

Romeronews

Issue no. 13: January 2014

Registered Charity no. 1110069

CONTENTS

Romero Week 2014
"A Poor Church for the Poor"

Will 2014 be Romero's Year?

A little piece of El Salvador in the heart of London

Monseñor Urioste – a reflection

Update on *Tutela Legal*,
Legal Aid Office of the San Salvador Church

Gaspar Romero views new sculpture

Timothy Radcliffe OP
Speaker at the 2013 Romero Memorial Lecture

News back from the Pilgrimage

Bargain Book and DVD Offers

Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

the anniversary, religious services and other events will be held throughout Romero Week running from 19 - 24 March and beyond. The theme for the week is Pope Francis' oft-repeated expression 'A Poor Church for the Poor' which resonates so powerfully with Archbishop Romero's ministry.

This year's special Romero Week speaker is **Martin Maier**, a German Jesuit priest and theologian, who studied and worked as a parish priest in El Salvador and is the author of books and articles on Romero and the Salvadoran martyrs.



*Martin Maier SJ celebrating Mass
in the rural community of Jayaque, El Salvador*

Romero Week 2014

Monday 24 March 2014 marks 34 years since the martyrdom of Archbishop Romero. In celebration of

We hope that, as in previous years, many parishes and dioceses across Britain will mark Romero's anniversary with a Mass, ecumenical service, talk, film-showing or other event. Now is the time to plan and organise if there is not already an event in your calendar.

The Trust has liturgical materials on the website which may be helpful to you in planning your event. We may also be able to supply you with people to give a talk, educational resources or Romero DVDs for events that you are organising. Let us know, so that we can give you publicity on the Trust website and in press releases to the Church media.

Romero Week Events with Martin Maier SJ

London Saturday 22 March at 11.00am

National Ecumenical Memorial Service.

'The Last Shall Be First...'

Oscar Romero and the Joy of the Gospel

St Martin in the Fields Church, Trafalgar Square,
London WC2N 4JJ.

Sheffield Wednesday 19 March at 7.00pm. Talk.

St Marie's Cathedral, Norfolk Row, Sheffield S1

2JB. Further details from Fr Sean Smith

sacredheart479@btinternet.com

Liverpool Thursday 20 March at 7.00pm. Talk.

Liverpool Hope University.

Details from Steve Atherton - Liverpool J&P

s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

Cambridge Friday 21 March at 7.00pm. Talk.

Fisher House, Cambridge CB2 3NH.

Details from Bernard Shaw – East Anglia J&P

bshaw98uk@yahoo.co.uk

Glasgow Monday 24 March. Mass at 6.30pm; Talk at 7.30pm. St Aloysius Church, Glasgow G3 6PA

Details from Fr Michael Smith SJ

mail@michaelsmithsj.com

Other events which we know of:

Birmingham Wednesday March 26th at 2pm

St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham.

Mass followed by refreshments and talk with Julian

Filochowski. Further details from CAFOD

Birmingham. birmingham@cafod.org.uk

London Thursday March 20th at 6.45pm

Farm Street Church, London W1.

Film showing of 'Romero' followed by
refreshments.

Norwich Friday March 28th evening

Blood and Sweat: the Witness of Romero's Relics

Jan Graffius will speak in the narthex of the
Catholic Cathedral.

Further details from East Anglia J&P

amandahopkinson@hotmail.com

Will 2014 be Romero's Year?

*Julian Filochowski reflects on new optimism for
Romero's early beatification.*

There are increasing expectations both in San Salvador and in Rome that 2014 will be the decisive year in moving the cause for beatification of Archbishop Romero towards its successful conclusion.

The signals have changed from 'red' through 'amber' to 'green' in less than 18 months.



Pope Francis addresses crowds at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, July 2014, with a poster of Archbishop Romero in prominent view

In 2012 Oscar Romero's cause was still held inside the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) waiting for their formal declaration that there were no doctrinal reservations relating to the orthodoxy of Archbishop Romero's preaching and teaching. This was a critical requirement before the canonisation process could go forward.

In July 2012, Archbishop Gerhard Müller, an admirer of Romero, became the new Prefect of the CDF with a will to move things forward after the inexplicable delays that had dogged Romero's cause since it reached Rome back in 1998. "I read 6 volumes about Oscar Romero - said Müller - and eventually the CDF gave its *nihil obstat*."

But it was the election of Argentinian Pope Francis in February 2013 that has proved to be the game-changer.

