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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 22nd October 7.00pm
Immaculate Conception Church Hall
Maryhill Glasgow
Lecture: From Romero to Gaza
Oliver McTernan

Sunday 28th February 2027 4pm
Bishop Jo Bailey Wells
Evensong St Alban's Cathedral

Week of 8th-14th March 2027
Cardinal Michael Czerny
Speaker Tour
Events being planned in Liverpool,
Oxford, Durham, London, Edinburgh
Full details to be announced

Saturday 13th March 2027 11.00am
National Ecumenical Service
St Martin in the Fields, London SW1

Thursday 18th March 2027 12.30pm
Romero Schools Award Mass
St George's Cathedral,
Southwark

Saturday 24th July 2027
CAFOD-Romero Trust
Pilgrimage
Holy Island of Lindisfarne

Welcome to the 38th edition of Romero News. The cross featured on our cover may look a little different from the traditional Romero Cross designed by celebrated artist Fernando Llort.

This is the Lund Cross, named after the city in Sweden where Pope Francis met with leaders of the Lutheran Church in 2016. It is the symbol of Pope Francis' apostolic journey to Sweden prior to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The Lund Cross is the work of Cristián Chavarría, a young Lutheran artist from El Salvador. It is now an icon of Christian unity which was dedicated and placed in the Ecumenical Chapel of the World Council of Churches' HQ in Geneva, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Archbishop Romero worked closely with fellow Church leaders in El Salvador and particularly with the Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gómez who greatly admired and supported Romero's work for peace, justice and human rights.

On 26th August 2026 Pope Leo renewed this commitment to Church unity when he spoke to a group of Lutheran bishops from Norway. At this time of tension and conflict Pope Leo's words are a call for

people of faith worldwide: "Grounded in our common baptism and our shared mission in the world. I pray that we may always grow together in our service to the promotion of peace and justice."

Thursday 22nd October 7.00pm
Immaculate Conception Church Hall
Maryhill Glasgow
2026 Romero Lecture
From Romero to Gaza
The price of living by our principles
Oliver McTernan

This October we are delighted to welcome the internationally recognised



peace mediator Oliver McTernan as our Romero Lecturer. Oliver is the Director and co-founder of 'Forward

Thinking' a British-based organisation dedicated to frontline conflict resolution and mediation. With decades of experience in international diplomacy, he has served as a senior advisor to the Club of Madrid, a Visiting Fellow at

Harvard University, and is a pioneer in high-level peace talks with a particular focus currently on the Middle East.

Drawing on his 25 years of service as a parish priest in Central London and his extensive work in global conflict zones, Oliver will explore the deep intersections of faith, social justice, and contemporary peacebuilding.

The evening will include a lecture, Q&A and refreshments. Hosted in partnership with the Newman Association, the Archbishop Romero Trust, Pax Christi Scotland, SCIAF and Justice & Peace Scotland. The event is free, but donations will be gratefully received on the door for the Archbishop Romero Trust.

Blessed Rutilio Grande SJ
Parish Priest
Social and Pastoral Activist
Companion of the Poor

March 12th, 2027, will mark the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Salvadoran Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande, and his two lay collaborators, Manuel Solorzano and Nelson Lemus. They were ambushed by a death squad and riddled with bullets as they drove

from the rural town of Aguilares, where Rutilio was parish priest, to celebrate Mass in the village of El Paisnal as part of the Novena of St Joseph.

During the 1970s, Aguilares was at the epicentre of growing tension and social conflict where landless peasants worked as exploited day labourers on the vast sugar cane plantations of wealthy landowners. Rutilio, with a team of young Jesuits, promoted programmes of conscientisation in the manner of Paulo Freire and established a remarkable network of basic Christian communities across his rural parish.

Rutilio preached and spoke with passion and clarity about the injustices suffered by the impoverished rural population and he stood with them as they organised to seek land reform and social development. The landowners came to see Rutilio's pastoral programmes as a great threat to their interests. Like many of his fellow Jesuits after 1975 Rutilio's guiding conviction was that there could be no authentic witness to faith without a commitment to social justice. As repression intensified Rutilio denounced it with apostolic courage - but he knew there would be a price to pay.

The killings occurred less than three weeks after Oscar Romero was named Archbishop of San Salvador. As a Jesuit priest Rutilio had served, ten years earlier, on the staff of the seminary in San Salvador where Oscar Romero came to live - and they gradually got to know one another. In their younger days both had had periods of psychological fragility and they seemed to recognise that in one another and it somehow cemented their friendship.

Rutilio Grande's assassination marked the beginning of a campaign of persecution of the Church in El Salvador. His killing was a huge shock, but especially to his friend Archbishop Romero. Rutilio had made an option for, **and importantly with**, the poor. He shared their life - and eventually their fate. Rutilio was a good person, through and through. Romero determined to follow the same path taking the side of the poor and exploited that Rutilio had pioneered - and it put Romero on the road to his own Calvary three years later.

With the strong support of Pope Francis, the Cause for the sanctification of Rutilio, Manuel and Nelson moved rapidly

forward, leading to their beatification in San Salvador on 22nd January 2022. Romero's friend and precursor was thus recognised.

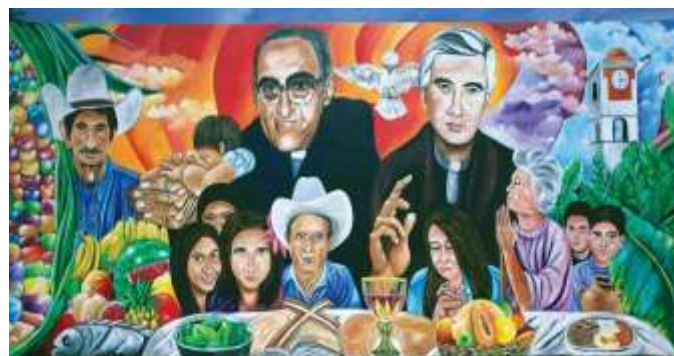
To prepare for celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Rutilio's martyrdom in 2027, and the centenary of his birth in 2028, the Romero Trust has set up special pages on the website devoted to Rutilio and his companions.

<https://www.romerotrusted.org.uk/martyrs/rutilio-story/>

With books, videos and photographs, they include the full text, in both English and Spanish, of the definitive biography of Rutilio, written by his Jesuit colleague Rodolfo Cardenal, which can be read on-line (but not downloaded).

See also 'Memory and Legacy of a Jesuit Martyr', the excellent text by Ana Maria Pineda RSM, who was, incidentally, a distant relative of Rutilio. Meanwhile the Cause for his canonisation goes forward.

Santo Subito!



