Book and DVD Offers

Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

Dedication of Romero Cross

Thursday 19 September 2013

You are warmly invited to an ecumenical service of prayer and dedication for the new Romero Cross being installed at St George's Catholic Cathedral in Southwark, London. The service will take place on Thursday 19 September at 6.00 pm. Archbishop Peter Smith will preside and Archbishop Romero's former Secretary, Msgr Ricardo Urioste from San Salvador, will preach.



Panels of the cross were flown in from El Salvador in May and are now in the process of being assembled.

The Cross was commissioned by the Romero Trust from renowned Salvadoran artist Fernando Llort. It contains a reliquary with a fragment of Romero's blood-stained alb. Panels of the 4 metre high cross were flown in from El Salvador and are in the process of being assembled.

The Cross honours Archbishop Romero but it will also be dedicated to the late Bishop Michael Evans, a great admirer of Romero and co-founder of the Trust.

After the service, please join us for a drinks reception in Amigo Hall, next to the Cathedral.

Romero Memorial Lecture Tour
Telling the Truth
29 October – 1 November 2013

The Archbishop Romero Trust is pleased to announce that Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP will be this year's speaker at our Romero Memorial Lecture series. He will speak on the theme of *Telling the Truth*, linked to Archbishop Romero's ministry and applied to our own times.



Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

Romero Lecture Tour
Dates and venues

London - Tuesday 29 October at 6.15 pm in Westminster Abbey.

Manchester - Thursday 31 October at 7.00 pm in Holy Name Church.

Edinburgh - Friday 1 November at 7.00 pm at the Lauriston Centre, Sacred Heart Church.

ALL ARE WELCOME. Please tell all your friends and fellow parishioners.

Thought for the Day
Romero's Canonisation Process

As new impetus grows for Romero's canonisation, we share with you this "Thought for the Day" by Clifford Longley, broadcast on Radio 4 on 6 May.

Above the great west door of Westminster Abbey there stands a row of statues. They are modern martyrs. Martin Luther King is there, along with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, murdered by the Nazis for his opposition to Hitler. And so is Oscar Romero, Roman Catholic archbishop of San Salvador, who was shot dead in 1980 in the middle of saying Mass, by an assassin thought to be working for the then right-wing Government of El Salvador.

The election of Pope Francis, also a Latin American archbishop, seems to have initiated a wind of change inside the Catholic Church. An early sign of

this is the news that the canonisation process for Oscar Romero has been "unblocked" - to use the Vatican spokesman's phrase - by the intervention of the new Pope.

The canonisation process for Oscar Romero has been "unblocked" - to use the Vatican spokesman's phrase - by the intervention of the new Pope.

The previous Pope, Benedict was well known to be opposed to any political activity by senior clerics that gave support and encouragement to the so-called theology of liberation. He saw Liberation Theology as a blend of Catholicism and revolutionary Marxism, though many of those who espoused it would feel that to be a caricature.

But certainly some Liberation theologians denounced the official church leadership for being on the wrong side in the political struggle to defend the poor from oppression. There were many individual exceptions, and Archbishop Romero was the most notable of them - which is no doubt why he was murdered. He knew he was a marked man.

To canonise such a man, that is to say to make him an official saint of the church, is to hold him up as a model to admire and follow.

There are plenty of people, inside the Church as well as outside, who don't like that idea one bit. They feel it's a high risk strategy, and the risk they worry about is of the Church being dragged too far into politics.

Just as the circumstances of his assassination have never been fully explained, so the internal dealings

of the Vatican and the Latin America church leadership in the matter of his canonisation may never be publicly revealed.

The power struggles that have rendered the Vatican bureaucracy dysfunctional no doubt have a lot to do with it.

There are some who wish the name of Oscar Romero to be honoured but then forgotten as quickly as possible; and some who say that this is the Church of the future, the Church of the poor, the Church of the Gospel.

The case of Oscar Romero therefore symbolises the crossroads at which this Church, with its one and a quarter billion followers, now stands.

All the signs are that Pope Francis has already made his choice.