According to San Salvador's Vicar General, Msgr 'Chus' Delgado, in 2007, two years after he finished as runner-up in the conclave that elected Pope Benedict, the then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio told him that if he had been pope, the very first thing he would have done is to order the beatification of Archbishop Romero. Apparently Msgr Delgado spoke to the Jesuit cardinal again in 2010, confirming what he had said three years earlier: "I remember it; the problem is that I will never get to be pope"!

So it was no surprise when on 19 March 2013, the day of his installation, Pope Francis reportedly told the Salvadoran Ambassador to the Holy See, "I hope that under this pontificate we can beatify Romero." The same day the Pope is said to have told Vanda Pignato, the wife of Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes that he hoped the canonisation of Archbishop Romero would be "as soon as possible".

Over the following two days, York's Anglican Archbishop John Sentamu presented Pope Francis with a simple painted Romero Cross like the one he himself wears as a pectoral cross; and, as he met with Pope Francis, Argentine Nobel Peace Laureate, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, pointed to Romero as an example reminding the pontiff that the beatification would bring great joy throughout Latin America.

But the real breakthrough came a month later. In a formal audience with Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Family and also the Postulator of Romero's cause, Pope Francis told him that he would personally intervene to 'unblock' Romero's cause which at the time was still in the hands of the CDF. This was a startling revelation.

Pope Francis told him that he would personally intervene to 'unblock' Romero's cause.

Nevertheless that the cause had indeed been 'blocked' and was now 'unblocked' was confirmed to me personally on 22 May in an interview with Fr Daniel Ols, the official within the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (CCS) who has been managing Archbishop Romero's file for more than a decade. The CDF subsequently gave their formal all-clear and returned Romero's cause to the CCS.

The crucial next stage within the CCS is the certification of Romero's assassination as martyrdom which will guarantee a rapid journey to beatification without the need for miracles.

Nevertheless, after 33 years, there still seemed until recently to be lingering doubts (and therefore potential obstacles) amongst some curial officials as to whether Romero was killed out of 'hatred of the faith' (which is the condition for martyrdom) or rather, as it was put to me, 'for political reasons'.

Therefore the statement towards the end of last year, from Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, that nothing now stands in the way of the beatification was particularly welcome - since it implies that any such doubts have now been vanquished.

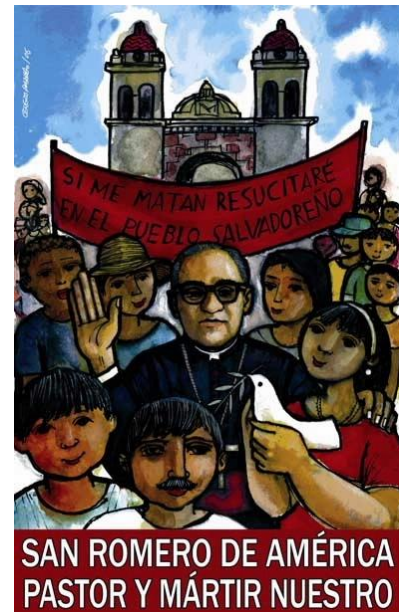
Cardinal Rodriguez based his declaration on a conversation he had had with the Prefect of the CCS, Cardinal Angelo Amato. "I asked Cardinal Amato ... if there are obstacles for the beatification of Archbishop Romero and he told me no".

Finally in a recent conversation with Leonel Búcaro, the President of the Central American Parliament, Pope Francis himself is quoted as saying the beatification "va por buen camino" – which means "is on the right road" or "is well on the way to its accomplishment".

Presidential elections will be held in El Salvador in February and March. Given the concern, repeatedly expressed, to keep Romero's canonisation away from any entanglement with Salvadoran politics it seems unlikely there will be any further news from Rome much before Easter. But thereafter we might expect some announcement which clarifies the state of the

process - with a guess that we might anticipate Romero's beatification either in 2014 or in 2015.

Santo subito! Oremus.



The poster reads, "Saint Romero of America, Our Pastor and Martyr".

Little piece of El Salvador in the heart of London

On a late summer's evening on 19 September 2013 some 900 people, many of whom had made long journeys from around Britain to be present, gathered in the Metropolitan Cathedral of St. George in Southwark.

This Victorian Cathedral bombed by Hitler during WWII and visited by Pope John Paul II in 1982, now houses the "Romero Space" that Salvadoran Ambassador Werner Matías Romero (no relation) called "*a little piece of El Salvador*" in the heart of London. The Space was conceived and designed by Jonathan Louth, the Cathedral architect.