Inspiration and Hope in Hard Times



Professor Todd Walatka, Assistant Chair for Graduate Studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA gave the following reflection at the St Oscar Romero ecumenical service held in St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square in March.

Romans 12 is one of those passages from St Paul that is both beautiful and, if we are honest, rather overwhelming.

"Love must be sincere."

"Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good."

"Be patient in suffering."

"Persevere in prayer."

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need."

"Practice hospitality."

"Live in harmony with one another."

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil."

"Overcome evil with good."

It is magnificent. And also exhausting.

It can feel less like scripture and more like the writing of a shopping list: do not forget the milk; do not forget the bread; do not forget the cereal. Only this list is rather more demanding.

Be loving.

Be zealous.

Be joyful.

Be patient.

Be generous.

Be peaceful.

Be humble.

Be forgiving.

And by the time we are only halfway through, many of us may feel not inspired but defeated. And yet this morning, as we remember Oscar Romero, I do not think we are meant to hear this passage as a crushing list of moral tasks. I think Paul is doing something else. He is describing a way of life. And to understand this way of life, it matters that Paul begins, not with demand, but with grace:

"I urge you, sisters and brothers, in view of God's mercy... "

So what follows is not a test we must pass in order to earn God's love. It is a picture of the life that becomes possible because God has already been merciful

to us. We are called not to reach some outlandish moral standard, but rather to a way of life that begins by accepting that we are loved. Once we accept this truth - that we are totally and completely loved - then we can live this life God is calling us to. With this mercy in mind, Paul then gives us a second aspect of this way of life: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

And when Paul speaks about "this world" here, he is not speaking about God's beautiful creation. Instead, he is speaking about the world we know too well: the world we see on the news, a world of injustice and indifference. I must be honest: when I look at the world, it is incredibly difficult to not be paralyzed by despair.

In my own country, I see migrants and refugees-vulnerable peoples who bring great hope-living in fear. I see human life treated with contempt, with war treated as a spectacle rather than something to lament. In my home city, I see the enduring struggle to get basic support for those struggling with mental illness and homelessness, a challenge that is both very local and seemingly universal.

In short, I see a world organized by fear, contempt, and a disregard for human life; a world in which the vulnerable bear the cost of the powerful; a world in which strangers and foreigners are treated as threats rather than neighbours. And that world is not only "out there." It has a way of taking root in us. It tells us who matters and who does not. It teaches us to fear strangers, admire power, protect our own, and settle for less than love.

Paul says: do not be conformed to that. Instead, be transformed.

That, I think, is where Oscar Romero can help us. To start, Romero would be horrified if we simply fell into despair. Instead, he would encourage the same spirit that infused the words we just sang: we are chosen to "bring to birth a new kingdom on earth...to tell the world that God's Kingdom is near."

We are to be transformed in order to live in this Kingdom. What is particularly helpful with Romero is that he did not speak of this Kingdom in vague or pious terms. He spoke about it concretely. As we heard in the reading from Romero, he gave a clear definition of the Kingdom: it is wherever we come to experience ourselves as brothers and sisters.

That is such a simple line. It is also extraordinarily demanding, but Romero was quite insistent on this point. This is the heart of what we must be about: living towards a world in which we truly come to experience ourselves as brothers and sisters. Any of us who have siblings, of course, know that even relationships of deep love and respect can be filled with tension, disagreement, and frustration. But we know that even in moments when we don't particularly like our sibling, true love can remain.

Romero's basic vision here-that we would come to truly experience ourselves as brothers and sisters is illuminating for understanding St. Paul. I promise I will not go through every line in Romans 12, but a number are still helpful and instructive.

"Love must be sincere."

Of course - because in the Kingdom there is no room for the false courtesies or hypocrisy by which we keep one another at a distance.

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

Yes - because if the Kingdom is where we come to experience one another as brothers and sisters, then the needy are

not interruptions. The stranger is not an intruder. Their need makes a claim on us because they belong with us.

"Live in harmony with one another; do not be proud"

Again, of course - when we look from the perspective of the kingdom, we know-we should feel-that no one is more a child of God than anyone else. Pride and contempt only tear us apart.

And then, Paul's concluding point: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil... overcome evil with good."

"Overcome evil with good."

Why? Because vengeance cannot create communion. Retaliation cannot heal the human family. Romero was insistent on this point. Near the end of 1977, clearly exasperated, he says that he has rejected hatred and violence "a thousand times" (11/20/1977). He would reject them another thousand times over the next two years. And, he treasured when people clearly saw this. In another homily, he says that he received a beautiful letter from an ordinary person in the archdiocese. The person wrote: "what I most admire in our Church these days is that, despite having suffered such attacks, even killings, never has anyone

heard a word of hatred or vengeance; instead, always a word of love and a call to conversion" (8/14/1977).

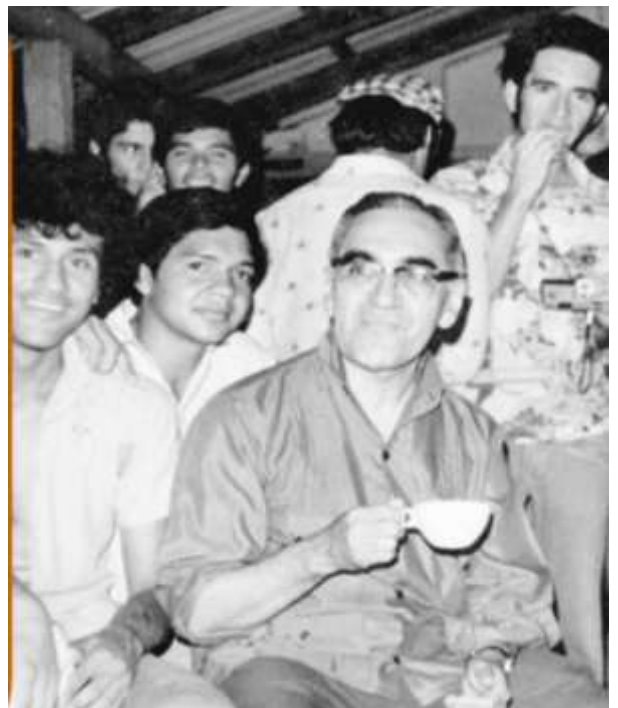
Romero was clear that hatred and violence never stay where we think we have placed them; they spread outward, and they corrode inward. If we are to experience ourselves as brothers and sisters, we must overcome evil with good.

Romero's words are all the more powerful given the time he lived in. He spoke of brotherhood and sisterhood in the midst of a society being torn apart by terror, repression, lies, and murder. He proclaimed human dignity when doing so threatened his own life. And he did so with hope.