The cardinals who voted for Cardinal Bergoglio - now called Pope Francis - knew exactly what they were doing, so this is their choice too.

Those in the old administration at the Vatican might warn the move could backfire. But many in the church, and outside it, will feel it to be not just bold but exciting.



The Urgent Need to Return to Being The Church of the Poor

Four years ago, Jon Sobrino SJ wrote this reflection on 'The Pact of the Catacombs' in honour of Dom Hélder Câmara. The first words and actions of Pope Francis have once again reminded us of this beautiful declaration signed in 1965 at the close of Vatican II. The Nobel Laureate from Argentina, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, presented a copy of the document to Pope Francis during a recent audience in the Vatican when he pressed Archbishop Romero's cause once more.

Envisioning the Church as "poor and powerless" has never prospered much among us.

Not even Vatican II, as important and decisive as it was in other matters, made it a central concern. The Latin American bishops' conference at Medellín (1968) did indeed make it a key issue, and the Puebla conference (1979) also stressed it, even in the face of serious opposition.

For the last three decades, however, the abandonment of the vision has been only too apparent. Although the Aparecida conference (2007) slowed down the decline a bit, the Church has still not experienced that "turning around of history" that Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría said was needed in order to heal a society that is gravely ill. The conclusion is that we need to return to being a Church of the poor and to work hard for that.

At the time of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII wanted the Council to recognise that the Church is "a

Church of the poor." Cardinal Lercaro gave a lucid, heartfelt discourse on that theme at the end of the first session in 1962, and Bishop Himmer expressed it in unmistakable terms: "The first place in the Church must be reserved for the poor."



*Jon Sobrino SJ, theologian at the UCA
(Central American University) in El Salvador*

The more progressive Latin American bishops also soon realized that the great majority of bishops at the Council did not feel comfortable discussing the topic.

Nevertheless, there was always a group of bishops who wished to be faithful to the inspiration of John XXIII, who met regularly and quietly to discuss the topic of "the poor Church."

On November 16, 1965, a few days before the end of the Council, about 40 of the bishops celebrated the Eucharist together in the catacombs of Saint Domitila. They asked for the grace "to be faithful to the spirit of Jesus," and at the end of the celebration they signed what they called "the Pact of the Catacombs."

The "Pact" was conceived as a challenge to the "brothers in the episcopacy" to lead a "life of poverty" and to be a "poor servant" Church, as was the desire of John XXIII.

The first signers were mainly Brazilians and other Latin Americans, but others soon joined them. By signing, they made a commitment to live in poverty, to reject all symbols or privileges of power, and to place the poor at the centre of their pastoral ministry. The text was to have a strong influence on the liberation theology that arose a few years later.

One of the supporters of the Pact was Dom Helder Câmara. In homage to him and to Archbishop Romero - and as a reminder to us - here again is the text of this historic document.

***The Pact of the Catacombs:
A Poor Servant Church:***

We, bishops assembled in the Second Vatican Council, are conscious of the deficiencies of our lifestyle in terms of evangelical poverty. Motivated by one another in an initiative in which each of us has tried to avoid ambition and presumption, we unite with all our brothers in the episcopacy and rely above all on the grace and strength of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the prayer of the faithful and the priests in our respective dioceses. Placing ourselves in thought and in prayer before the Trinity, the Church of Christ, and all the priests and faithful of our dioceses, with humility and awareness of our weakness, but also with all the determination and all the strength that God desires to grant us by his grace, we commit ourselves to the following:

- 1. We will try to live according to the ordinary manner of our people in all that concerns housing, food, means of transport, and related matters. See Matthew 5,3; 6,33-4; 8,20.*
- 2. We renounce forever the appearance and the substance of wealth, especially in clothing (rich vestments, loud colors) and symbols made of precious metals (these signs should certainly be evangelical). See Mark 6,9; Matthew 10,9-10; Acts 3.6 (Neither silver nor gold).*
- 3. We will not possess in our own names any properties or other goods, nor will we have bank accounts or the like. If it is necessary to possess something, we will place everything in the name of the diocese or of social or charitable works. See Matthew 6,19-21; Luke 12,33-34.*
- 4. As far as possible we will entrust the financial and material running of our diocese to a commission of competent lay persons who are aware of their apostolic role, so that we can be less administrators and more pastors and apostles. See Matthew 10,8; Acts 6,1-7.*
- 5. We do not want to be addressed verbally or in writing with names and titles that express prominence and power (such as Eminence, Excellency, Lordship). We prefer to be called by the evangelical name of "Father." See Matthew 20,25-28; 23,6-11; John 13,12-15).*
- 6. In our communications and social relations we will avoid everything that may appear as a concession of privilege, prominence, or even preference to the wealthy and the powerful (for example, in religious services or by way of banquet*

invitations offered or accepted). See Luke 13,12-14; 1 Corinthians 9,14-19.

7. Likewise we will avoid favoring or fostering the vanity of anyone at the moment of seeking or acknowledging aid or for any other reason. We will invite our faithful to consider their donations as a normal way of participating in worship, in the apostolate, and in social action. See Matthew 6,2-4; Luke 15,9-13; 2 Corinthians 12,4.

8. We will give whatever is needed in terms of our time, our reflection, our heart, our means, etc., to the apostolic and pastoral service of workers and labor groups and to those who are economically weak and disadvantaged, without allowing that to detract from the welfare of other persons or groups of the diocese.

We will support lay people, religious, deacons, and priests whom the Lord calls to evangelize the poor and the workers by sharing their lives and their labors. See Luke 4,18-19; Mark 6,4; Matthew 11,4-5; Acts 18,3-4; 20,33-35; 1 Corinthians 4,12; 9,1-27.

9. Conscious of the requirements of justice and charity and of their mutual relatedness, we will seek to transform our works of welfare into social works based on charity and justice, so that they take all persons into account, as a humble service to the responsible public agencies. See Matthew 25,31-46; Luke 13,12-14; 13,33-34.

10. We will do everything possible so that those responsible for our governments and our public services establish and enforce the laws, social structures, and institutions that are necessary for justice, equality, and the integral, harmonious development of the whole person and of all persons,

and thus for the advent of a new social order, worthy of the children of God. See Acts 2,44-45; 4,32-35; 5,4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; 1 Timothy 5,16.

11. Since the collegiality of the bishops finds its supreme evangelical realization in jointly serving the two-thirds of humanity who live in physical, cultural, and moral misery, we commit ourselves: a) to support as far as possible the most urgent projects of the episcopacies of the poor nations; and b) to request jointly, at the level of international organisms, the adoption of economic and cultural structures which, instead of producing poor nations in an ever richer world, make it possible for the poor majorities to free themselves from their wretchedness. We will do all this even as we bear witness to the gospel, after the example of Pope Paul VI at the United Nations.

12. We commit ourselves to sharing our lives in pastoral charity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, priests, religious, and laity, so that our ministry constitutes a true service. Accordingly, we will make an effort to "review our lives" with them; we will seek collaborators in ministry so that we can be animators according to the Spirit rather than dominators according to the world; we will try to make ourselves as humanly present and welcoming as possible; and we will show ourselves to be open to all, no matter what their beliefs. See Mark 8,34-35; Acts 6,1-7; 1 Timothy 3,8-10.

13. When we return to our dioceses, we will make these resolutions known to our diocesan priests and ask them to assist us with their comprehension, their collaboration, and their prayers.

May God help us to be faithful.

As we read the Pact today, we are struck by the fact that it treats basically just one theme: poverty.

But because the pivot on which everything else turned was that – and not, for example, the administration of the sacraments – the Pact of the Catacombs produced important fruits in Medellín and, little by little, elsewhere as well. Historically, it has led to the struggle for justice and liberation. Ecclesially, it has led to the option for the poor. Theologically, it has led to the God of the poor.

All of this reached El Salvador, and Archbishop Romero blessed it and made it bear fruit, in the midst of the new Salvadoran reality of martyrdom.

Nowadays, in our convulsed situation, we profess the continuing urgency of those social, political, and ecclesial dreams, which we can in no way renounce.

