

Saint Oscar Romero,

You spoke out in defence of the poor and oppressed people of El Salvador and became known as 'voice for the voiceless'.

Pray for me to be brave enough to speak up when I see injustice around me, in my neighbourhood or elsewhere in our world.

Amen.

A thought to take away

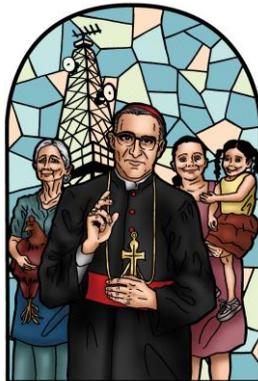
"Peace will flower when love and justice pervade our environment." Romero

True peace is not achieved by responding to violence with more violence, but by loving and by acting justly. How do I respond when I see violence, whether that is in the news or among my peers? Do I respond with anger? Or do I find ways to work for justice and to act with love?

An action to complete

- Find out more about a place in the world where there is conflict; pray for the people involved.

Saint Oscar Romero
Pray for us

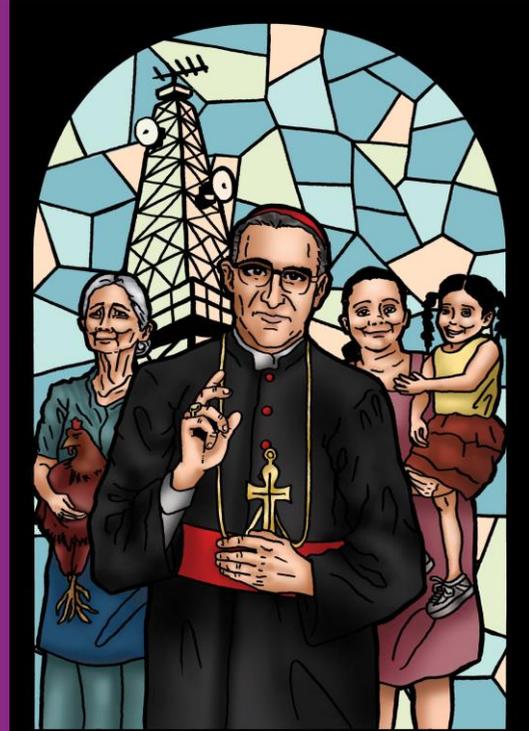


Birthplace
Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador

Born
15 August 1917

Died
24 March 1980

Canonised
14 October 2018



*Many would like
the poor to
keep on saying
that it is God's
will for them to
live that way.
It is not God's
will for some to
have everything
and others to
have nothing.*”

Oscar Romero was a martyr, someone who died for their faith. He was also a person who spoke out against injustice, despite his life being threatened.

- How can you speak up against injustice?
- How much would you endure for the sake of your faith?

The life of Saint Oscar Romero

Oscar Arnulfo Romero was born into a family of ten. His father was in charge of the local telegraph office. Sometimes he helped his father to deliver telegrams. Oscar also learned to be a carpenter, making tables, chairs and doors.

When he was 14 years old, Oscar wanted to be a priest so he went to study at junior seminary. When his mother was ill and they needed money for medicine, Oscar left the seminary for three months and worked in the gold mine in Potosi. He earned about 4p a day.

Oscar went to Rome to study and stayed there during World War II. His father and brother died while he was in Rome. Romero was ordained a priest in 1942 and returned to El Salvador two years later. He became famous for his sermons. He also did a lot of parish work like visiting prisons, organising catechism classes and working with others in the Church to provide help and food for the poor.

When Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977, some rich people were happy because they thought he would stop priests from helping the poor to stand up for their basic rights. But a few weeks later, his friend Fr. Rutilio Grande was shot and killed, along with two companions. The following Sunday, Romero allowed only one Mass in the whole diocese - at the Cathedral - and spoke out against the murders.

As the violence in El Salvador continued, Romero continued to speak out. Every Sunday his sermon was broadcast by radio. The whole country listened. Romero's life was often threatened. Romero was a CAFOD partner and when his radio station was bombed, CAFOD rebuilt it.

In his sermon on 23 March 1980, Romero told the soldiers of the army:

"In the name of God and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I beg you, I implore you, I order you, in the name of God, stop the repression!"

The next day, a shot killed Romero as he said Mass. A United Nations report later found that Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, had ordered Romero's death. At the funeral, the army fired into the crowd. 30 people died and hundreds were injured. There was civil war in El Salvador until 1992.

On 3 February 2015, Pope Francis announced that Oscar Romero was a martyr for the faith. He was canonised on 14 October 2018.

CAFOD partners' work in El Salvador

Just as Romero did, CAFOD partners know the needs of their communities because they live and work alongside them.

CAFOD has worked in El Salvador since the early 1970s; the Legal Aid Office of Romero was one of CAFOD's main partners there. At the time, the government was crushing demands for social reform. Romero's Legal Aid Office helped the families of people who were arrested, tortured and killed by the army and police.

In El Salvador today, our partners focus on:

1. Helping farmers to improve their crops and find ways to earn money.
2. Reducing the risk of disasters.
3. Treatment and raising awareness of HIV and AIDS.
4. Creating peace.

CAFOD supports the Jesuit Development Service (JDS), which works with some of the poorest communities. People in the west of the country grow food to survive, but the steep, rocky landscape makes farming difficult. The JDS helps farmers to share skills, develop new ways to earn money and create a better life for their families.

"The JDS has helped us to develop our farm and shown us how to breed pigs. Looking ahead, I would like my children to learn how to work the land. I hope that they will have a better future and a better quality of food."



Fidel

The JDS also works to reduce the risk of disasters like floods and mud slides, by providing emergency equipment, helping communities to develop evacuation plans and to plant crops to stop soil erosion.

"The JDS has helped us a lot. Now we are better organised and meet more frequently. We know what to do in a situation of emergency."



Rosita

» Find out more by visiting cafod.org.uk/education