Christian hope is the conviction that in Jesus Christ, God has already declared what is true: that we belong to one another; that no one is a stranger to God; Christian hope is not optimism about the state of the world. Romero had no such illusions. Christian hope is the confidence that violence, contempt, and division are not the deepest truth about us, because in Christ God is making us one family.

And so perhaps the question for us this morning is not simply: how can I manage Paul's long list of commands? But rather: what does it mean, here and now, to live as though Romero was right? What does it mean to live as though the Kingdom really is where we come to experience ourselves as brothers and sisters, as truly part of one family?

Romero himself, of course, offers a wonderful example here - and there are many ways to tell the story of Romero.



Romero was famous for how he was seemingly always with his people. One of my favourite lines in Romero's preaching is a very simple one. Reflecting on his close relationship with so many communities in his diocese, he simply

says, "I am so happy not to be alone" (7/2/1978). Romero's own faith and hope was strengthened by his people, by the ordinary people who refused to give up. Romero knew that God was making a people, and he was grateful to belong to them.

Romero was equally famous for his love for and with the poor. This was not abstract. He did not "care about the poor" as an idea. He walked alongside those who suffered, listened to them, and allowed their reality to shape the way he saw the world. This reminds me of a question that the great liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez was fond of asking, "If you say you love the poor, what are their names?" Romero knew their names. You can hear them every week in his preaching and written in his diary.

Romero knew that the Kingdom comes to life when we have real fellowship with real people, particularly with those who are frightened, displaced, grieving, forgotten, and burdened.

And Romero sought that same communion even where there was conflict.

He did not confuse unity with pretending that everything was fine. He told the truth plainly, and he stood where he needed to stand. But he was always trying to win people back to communion rather than simply defeat them.

That was true in personal slights, when he would reach out for forgiveness; it was true in his strained relationships with fellow bishops when he did what he could to bring unity; and it was true even in the face of terrible violence. Here, the most striking moment remains his direct address to the killers of his friend, Fr. Rutilio Grande. In his homily at the funeral for his friend, Romero says:

""Who knows if those who are responsible for this criminal act.... are hearing these words on a radio there in their hideout and in their conscience? We want to tell them, 'Brother criminals, we love you, and we ask God to pour forth repentance into your hearts because the church is incapable of hatred; the church has no enemies'" (March 14, 1977). This is not cheap grace or a willingness to ignore injustice. It includes a sharp call for repentance and conversion.

However, it is equally clear that Romero put no limits to the brothers and sisters welcomed into God's Kingdom.

Of course, the worst thing we could do would be to admire Romero from a distance, as though he belonged to a nobler species of Christian than we could ever hope to be. We honour him best by receiving again the vision that governed his life: be satisfied with nothing less than the Kingdom of God, nothing less than the world remade in mercy and justice, nothing less than human beings discovering in Christ that they are brothers and sisters.

So our hope in hard times is not that the world is less broken than it is. It is that the broken world is not the final world. In Christ, God is already drawing near the kingdom that Romero named: the kingdom in which we learn to know one another as brothers and sisters. And whenever strangers are welcomed, whenever those who suffer are not abandoned, whenever truth is spoken without hatred, whenever evil is overcome with good, that kingdom becomes visible among us. That is the hope and the calling that Romero leaves with us.

**Visit the Romero Trust website
to read Todd Walatka's Leeds
Romero Lecture
and other key events in 2026**



Prisons: What Would Romero Say?

In July 2026 Amnesty International published a report into the human cost of the Salvadorean government's 'State of Exception', concluding that it could amount to crimes against humanity.

What began as a temporary measure in 2023, allegedly to combat gang violence, has evolved into a permanent system that promotes and justifies mass arbitrary detentions, suspension of guarantees, and serious human rights violations. Originally introduced for an initial one-month period, the emergency regime has been renewed more than forty times.

Since 2023 more than 90,000 people have been detained, at least 470 have

died in state custody and thousands of families continue to seek answers about the whereabouts, health or legal status of their loved ones.

Amnesty concluded that “whilst the state has an obligation to protect the population from criminal violence and to investigate and punish crimes committed by gangs, that does not authorise the commission of serious human rights violations.” Almost 2% of the Salvadorean population is in prison. If that was translated to Britain that would be a prison population of 1.4 million (actual population is 98,000).

Around the same time that the Amnesty Report denounced the brutality of the Salvadorean prison regime, Richard Madely made a TV documentary on the Salvadorean mega-prison, known as CECOT, broadcast on UK's Channel 5. The Good Morning Britain host said the Salvador system could help authorities in Britain fix what he called the 'broken' prison system saying: 'I think Cecot is probably a unique, brutally bespoke solution to the horrors that plagued ordinary Salvadoreans for so long. But I do believe there are lessons we can learn and apply to repair our own broken prison

system.” Reform UK already declared their intention to deport foreign prisoners to El Salvador if they win power.

Meanwhile Tim Muth, a US based expert observer on El Salvador, reflected upon Archbishop Romero's loving concern for the imprisoned during his lifetime. At a time in El Salvador's history marked by brutal repression by the security forces, arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, and torture within prisons, Romero's was a voice of moral clarity.

Romero's prophetic voice still resonates today. For reflection on this year's anniversary of Romero's murder, Muth collected a series of quotations from Romero's sermons which touch on the topics of prisons and prisoners.



Homily, July 17, 1977

If only we had people of prayer among those who manage the destiny of the country and the destiny of the economy!

If only they relied more on God and his techniques rather than on their own human technology, we would have a world that the church dreams about, a world without injustices, a world respectful of rights, a world where all people generously participate, a world without repression, a world without torture.

Forgive me if I always mention torture, but there is a heaviness in my poor spirit when I think about those people who suffer the scourges, the kicks, and the blows of another human being. If they had just a bit of God in their hearts, they would see a brother or sister as an image of God.

I say this because these situations continue. The arrests and the disappearances continue. How I hope that a little contact with God will change these dungeons of hell, that a little light will shine on them and make them understand what God desires of them. God does not want those things. God repudiates evil. God wants what is good, what is love.

Homily, November 26, 1978

What I ask is this: freedom for all those who are suffering unjustly. Either bring

them before the courts to be judged or let them go free! In El Salvador we want a Christmas without the torments and the tortures of the clandestine prisons.

Homily, December 1, 1977

Pain sanctifies and brings us close to God, but that does not mean that it is ever right to torture another person, even a criminal.

Homily, November 26, 1979

The face of Christ is there in the torture and cruelty of the prisons.

Homily, January 21, 1979

Kidnapping is not civilised, and neither is making people disappear or keeping them imprisoned without trial. All that is savagery.