We continue to reject neo-liberal capitalism, the neo-imperialism of money and arms, and the free-market economy of consumerism, which sinks the great majority of humankind into poverty and hunger.

And we continue to reject all discrimination for reasons of gender, culture, or race. We demand a substantive transformation of the international organisms (UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO, etc.).

We commit ourselves to living a “profound and integral ecology,” promoting agrarian policies that are a true alternative to the predatory policies of large estates, monoculture, and toxic chemicals.

We gladly participate in the social, political, and economic transformations that have as their goal a “high intensity” democracy.

As Church, we want to partake, in the light of the Gospel, of that consuming passion of Jesus, the Kingdom.

We want to be a Church that opts for the poor, a community that is ecumenical and also macro-ecumenical. The God in whom we believe, the Abba of Jesus, can in no way be the cause of fundamentalism, harsh exclusion, possessive inclusion, or proud proselytizing. Interreligious dialogue is not only possible, it is necessary.

We will make the Church a network of praying, prophetic communities of service which bear witness to the Good News of life, liberty, and joyful communion.

We will preach a Good News of compassion, welcome, pardon, and tenderness; we will be Samaritans on all the roadsides of humankind.

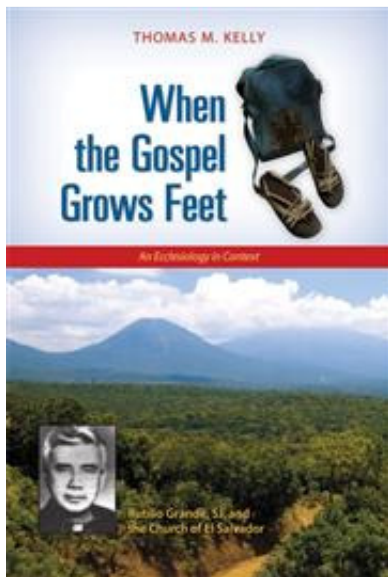
Let authority be service. The Vatican will cease to be a state, and the Pope will no longer be head of a state. The Curia will be thoroughly reformed, and the local churches will promote inculturation of the Gospel and sharing of ministry.

The Church will be committed, without fear or evasiveness, in the great causes of justice and peace, in the struggles for human rights and the recognition of the equality of all peoples. There will be a prophecy of proclamation, of denunciation, and of consolation.

When the Gospel Grows Feet

Rutilio Grande SJ and the Church of El Salvador, an Ecclesiology in Context

A new book has been published about Father Rutilio Grande, the Jesuit priest and friend of Romero who was assassinated in 1977. American author, Thomas Kelly explores Rutilio's life, formation, ministry, and death and his impact on Archbishop Romero.



Thomas Kelly writes: On March 12, 1977, shortly after five o'clock in the afternoon, a Volkswagen Safari left a small town in El Salvador known as Aguilares. In the vehicle were three people—an elderly man named Manuel Solorzano, a fifteen year old boy named Nelson Lemus, and a Roman Catholic priest named Fr. Rutilio Grande, SJ.

On the way out of town, near the train tracks, the vehicle stopped to give three small children a ride. They were leaving Aguilares, a small dusty town roughly an hour north of the capital of San Salvador. Their destination was the town of El Paisnal, roughly

three miles away, where Fr. Grande was travelling to continue a *novena* in celebration of the town's feast day.

As the bell was tolling to gather the people near the small church in the central plaza of El Paisnal, Fr. Grande and his entourage made their way along the narrow dusty road that connected Aguilares and El Paisnal.

As they passed the small village of Los Mangos, the children recall seeing groups of two or three men located on the banks of the small canals on either side of the road. Behind the VW was a small pickup truck that had followed them from Aguilares.

In a low voice, Fr. Grande is quoted as saying, "We must do what God wants."

As the pickup came closer to the VW, a hail of bullets fell from the sky, impacting the car.

Later, a doctor who examined the bodies indicated that Fr. Grande was killed by bullets coming from both the front and rear of the vehicle. The weapons and ammunition used were common to the local police.

