

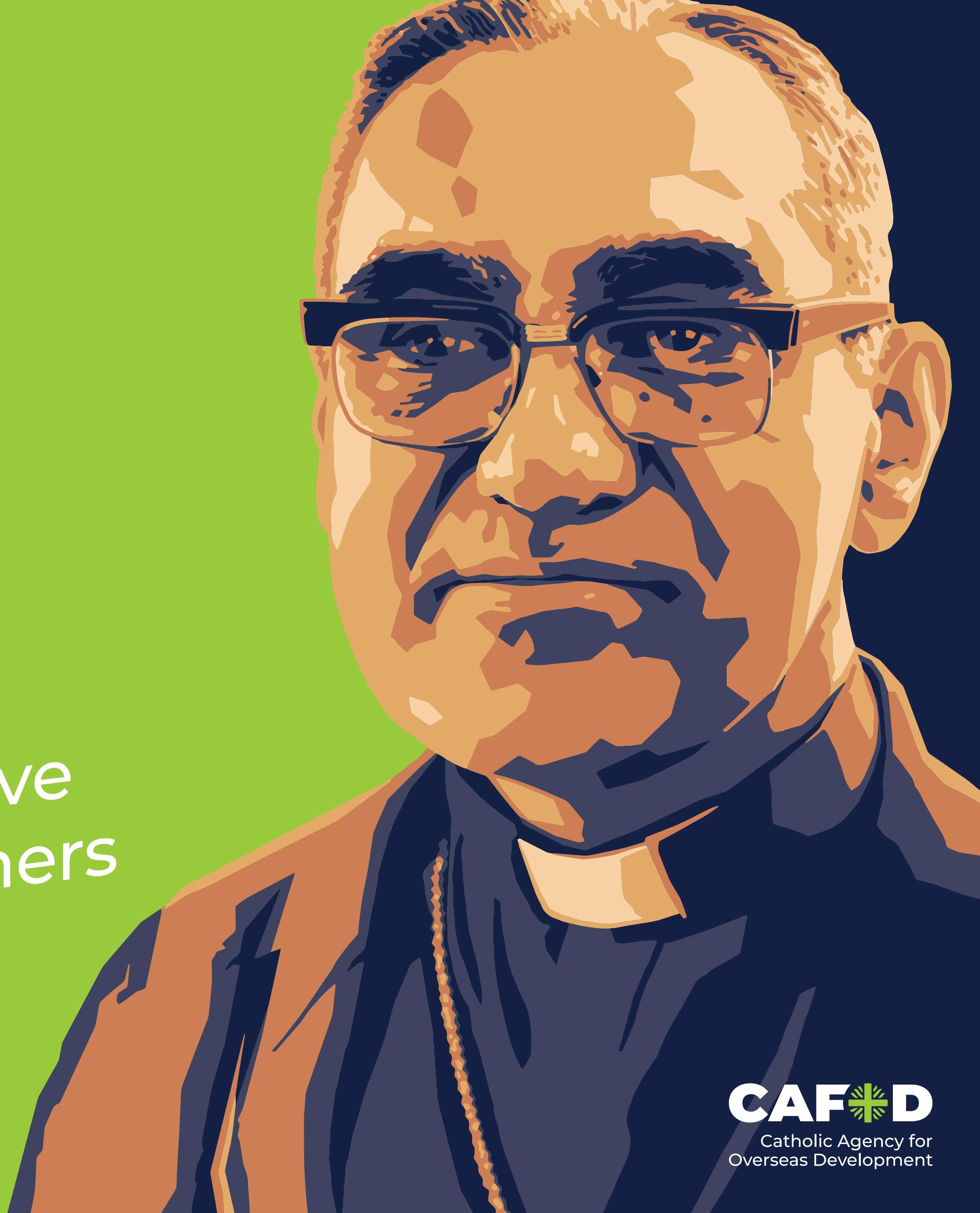
**SAINT**

**OSCAR**

**ROMERO**

1917-1980

“It is not God’s  
will for some to have  
everything and others  
to have nothing.”



**CAFOD**  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development



1917

Oscar Arnulfo Romero was born into a family of ten on 15 August in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador. His father was in charge of the local telegraph office. Sometimes the young Romero helped his father to deliver telegrams. Oscar learned to be a carpenter, making tables, chairs and doors.



1937

Oscar went to Rome to study and stayed there during World War II. His father and brother died while he was in Rome.



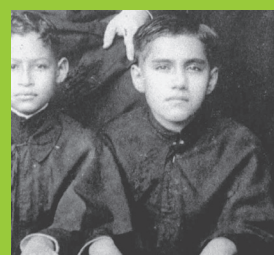
1942

Romero was ordained a priest and returned to El Salvador. 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.



1930

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.



1970

Romero was made a bishop on 21 June.



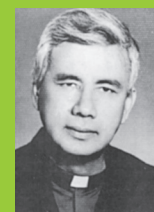
1974

Violence increased in El Salvador by the mid 1970s, as the government and army began killing poor people who stood up for their rights. When the army killed three people in the village of Tres Calles in Romero's diocese, he comforted the families and wrote to the President to protest about the murders.