Homily, February 5, 1978

God is near all those who are concerned for the hungry, the naked, the poor, the disappeared, the tortured, the imprisoned.

Homily, September 10, 1978

I want to support what is good, applaud it, encourage it, console the victims of atrocities, of injustices.

And also with courage disclose the atrocities, the tortures, the disappearances of prisoners, and the social injustice.

Magnifica Humanitas and Saint Oscar Romero



Carlos Ayala is Professor of Christology and Ecclesiology at the Pastoral Leadership School of the

Archdiocese of San Francisco. He was the founder of YSUCA, the radio station of the Jesuit University – UCA in El Salvador.

Let us begin our study of Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas* on the protection of the human person in the age of artificial intelligence. One of its central themes is the need to build a civilisation of love that confronts the serious consequences that may arise from the culture of power, fuelled by a technocratic model. Another central theme is that history must become a place where every person's dignity is protected, justice is advanced, and fraternity can flourish (MH n.1). In other words, the encyclical seeks to answer three essential questions central to Christian social thought: How can we make society more humane? How can

we ensure greater respect for the person? How can we safeguard and promote their rights?

In Chapter 5 of the encyclical: "The Culture of Power and the Civilisation of Love" Pope Leo compares two opposing logics that unfold throughout the text: on the one hand, the temptation to build the "Tower of Babel," relying on power and pride; on the other, the patience required to rebuild Jerusalem, as in the time of Nehemiah, "piece by piece," caring for the human person and the common good (MH, n. 184). This is a decisive choice that must be made by ethical citizens, the "Magnificent Humanity."

In today's world, according to Leo XIV, a culture of power is taking hold, in which resources and the capacity to dominate them dictate the agenda and decision-making criteria, relegating the common good of humanity to the background. Moreover, this culture of power is expanding by normalising war, pursuing ever-greater military might, and fuelling a false realism that insists there are no alternatives (MH, n. 188).

The encyclical's message affirms, however, that there are indeed options. The proposal is the civilisation of love.

For the Pope, “the civilisation of love is not a naive utopia, but a demanding project. It consists of translating charity into structures of justice, in giving institutional form to fraternity, and in regarding the other—whether a person or a people—as a necessary ally in building the common good” (MH, n.186). In this approach, artificial intelligence should be at the service of human potential and our highest aspirations, not in competition with them.

The Pope warns, however, that “the civilisation of love is not born of a single, spectacular gesture, but of a sum of small and tenacious acts of fidelity that stand up to dehumanisation”(MH n. 213). The Pope proposes five paths of responsibility in the pursuit of this project. First, let us disarm words. The first contribution we can make to a more humane civilisation is **to pay attention to our words**. Let us disarm words, and we will contribute to disarming the earth (MH, no. 214). The power of words is enormous.

Second, build peace through justice. Everyone can contribute to the foundation of peace, which is justice. We do not seek just any kind of peace—an

absence of conflict at any cost—but rather **that true peace which springs from justice** (MH, n. 215).

Third, adopting the perspective of the victims. There are situations in which, to remain human, we must set aside our hesitations and take a stand. **There are conflicts in which it is not right to remain neutral**, and it is not enough to think merely of “not being complicit” (MH, n. 216).

Fourth, cultivate a healthy realism. **Authentic realism does not give up on changing the world**: it begins by clearly seeing interests, fears, limitations, and power relations, precisely in order to assess what can be achieved and through what steps (MH, n. 218).

Fifth, revitalise dialogue. **To build a civilisation of love, we must practice dialogue**. This is the primary instrument for coexistence among individuals and among peoples, and it is the alternative to open conflict (MH, n.219).

Paragraphs 124 and 125 of the third chapter deserve special mention, as they discuss the greatness of the human person. There it is stated that, “certain events help us see that **history can change when at least one man or one**

woman truly takes the dignity of all people seriously.” In this vein, the text mentions: the civil rights movement in the United States of America, linked to the witness of Martin Luther King Jr., and the end of apartheid in South Africa following Nelson Mandela’s release and his decision not to place the future in the hands of hatred.



Pope Leo XIV at the presentation of Magnifica Humanitas in the Vatican Synod Hall, May 2026

Likewise, the text speaks of courageous and generous women such as St Laura Montoya, St Teresa of Calcutta, Dorothy Day, Marie Curie, Maria Montessori and so many others from every continent, who through their efforts have helped make history more humane. And when referring to the martyrs of brotherhood and justice, Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe, Saint Óscar Romero, and Blessed Enrique Angelelli, among others, are mentioned.

In Archbishop Romero, we certainly have a distinguished example of a

selfless builder of the civilisation of love. He did so in the midst of rejection and persecution, inspired by the Gospel. He did so by strengthening the bond between justice, truth, and peace—concrete expressions of love in its social dimension. That is why he was known as the “martyr for love.” And looking at his life in historical terms, we must say that he did so out of love for the poor, for the Gospel, for truth and justice, in a world devoid of compassion. That way of loving serves as a source of inspiration and challenge. It inspires human beings and challenges us to confront our own degrees of dehumanisation.

In one of his homilies, he proclaimed: “This is the true civilisation! The one that makes us truly human beings, Christians, children of God, because God is love, and the civilisation that God desires among humankind is the civilisation of love, which also encompasses justice, truth, and freedom” (April 1979). For Saint Óscar Romero, the civilisation of love is a civilisation with a heart. That is to say, it is attentive to the great cries that spring from reality. In this regard, Archbishop Romero was an exemplary person, a true martyr of fraternity.

**The Tenth Anniversary
24TH March 1990**



*Tommy Greenan, a priest from Edinburgh spent several decades ministering to the rural poor in El Salvador during and after the civil war. The following extract is from his book, *The Song of the Poor*. Tommy died in 2020. RIP*

Over the past few days the parish's main village has been heavily militarised by Government troops. Day and night pockets of soldiers laze in doorways and pepper with their presence the forecourt and steps of the church. Earlier they had dealt out food parcels to the people in an effort to win popular support.

Being as the people of San Fernando Morazán in general tend to separate faith and social justice, I thought it would be appropriate to mark the tenth anniversary of Archbishop Romero's assassination with a morning celebration of the Eucharist. Christ's body broken on a

cross, and his lifeblood poured out, a being sacrificed for the practice of truth, seemed a fitting expression of the life and death of Óscar Arnulfo Romero.

This day should not pass unrecognised. The three northern repopulations* of El Higueral, Teosinte and Tremedal had been invited to participate with us. Imaginary butterflies tickled inside my tummy, because I knew that on this day there would be military surveillance on my preaching. Many in the military regard Archbishop Romero as having been a commander of the Guerrillas who deserved summary execution. No words can dissuade them from this rigid way of thinking. I suppose there are none so blind as those who will not see.