Ambassadors and High Commissioners, members of Parliament and other government officials were present together with clergy and laity from the Catholic and Anglican communities. They were joined from El Salvador by Fernando Llort; Romero's younger brother, Gaspar Romero; and Romero's Vicar General, Monseñor Ricardo Urioste, who had turned 88 earlier in the week.

The assembly gathered for a special liturgy to inaugurate the Romero Space and to bless a large "Romero Cross". The cross was created by the renowned Salvadoran artist, Fernando Llort, in the highlands of El Salvador and shipped to London to house an original skullcap worn by Romero and a fragment of the blood-stained alb Romero was wearing when he was killed.

Archbishop Peter Smith sprinkled holy water and incensed the Cross during the blessing ceremony. As he did so, the words of Ambassador Matías Romero seemed to frame the scene. Referring to Archbishop Romero, the ambassador said, "*He held us to a higher standard.*"

Following the Service everyone was invited to a reception generously hosted by the Salvadoran Embassy, where old friendships were renewed and new friendships made. *Romero Vive!*



The blessing of the Romero cross



The cross houses a fragment of Romero's alb



About 900 people attended the service



The ceremony at St George's cathedral



Artist Fernando Llort (centre) lights a candle

Monseñor Ricardo Urioste - a reflection

Clare Dixon, ART Trustee and close, longstanding friend of Monseñor Urioste, reflects on his life and words at the blessing ceremony.

On the night of 24 March 1980, Monseñor Ricardo Urioste entered the Chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital in San Salvador, and prayed before the altar where Archbishop Romero had been assassinated earlier that evening.

After offering some words of condolence to the Carmelite Sisters who run the hospice, he led an impromptu prayer with the mourners at the chapel. Monseñor Urioste, who had served as Archbishop Romero's secretary and vicar general, fought back tears to voice the following reflection as shocked mourners gathered around him.

“Our first thought is of thanksgiving to the Lord for having given us an archbishop of such great worth. For letting us have him for three years. For his having been so profoundly Christian, so profoundly a priest, such a lover of justice and peace. And that's the reason for his murder—for having loved righteousness and wished for peace.



Clare Dixon at the blessing ceremony

“This was a man of prayer, a man much loved whom we will not be able to replace. But the Church wants everyone to know this clearly: the Church does not depend upon one man. The Church will move forward. She knows what her mission is, because it is not the mission of a single man. It is the mission of all of us in the Church. We know he stands already before God. That he has appeared before him and declared, ‘Mission accomplished, my Lord. Here I am. Like you on the Cross, here I am too, after completing my mission as you asked me to do, and as you wanted.’

“I would like for everyone, then, to say a prayer—a prayer for him and a prayer for the country.”

Some 33 years later, on the evening of 19 September 2013, Monseñor Urioste entered Southwark's packed cathedral in London to witness the blessing of a four metre high, colourfully decorated cross in the style pioneered by the Salvadoran muralist Fernando Llort.



Monseñor Urioste speaking in St George's Cathedral, at the blessing of the Romero Cross.

Monseñor Urioste preached movingly at this ecumenical service to mark the consecration of the Memorial Cross to Archbishop Romero, which was also dedicated to Bishop Michael Evans, whose own priesthood was inspired by a deep admiration

of Archbishop Romero. Monseñor Urioste's words recalled the three essential characteristics of Romero's life:

"First of all, Romero was a man of God, a man of deep prayer. Second, Romero was a man of the Church. And third, Romero was a man for the people, especially for the poorest, and for those who suffer the most."

These three qualities could equally describe Monseñor Urioste, whose life is at the heart of the Church in El Salvador. As the diocesan judge in Romero's cause for sainthood and president of the Romero Foundation, he has been devoted to carrying on the mission of his archbishop.

Throughout the long years of civil war and in the elusive search for peace with social justice, Monseñor Urioste became the touchstone and reference point for all who sought to follow the example of the martyred archbishop.

His first direct contact with CAFOD came shortly after Romero's death when he was the moving force behind setting up the Legal Aid Office of San Salvador Archdiocese, which carried out the task of documenting the daily toll of victims of the notorious death squads.

I remember his tireless efforts to bring comfort and consolation to the victims of violence and brutality during the 1980s. He confessed once that he became frustrated because at the end of every working day he had never managed to get through all the tasks that the busy archdiocese required, because of the need to respond to emergencies, to support grieving families, to minister to refugees,

and to denounce the constant crimes committed against the population.