The reality of Fr. Rutilio Grande's death leaves the reader with some serious questions. How could powerful forces within the overwhelmingly Catholic country of El Salvador both plan and execute a Roman Catholic priest and two innocent people in broad daylight in front of witnesses? Why would this same government deepen its confrontation with the Catholic Church until thousands of lay ministers, dozens of priests, and even the archbishop of San

Salvador, Oscar Romero, were murdered? What was so threatening about the church and its ministry? Why would the government, and the oligarchy that supported it, believe it necessary to repress the church in such a brutal manner?

This book is a must read for those who want to understand how the church entered into the lives of its people in El Salvador after Vatican II and Medellin, through the ministry of Rutilio Grande SJ. When you begin with Rutilio, his ministry and his death – then you can understand the period of suffering endured by the prophetic church of El Salvador.

Jon Sobrino SJ

Now available from the Romero Trust at the discount price of £ 15.00 incl p & p. (RRP £24)

Everyone was on Edge – Nervous

Memories in Mosaic

The following extract comes from *Memories in Mosaic*, a compilation of anecdotes from people who knew Romero personally or who felt impacted by his life. The book was written by Spanish-Cuban author, Maria López Vigil, and was recently re-published by Orbis books.

Everyone was on edge – nervous.

“What could be the matter? Why isn’t he here yet?”

“I don’t know. Monseñor is usually so punctual.”



He was already a half hour late for his appointment. The big burly men from the United States Embassy were getting impatient.

The appointment was with Mr Terence Todman, who had recently been named Undersecretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.

It was early 1978, and the subject of El Salvador was already controversial in the United States Congress. There had been several very critical reports issued about human rights violations being committed by the Salvadoran government.

Those were the Carter years, you know, and Monseñor Romero’s homilies were having some impact internationally. So the US government was also interested in having contact with him.

When he finally arrived, Monseñor Romero didn’t apologise.

“How are you, sir_” he said, extending his hand to Todman. “I’ve just returned from visiting my communities.

He wanted to make it clear that the communities took priority over diplomacy. And just like that, he walked into the meeting room as calmly as you please. Todman went straight to the point.

“We don’t think it’s a good idea for there to be such discord between you and the Salvadoran government.”

Monseñor listened. Todman went around and around on the same point, driving it home.

“We think it would be more constructive for there to be a good relationship between the Church and the State, just as there always has been in the past...”

Monseñor kept listening, his eyes downcast, his hands on his knees.

“For the good of the people, the Church and the State should work together..”

Finally, like a water jug that breaks after too many trips to the spring, he got tired of hearing he same thing. Monseñor raised his head and looked Todman in the eye, stopping him in his tracks.

“It seems to me that you don’t know what the problem is.”

“Why do you say that?”

Because the problem is not between the Church and the government. It’s between the government and the people. The government-people

relationship is the key issue. It’s not the Church, much less the archbishop!”

It was Todman’s turn to listen.

“If the government improves its relationship with the people, we will improve our relationship with the government”, Monseñor told him firmly “We will always measure our actions according to how things are going for the people.”

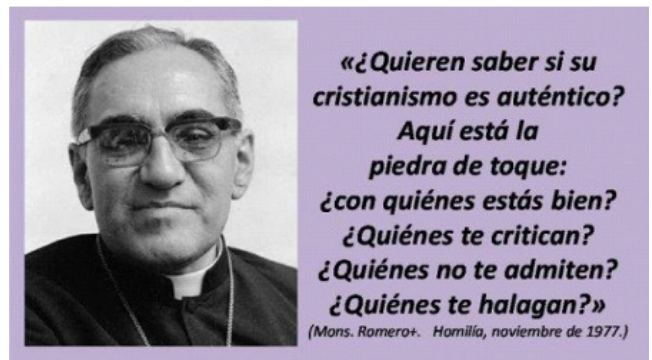
(Roberto Cuellar and José Simán)

**Romero asks:
Is your Christianity is authentic?**

Do you want to know if your Christianity is authentic? Here is the touchstone:

“Who do you get on well with?
Who criticises you?
Who doesn’t accept you?
Who shows you affection?”