I rang the three customary peals calling the people to worship, but only about fifteen people of San Francisco Morazán came, and these were mostly young girls and old women. I felt disappointed that so few parishioners wished to remember the words and sacrifice of Archbishop Romero, their pastor, their prophet, their martyr, who lives on in the hearts of the poor with spirit. Then from the sacristy I heard a stampede of feet and, peeping out, saw seventy-five people from the

repopulations filing into the empty benches. There they were, a thrilling sight; poor men, women and children, perspiring, carrying infants, **the poor with spirit**, some of them having walked nearly three hours to be present and they would repeat the journey to return. Ignoring the military's psychological pressure against commemorating Romero's memory they took their places at the table of the Lord.

In the sermon I took to developing a recent theme, the sign of Jonah, and applied its meaning to Monseñor Romero, without daring to mention the Jesuits recently murdered by the military. Needless to say, three officers stood at the back of the church, arms folded, listening. And at the point where I mentioned the sign of Jonah falling on Monseñor Romero, my first mention of his name in the homily, the senior officer turned on his heels and walked out, followed by the others. I continued, nervous but determined, emphasising that the centre of the Gospel message and the centre of Romero's preaching is the dignity of human life. 'Life is always sacred. The commandment of the Lord – "Thou shalt not kill" – makes the totality

of life sacred, and blood spilt – even if it should be the blood of a sinner – always cries out to God. And those who kill are always guilty of homicide.

As far as the church is concerned, there is nothing as important as human life, the human person. In particular, the persons of the poor and oppressed, which – besides being human – are also divine. That's why Jesus said that everything done to them He takes as done to Him. And that blood (blood, death) is beyond all politics. It touches the very heart of God.' Preaching in El Salvador does require prudence, but the message of God's kingdom cannot honestly be accommodated to unjust structures. The military, like us all, have to serve and follow the Gospel. The Gospel should not be forced to serve and follow the military. The sign of Jonah brought Jesus, Monseñor Romero and the Jesuit martyrs violent death. Nobody seeks that; it happens as a consequence of what one says and does. **Martyrdom is not sought, it is encountered.**

**Repopulations refers to those areas of El Salvador where refugees who had fled from persecution and the violence of the civil war were resettled on returning to the country.*

Remembering the Martyrs Carlos X Colorado



Carlos Colorado, is El Salvador-born US-based lawyer, and author of the blog "Where Peter Is"

At the 2025 ecumenical Commemoration of the Martyrs and Witnesses of the Faith of the 21st Century, Pope Leo XIV began the ceremony by quoting St Oscar Romero:

'Let us also take account of the hope that has been poured into our hearts with the same confidence as Saint Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who preached that our God "is a God who wants to be with men, a God who feels the pain of those who are tortured and killed, a God who restores faith in the Church. He is a living God, who feels, acts, works, and guides this history, and in him we hope, in him we trust."

Pope Leo's selection of Romero's phrase set the tone for the commemoration.

Romero is central to the prophetic vision of the Latin American Church, so we need to look at the context to understand the significance of the words from Romero that Pope Leo chose to quote during this commemoration.

First, the definition of martyrdom was slowly expanded through the late twentieth century – the time when Romero lived (and died). As early as the late 18th century, during the French Revolution, it was difficult to assess whether Catholics were persecuted due to anti-religious animus or for political reasons.

This problem intensified during the Spanish Civil War and later during the Second World War. When the Church canonised St. Maximillian Kolbe, who was killed by the Nazis, the Church nearly abandoned the idea of treating Kolbe like a martyr in favour of considering him a "regular" saint. Romero would become the ultimate disputed case because his denunciations of human rights abuses in El Salvador were seen to coincide with the views of leftwing insurgents fighting the government. A further consideration is the prophetic ministry of the Latin

American Church since the time of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Benedict XVI recounts, “it was not only the Americans who intervened forcefully in the unfolding of the Council, but also Latin America, well aware of the extreme poverty of its people, on a Catholic continent, and the responsibility of the faith for the situation of these people.”

As a result of the Latin American bishops’ intervention, the Council issued documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church and the modern world. The opening lines of this document (“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ”) are paraphrased in Romero’s words quoted by Leo, which remind us that God hears the cries of those who suffer, and that is why we, too, must hear them.

The Latin American bishops doubled down on these pronouncements, issuing their own documents in the years and decades that followed, such as that of Medellin, Colombia in 1968. The opening lines of the Medellin document

denounced “the misery that besets large masses of human beings in all of our countries,” declaring “that misery, expresses itself as injustice which cries to the heavens.”

Beginning reluctantly, Romero took up this call and ultimately became a leading light and voice across the continent. He issued four pastoral letters interpreting the Council, much like the body of the Latin American bishops had at Medellin but written in the context of the Salvadoran reality.

Romero explained that his preaching came after asking God in prayer, “How do you want me to speak at this time in history?” And Jesus tells me, “You must speak differently from the way they spoke four centuries ago or in the Middle Ages or in the first years of Christianity. I am Christ who walks with you. I need your mouth to preach to men and women of 1977 in the language that they need.” (Homily August 6th, 1977).

Romero’s interpretation proved a bitter pill for much of the Church to swallow. Many Salvadoran Catholics rejected it — although, to be fair, many rejected (or disregarded) the social pronouncements of the Council as well. The Salvadoran

government lodged an objection with the Vatican Secretary of State to try to block Romero's canonisation.

Pope Francis attested to the opposition to Romero within the Church in El Salvador: "I was a young priest and I witnessed this — he was defamed, slandered, sullied, that is, his martyrdom was continued even by his brothers in the priesthood and in the episcopate."

Romero's canonisation cause was controversial and openly opposed by some. This begs the question: why is Pope Leo pointing to Romero as an exemplar of martyrdom? For him. Romero exemplifies the martyr as the proverbial calm in the eye of the storm.

Martyrs today give witness to the fact that God has not abandoned us, even in the most modern of realities. The controversies that roiled Romero's time did not trouble the saint because he set his gaze on God, and the polarisations of our day should not trouble us if we trust in God fully. That seems to be Pope Leo's message in citing Romero — while also hoping that we will entrust the reform and continuity of Church processes with the same faith — as his model of martyrdom.

Forthcoming Events



Anglican Bishop Jo Bailey-Wells will preach at the Romero Evensong at St Alban's Cathedral at 4pm on Sunday 28th February.