"But when I read the gospels," he said, "I realised that Christ's life was made up of interruptions: he would be on his way somewhere when he would be stopped on the road, by the sick, the blind, the grieving, the widow. We never learned if he ever reached where he was planning to go, and that was a great comfort to me, that if Christ's life was like that, then that too was how I should live my life."

In his closing words in St George's Cathedral, Monseñor Urioste spoke of three bishops who had been murdered in their churches: the first, Stanislaus, Bishop of Krakow; the second, Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury; and the third Archbishop Romero of San Salvador. He said: "The first two have been canonised. Perhaps one day, God willing, Monseñor Oscar Romero will be canonised too".

When I bade farewell to Monseñor Urioste, he was leaving London bound for Rome: he went with his heart filled with the hope that his own mission would soon be accomplished.

Update on *Tutela Legal*, Legal Aid Office of the San Salvador Church

In late 2013, the Church in San Salvador hit the headlines for the wrong reasons when the Legal Aid Office - *Tutela Legal* - of the Archdiocese was abruptly closed on the orders of Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas.

Human rights organisations and Church-linked agencies across the world – including Romero

Trust and CAFOD - expressed their shock and bewilderment at the silencing of this prophetic voice which was established within the Church by Archbishop Rivera Damas in 1981. Its work served the poorest, most excluded communities in El Salvador, demanding justice for thousands of survivors and victims of El Salvador's brutal civil war. *Tutela* achieved the highest reputation in El Salvador and across Latin America; its work gave the Church huge credibility and its reports formed the basis of the United Nations' Truth Commission findings at the end of the decade-long civil war.

Victims of human rights crimes were outraged at the manner in which the office was closed.

As they arrived at work on 30 September, private security personnel escorted staff-members - many of them with decades of faithful service - to their desks giving them just ten minutes to collect their belongings and leave, obliging them to sign affidavits that they were 'satisfied' with the arrangement even though they were in the midst of supporting high level cases at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights such as the Massacre of El Mozote in which more than a thousand civilians were murdered by the army.

CAFOD along with European and North American Church agencies had supported and financed the work of *Tutela* throughout its existence yet apart from a public communiqué from the Archbishop they received no proper explanation for the closure: the initial reason given by the Archbishop was that "*Tutela Legal* no longer has a *raison d'être*", arguing that as there was no longer a civil war its work was no longer needed.

Yet El Salvador is a desperately polarised society with huge unresolved issues of justice and human rights violations and it was clear that *Tutela's* role continued to be vital as impunity is rife and communities find themselves at the mercy of abusive practices by mining and extractive industries, gang violence and organised crime.



Leaders from El Mozote show their support for Tutela Legal. El Mozote was an emblematic case for truth and justice, following the 1981 massacre

Speculation as to the reasons for the closure of the office was rife, given that in the months preceding the Archbishop's decision there had been attempts to overturn an amnesty law which granted immunity from prosecution for many of the perpetrators of war crimes. Case files held by the office would play a significant role in any court case to bring human rights abusers to justice and it was feared that the closure of the office would put this evidence at risk.

Other explanations ranged from the parlous state of the Church's finances to the suspicion that the Archbishop was suffering from an illness which caused him to make erratic judgments and arbitrary decisions.

In the face of protests from inside and outside the Church at the highest levels, the Archbishop backtracked, making further statements which cast a shadow over the reputation of staff members whilst still providing no explanation or basis for accusations against them.

After weeks of controversy and protest, a special commission was set up within the Archdiocese, made up of four priests with a strong commitment to promotion and protection of human rights, with the task of finding a way forward. Just days before Christmas the Archbishop announced the establishment of a new human rights office, a move described by one close aide of Monseñor Romero as “a partial correction for the sin committed”.

We hope and pray that the new office will be able to build bridges to the communities of victims and to the former team of lawyers so as to ensure that the cause for justice and human rights will remain at the heart of the Salvadoran Church’s mission.

Gaspar Romero views new sculpture to be installed in St Albans Abbey



Gaspar Romero viewing a bust of his brother, Oscar, created by sculptor Rory Young.

A new Romero sculpture has been commissioned for St Albans Abbey.

Created by artist Rory Young, the full-size statue is being carved from Caen stone and will be placed alongside six other martyrs in one of the niches above the nave altar. The installation is expected early in 2015.

Last September Gaspar Romero, Archbishop Romero’s younger brother, visited the studio in Cirencester to see how work was progressing.