Monseñor Romero, Homily, November 1977



Romero's Diary

For two years, from March 1978 until just before his death, Archbishop Romero kept a diary of his meetings and activities which he dictated most evenings into a simple cassette tape recorder.

Those tapes were transcribed and in 1993 were published in English under the title 'A Shepherd's Diary'. This book is now out of print.

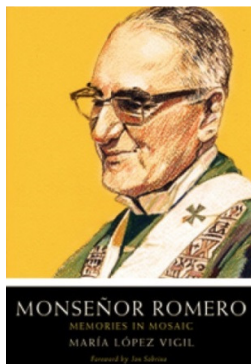
With a small grant from Lambeth Palace, the Trust has recently been able to digitalise those cassette recordings and is pleased to make them available for listening via our website on the following link.

<http://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/>

Alongside the audio recordings, there are downloadable and searchable PDFs of both the Spanish and English texts of Romero's diary. These can be read alongside the audio, so that it is possible to follow the text on the screen whilst listening to Archbishop Romero speaking.

Bargain Book and DVD Offers

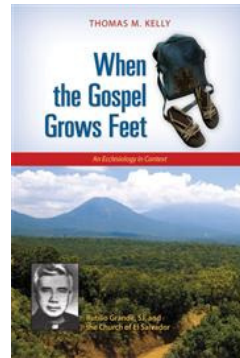
Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic



£12 (including p & p)

Now published by Orbis Books, The story of Archbishop Romero, told by those who worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him. One of the very best books on Romero. Offered by the Romero Trust at the discounted price of £12, reduced from £20.

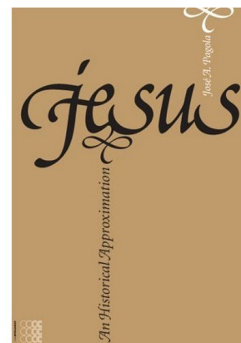
When the Gospel Grows Feet



£15.00 incl p & p, (RRP £24)

A new book published about Father Rutilio Grande, the Jesuit priest and friend of Romero who was assassinated in 1977. American author, Thomas Kelly explores Rutilio's life, formation, ministry, and death and his impact on Archbishop Romero.

Jesus, an Historical Approximation



£20 (incl p & p)

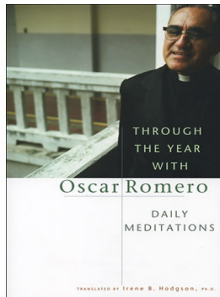
A lively and passionate narrative of Jesus, addressing basic questions about who he was, the originality of his message and how the vision of the Kingdom of God centred his life.

On “Jesus, an Historical Approximation”:

"At my age, I no longer read many books, but I read Pagola's in one sitting. It has helped me grow in age, wisdom and grace. I recommend it to many people, Christians and non-believers. Monseñor Romero would have quoted from it in his Sunday homilies."

Jon Sobrino SJ

Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations



£8 (incl p & p)

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

Oscar Romero and the Communion of the Saints



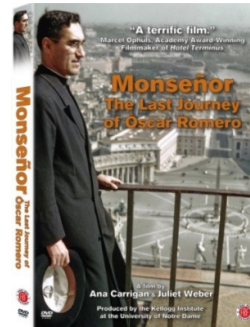
(£10 incl p & p)

One of the special joys of this biography is its inclusion of many rarely-seen photographs, taken

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

by Octavio Durán, a Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer.

'Monseñor – the Last Journey of Oscar Romero



£14 (including p&p)

DVD produced by film-maker Ana Carrigan in 2010, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Romero's death,

The books and DVD may be ordered from the Archbishop Romero Trust, PO Box 70227, London E9 9BR, or by email: romerotrust@btinternet.com

Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

There are now over 400 *Friends of Romero* who belong to our solidarity network. If you can afford to do so, please send a cheque for **£10** to help cover our costs, to the **Archbishop Romero Trust, PO Box 70227, London E9 9BR.**

Please note this is the Trust's new address. We apologise for some early teething problems with the PO Box which have been overcome - and mail now seems to reach us normally.