Currently serving as Bishop for Episcopal Ministry, in February 2024 Bishop Jo was invited by Pope Francis to the Vatican to address the Council of Cardinals in a session dedicated to deepening their reflection on the role of women in the Church. Earlier this year, in her capacity as Deputy Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Jo went to El Salvador where she visited the tomb of Archbishop Romero, the Divine Providence Hospital where St Oscar lived and died, and met with Jesuits at the Central American University, UCA.



Cardinal Michael Czerny will be in the UK during the week of 8th -14th March 2027 with events in London, Oxford, Liverpool, Durham and Edinburgh.

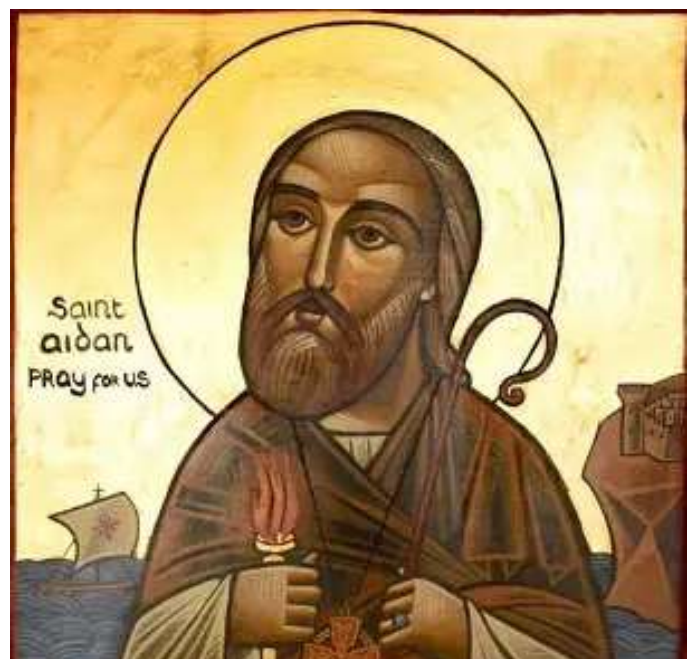
A Jesuit, Michael Czerny's life has been dedicated to social and environmental justice issues, focussing on refugees and HIV-AIDS advocacy in Africa. Cardinal Czerny retired this year from his role as Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in the Vatican. He was a close adviser to Pope Francis, in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and organiser of the Pan Amazon Synod. Michael Czerny worked in El Salvador during the civil war after the massacre of the UCA Jesuits in 1989. He served as the Director of the UCA Institute for Human Rights, taking up the role formerly held by the martyred Segundo Montes SJ.

**CAFOD & Romero Trust
Holy Island Pilgrimage
Saturday 24th July 2027
JOIN US!!**



Walk across the sands to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in a joyful, prayerful celebration of the work of CAFOD and the Romero Trust in the company of the Northumbrian saints.

24th July 2027



El Salvador Update

Hundreds of faith leaders and Church organisations in the United States have urged the Trump administration to extend Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for El Salvador before it was due to expire in September. A TPS designation shields migrants from deportation if they are from countries experiencing dangerous conditions such as war, disaster, or other unrest. The removal of that legal status would impact about 170,000 Salvadoran nationals in the U.S.

In a letter to President Trump, more than 270 faith leaders and organisations, including several U.S. bishops and many Catholic groups argued to extend El Salvador's TPS designation to prevent disruption to U.S. communities where Salvadoran migrants have established ties and prevent family separation due to remaining dangerous conditions in the country.

"We believe that sending hundreds of thousands of Salvadoran TPS holders back into an unstable and unfamiliar country that does not have the capability

to support its own nationals is a danger to those individuals and a decision that would have severe negative consequences for years to come," the letter said. "A thoughtful review of the current conditions in El Salvador, the administration's obligation to respect the statutory framework which governs TPS, supports an extension of El Salvador's TPS designation."

Doctor of the Church



Artist: Dora Magaña

On the Feast of the Assumption, which is also Saint Oscar Romero's birthday, the Archbishop of San Salvador, José Luis Escobar, urged the faithful of his diocese

to pray fervently for Saint Oscar to be declared a Doctor of the Church.

He said, “We give thanks to the Lord for the fecundity and universality of the Christian witness of Saint Oscar Romero, for the depth of his faith in Jesus Christ, for his love of the Word of God and of the Church, for the teaching conveyed through his preaching, especially in his homilies and Pastoral Letters’; for his solicitude as a pastor and for the coherence of a life which culminated in the shedding of his blood in martyrdom.



The Cathedral of San Salvador

Get rich quick?

Journalistic investigations by the Spanish newspaper “El País” have discovered that, during just the first seven years of his presidency, Nayib Bukele and his family acquired 34 new properties, increasing their landholdings twelvefold to assets valued at more than \$10 million.

Unlike previous oligarchies, Bukele did not come from a highborn family, and they were not major business owners. But once in power, he became a member of the elite and displaced the old millionaires to make room for new actors such as bitcoin entrepreneurs and artificial intelligence agencies,” according to Héctor Dada, a former minister of economy.

Heatwave

The Salvadorean government issued a red alert across the country for a lack of rain coupled with temperatures of over 43C degrees. Heat records were set across the country during the month of August, and there is particular concern for the eastern part of the country, the so-called Dry Corridor of Central America. Already farmers have reported large crop losses. An association of small farmers indicate that up to 30% of the season’s first harvest had been lost and that 100% of the second harvest was at risk if the rains do not resume. The heat and drought brought about by the extreme impact of El Niño will directly hit the rural poor in El Salvador who live hand to mouth as subsistence farmers. They eat what they grow and sell what is left over

to have some income. The severe drought will lead to famine for hundreds of thousands of the rural poor.



Scene from rural town of Ataco

The War on Drugs?

In a sign of the growing collaboration between Presidents Trump and Bukele, El Salvador has been sending its navy ships more than 1000 miles out into the Pacific Ocean to capture drug boats speeding from Ecuador and the Galapagos islands.



Bukele's government does not tell the Salvadorean public that it is working closely with the US in these operations. The government also does not talk about allowing the US to base military aircraft in El Salvador linked to **the illegal boat**

strikes which the Trump administration claims are part of its war on drug smuggling. El Salvador's Ilopango airport has been the base from which surveillance aircraft flew towards Ecuadorian fishing vessels in a CIA covert operation before the boats were blown up by drones. According to the New York Times, at least three US military aircraft have begun flying missions out of El Salvador. The deployment is thought to be the first time a foreign country has hosted US planes that may be used in military strikes in the region.

US government sources say that it has killed 227 alleged drug traffickers in its operations in the Caribbean and the Eastern Pacific, whilst countries across the region claim that small fishing boats have been targeted.