Timothy Radcliffe OP Speaker at the 2013 Romero Memorial Lecture



Timothy Radcliffe OP speaking on the theme: "A Disturbing Truth: the Church, the poor and Oscar Romero"

Timothy Radcliffe OP, former Master General of the Dominicans, gave the 2013 Romero Memorial Lecture, entitled "A Disturbing Truth: the Church, the poor, and Oscar Romero". In October, he spoke to packed audiences at Westminster Abbey, the Manchester University Chaplaincy Church and the Lauriston Centre, Edinburgh. Here are some extracts from his talk.

“Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered ... because of his championing of the poor.

This might make him sound like an Episcopal *Che Guevara*. But in many ways, he was a traditional Roman cleric. How did this timid, even nervous, cleric come to be murdered? It was because he told the truth.

For Romero, the fundamental moral choice was between dialogue and violence. He quoted Pope Pius XI who said that he would even dialogue with the Devil if need be.

Dialogue is not about making compromises. It is not about negotiation but transformation. The deepest truths are only attainable through patient exchange, building friendship, transforming our hearts and minds. It is the very opposite of violence.



A packed audience in Manchester for the 2013 Romero Memorial Lecture

So that is the first challenge that Romero puts to Christians in Britain today. Often we are tempted to scan the Scriptures for evidence that God agrees with me! There is some disputed topic: gay marriage or the ordination of women as bishops.

People grab the Bible for ammunition. God must be intelligent; He is on my side.

But for Romero meditation on the Word of God involves a much more disturbing experience. It demolishes my little prejudices. It subverts my narrow identity, and sets me free for friendship with God and unexpected people.”

Romero said: ‘I always wanted to follow the gospel but I did not know where it would take me.’

The full text of Timothy Radcliffe’s lecture can be found on the Romero Trust website.

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

News back from the Pilgrimage



View from our accommodation at the Loyola Centre

For eleven days last November, El Salvador welcomed 33 UK visitors who travelled to the country on the Romero Pilgrimage organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust.

The visit coincided with the 24th anniversary of the Jesuit martyrs of the UCA and so the pilgrims were able to participate in the commemorative events as

well as visit the places of martyrdom of Archbishop Romero and countless other faithful whose lives were sacrificed in the struggle for peace with justice.



Pilgrims at Fernando Llort's studio and gallery

It is difficult to choose the highlights of the trip, but perhaps the visit to the patients in the cancer hospital, where Archbishop Romero lived and was killed, and the meeting with survivors of the Mozote massacre, where more than a thousand people - mostly children - were slaughtered, were the most moving.



Receiving the keys of Ciudad Barrios

Amongst the joys of the visit was the warmth of the Salvadoran communities, with a high point when the mayor of Ciudad Barrios - Archbishop Romero's birthplace - awarded the keys of the town to the Romero Trust.

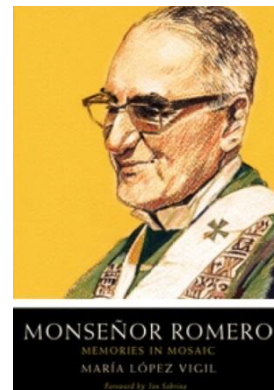
In the next edition of Romero News we will be bringing you some further reflections from the pilgrims.



At the vigil for the UCA martyrs

Bargain Book and DVD Offers

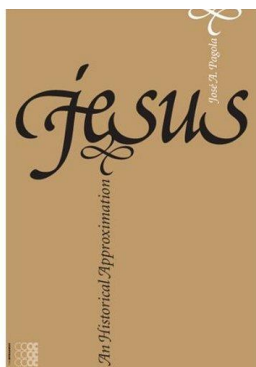
Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic



£ 13 (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 £13, reduced from £20.

Jesus, an Historical Approximation



£24 (incl p & p)

Jon Sobrino SJ comments on this book:

"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."

Oscar Romero & the Communion of the Saints

OSCAR ROMERO
and
The Communion of Saints

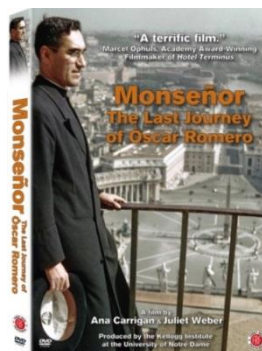


(£12 incl p & p)

Includes photographs, by Octavio Durán, a Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer. 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. Seems very much like Pope Francis' theology!

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

'Monseñor – the Last Journey of Oscar Romero



£15 (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, Archbishop Romero Trust, PO Box 70227, London E9 9BR, or by email: romerotrust@btinternet.com

Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

There are now around 500 *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.**