Thankyou Anne



Anne Griffin is a sister of the congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary who are more familiarly

known as the Chigwell Sisters. For over a dozen years Anne worked in El Salvador in the rural community of El Mozote, the site of the brutal massacre of 1,000 men, women and children in 1981. Sr Anne accompanied the survivors to hearings at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In their long struggle for the truth, they won a landmark ruling by the court that El Salvador must investigate the crime and bring the perpetrators to justice.

For the last ten years in Chigwell, Anne has given huge support to the Romero Trust by organising the printing of every edition of this newsletter. Alas, the old printer is no longer fit for purpose but Anne continues to work tirelessly for justice for the El Mozote community.

ROMERO TRUST WEBSITE

If you haven't done so already, please visit our newly updated and designed website.

www.romerotrusted.org.uk

The Romero Trust has the most complete and comprehensive material on the life and work of Saint Oscar and is recognised internationally as a treasure trove of information on our beloved Saint.

The website redesign was created by

www.caledonianwebsites.com

established in the Scottish Highlands

by Chris Boles who also runs

[Websites For Churches](http://www.websitesforchurches.com)

We are delighted with the website upgrade and we hope you will find it an excellent resource to learn about St. Oscar Romero, his life and legacy.

Do visit the new pages dedicated to Blessed Rutilio Grande and learn more about Saint Romero's close friend as we prepare to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his martyrdom in March 1977.

www.romerotrusted.org.uk/martyrs/rutilio-story

MARTYRS OF EL SALVADOR PRAYER CARDS

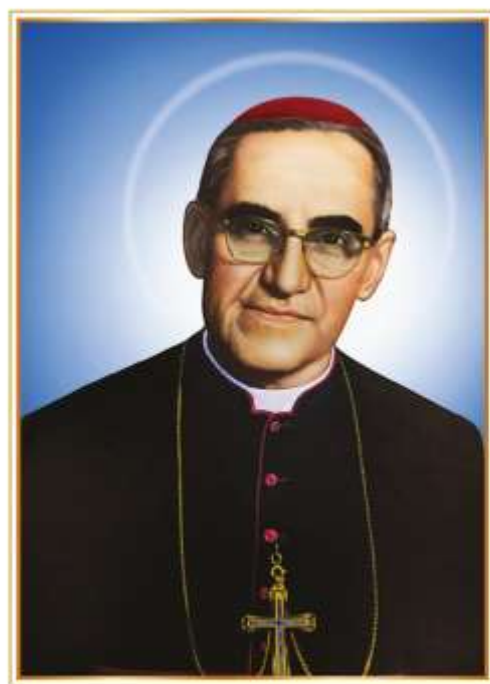


The Romero Trust has produced prayer cards of this beautiful portrait of Rutilio Grande and his companions, Manuel Solórzano and Nelson Lemus, by Salvadorean artist Cristián Lopez.

We also have available prayer cards of the “Great Amen” by Peter Bridgman.



And the official portrait of Saint Oscar Romero is still 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.

RESOURCES

A range of inspiring documentaries and feature films are available free to view on the Romero Trust website.

We particularly recommend:

Roses in December: *A moving account of the life and the death of lay missionary Jean Donovan, as remembered by her friends and family.*

Righting the Wrong: *An excellent overview of Romero's life and martyrdom. and the long process after his death leading to his canonisation by Pope Francis in 2018.*

What Lucia Saw: *A dramatic retelling of the true story of Lucía, the only witness to the killing of the UCA martyrs. A gripping and chilling tale of an attempted cover-up of the UCA massacre. **Highly recommended!***

Find all the videos on:

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

The Southwark Romero Cross

The beautiful Romero Cross in St. George's Cathedral is the work of the celebrated Salvadorean artist, Fernando Llort, who was present in Southwark at the inauguration of the Romero shrine in 2013. The Llort family workshop has produced large copies of the double-sided cross and the Romero Trust has them available for purchase.

The small single-sided cross measures 4 inches is **£5 or 3 for £12 + £3p&p**

The large double-sided cross with a stand measures 12 inches and costs **£15 + £5 p&p**

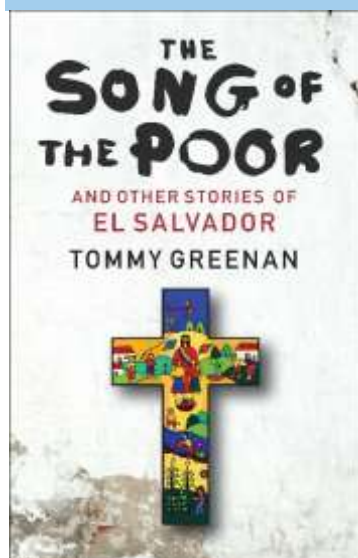


Front of Cross represents Christ and Romero



Reverse of cross represents the People of God

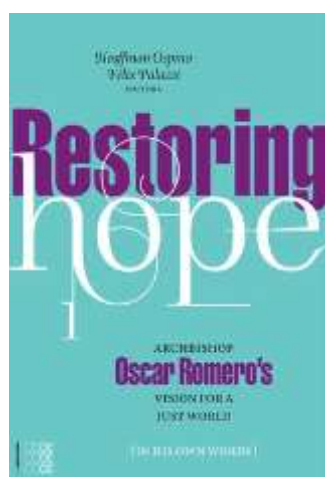
BOOK OFFERS



The Song of the Poor by Tommy Greenan, Scots missionary priest who served the poor in the war-torn villages of rural El Salvador.

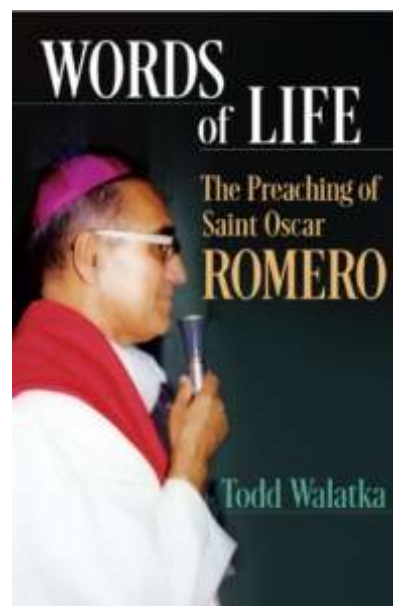
A passionate and moving elegy which gives names to the nameless and voice to the voiceless. Tommy plunges us into the lives of a crucified people, the poor WITH spirit of the Beatitudes. **208 pp**

Special price of £12 + £3 p&p



Restoring Hope – Oscar Romero's Vision for a Just World. 83 pages Ed. Hosffman Espino
A selection of Saint Óscar Romero's

own words about hope from the homilies he preached when Archbishop of San Salvador **£10 + £3 p&p**

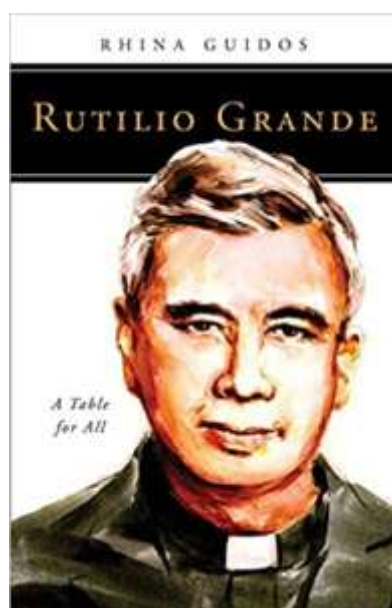


Words of Life
The preaching of Saint Oscar Romero by Todd Walatka
Orbis Books
Through this selection of a dozen of Saint Oscar's most

iconic homilies we learn how Romero's response to the injustice of the world was rooted in his deep incarnational faith. **252 pp**

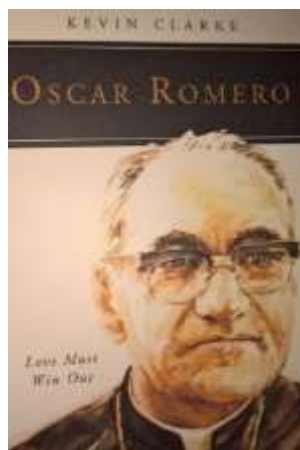
Special price of £12 + £3 p&p

'Rutilio Grande - A Table for All' by Rhina Guidos.



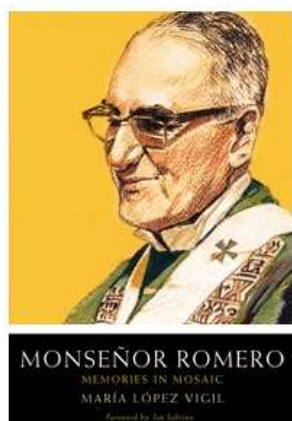
A short and readable biography which beautifully captures the life and ministry of Blessed Rutilio Grande".

£8 + £3 p&p



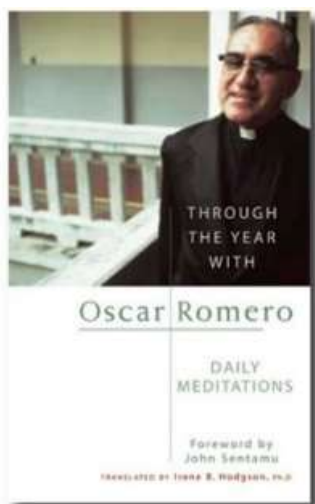
£10 + £3 p&p

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



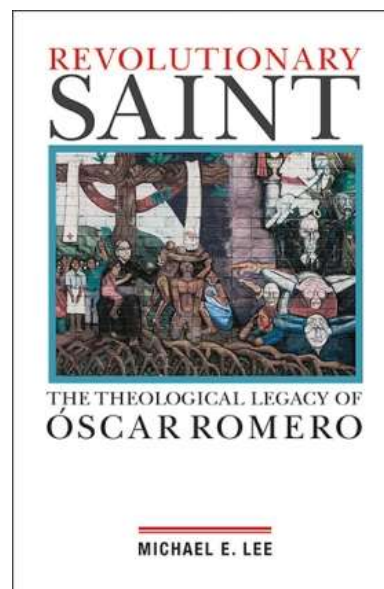
him and prayed with him, compiled by María López Vigil. Arguably the best book on Romero. Unput-downable. Highly recommended. **£15 + £3 p&p**

Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero remembered by the people who worked with him, lived with



£10 + £3 p&p

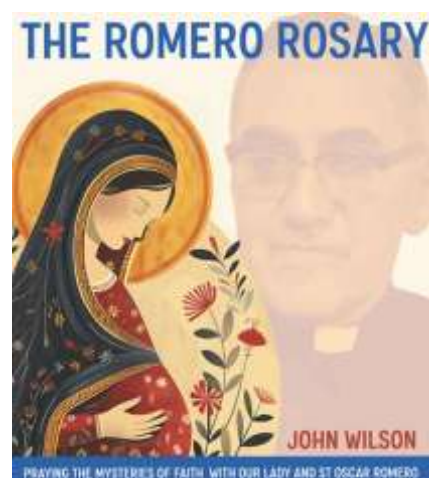
Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations Powerful and moving selections from Saint Oscar Romero's homilies.



£20: and from the Romero Trust at the special price of:

£13 + £3 p&p

Revolutionary Saint – The theological Legacy of Oscar Romero Michael E. Lee. Highly recommended! Available in bookshops at



the “Romero Mysteries”: charity, compassion, mercy justice & peace, illuminated for reflection and prayer by St Óscar Romero who said the “mysteries of the rosary are a precious summary of the Gospel”

£10 + £3 p&p

The Romero Rosary by Archbishop John Wilson. A beautiful new book introduces

FRIENDS OF ROMERO

Join us as a 'Friend of Romero'. Just £10 a year. Support the Archbishop Romero Trust to raise awareness and celebrate the life and example of St Oscar Romero and the many martyrs of El Salvador, as well as supporting social justice initiatives in Latin America that carry forward the tradition of St Romero's work.

Your donations help us to produce this newsletter and organise events like Romero Week and the Romero Lecture.

The Trust's reserves are modest, and we rely on volunteers to carry out our work. If you can make a gift towards our work, we would be hugely grateful. Please send cheques payable to the Romero Trust to:

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

or visit our new improved website:

www.romerotrusted.org.uk/donate

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

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Please let us know if you prefer to receive the Romero News by post, by email or by both channels.

Please do inform us of any changes of your address and please send any feedback

Remember, the newsletter is also on the Trust's website, and you can contact us by email on:

romerotrusted@gmail.com

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The 2026 Romero Lecture

From Romero to Gaza: The Price of Living by Our Principles

 **Thur 22nd October, 7pm**

 Immaculate Conception
Maryhill, Glasgow

This year's Romero Lecture will be delivered by **Oliver McTernan**, internationally recognised peace mediator, Director of Forward Thinking, and author of *Violence in God's Name*.

The evening will include a lecture, Q&A and refreshments



Sign up now

sciaf.org.uk/romero2026



Hosted by the Newman Association, the Archbishop Romero Trust, Pax Christi Scotland, SCIAF, and Justice & Peace Scotland



Glasgow Circle
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