1977

Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador. 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 – where he spoke out against the murders.



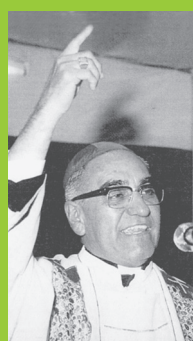
1977/80

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. CAFOD supported Romero's work and when his radio station was bombed, CAFOD rebuilt it.



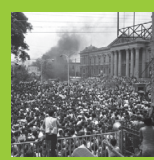
1980

In his sermon on 23 March, Romero ordered the army to stop killing people: "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!"



1980

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



2009

On 15 March, the new president of El Salvador announced that his government would be inspired by Romero and the "option for the poor" (choosing to put the most vulnerable people first).



2015

Pope Francis confirmed Oscar Romero was a martyr, killed out of hatred of the faith. He was beatified on 23 May.



## CAFOD's work with Romero

Our work in El Salvador began in the 1970s when a military-dominated government was using violence to crush demands for social reform.

As part of the global Church network, led in El Salvador by Archbishop Romero, we were able to reach thousands of families who fled their homes into refugee camps or protection in Church properties. We also supported Romero's Legal Aid Office, which provided vital support to the families of people arrested, tortured and killed by the army and police.

Romero stood alongside his people as they struggled against injustice. He is remembered for his courage, his faith and, above all, his great love for the poor. Romero still inspires CAFOD today – our London office is named 'Romero House' – and we are proud to have worked with him.

Today El Salvador is a more democratic country but it is still riven by poverty and violence. CAFOD continues to support organisations and community groups in El Salvador who, like Romero, know the needs of the local people because they live and work alongside them.

CAFOD works in the same way around the world. Together we bring hope and compassion to poor communities, standing side by side with them to end poverty and injustice.

## CAFOD in El Salvador today

We focus on four key areas:

- Helping farming families improve their crops, and nurture the environment in the face of climate change.
- Supporting mother and child health work in rural communities.
- Nurturing peace and justice, providing legal aid, counselling and peacebuilding workshops.
- Helping women know their rights, grow in self-esteem and earn an income.

## CAFOD still supports communities in El Salvador



Ana Maria Gomez Duenas is joint founder of a community radio station in Guaymango that gives vital weather warnings, tells farmers when to plant and sow, and covers other subjects affecting local people.

"Radio Copinula is everything to me. I'm just an ordinary person, but my voice – through the microphone – is helping to transform my community.

We were inspired by the example of Archbishop Oscar Romero. He used the radio station YSAX to inform our people and the international community about the horrors of El Salvador's civil war.

In El Salvador, only 20 per cent of households have internet access. Radio remains an influential means of communication.

We thought, 'Why don't we have a radio station for all the communities, so they can listen to the voices that don't get heard?'

The programme I am most proud of is probably, 'The full life you dream of'. Many women listen.

In our society, men often dominate and tell women what to do. Some women have said that the programme has really helped them become more aware of their rights. One woman said that the show gave her the confidence to report her husband for abuse.

I feel that we are helping to demolish these myths that exist about women. We live our belief that communication transforms people, permanently.

I want young women across El Salvador to empower themselves and work for the change they want to see... and ultimately, make their dreams a reality."

2018

Pope Francis approved a miracle which was attributed to Oscar Romero. This meant he could now be canonised. The canonisation date was 14 October. **Saint Oscar Romero, pray for us.**



## Romero cross liturgy

We invite you to use this liturgy to pray with us and with the people of El Salvador with whom CAFOD works.

### Prayer focus:

- Map of the world, highlighting El Salvador
- Large candle, eg. CAFOD candle (or you could use our virtual candle: [cafod.org.uk/virtualcandle](http://cafod.org.uk/virtualcandle))
- Romero cross
- Romero poster
- Large sheet of paper cut into wide cross, with a figure of Jesus drawn onto it.

### Introduction:

In the name of the Father...

**Leader:** Today we join in prayer with the people of El Salvador.

(Tell the story of Romero in your own words, using information from the timeline, or use the primary or secondary Romero PowerPoints or the short film on our website. You may wish to include a section from one of Romero's sermons.)

### Symbolic action:

(If possible, beforehand give people time to draw or paint figures and symbols to add to the cross that represent people in our global community who live in poverty.)



**Leader:** We are used to seeing the figure of Christ alone on the cross. But in El Salvador there is a tradition of painting the local community and landscape on the cross with Jesus. It is a sign that Jesus takes our joys and pains with him as he dies and rises again.

Today we are inspired by Romero's words: "It is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing." We bring to Jesus those in our global family who do not have what they need. During the music, you are invited to think carefully about the words of Romero. Come up to the cross and write on it one thing you can do to help people have the basic things they need to be able to live as God wants.

Play quiet music. When everyone has returned to their seats:

### Prayers:

**Inspired by Saint Oscar Romero:**

We pray for all those who have lost family members through violence in El Salvador.

### Lord, hear us

We pray for CAFOD partners working today with poor communities in El Salvador and around the world.

### Lord, hear us

We pray for ourselves that we may always be as brave as Romero in speaking out against injustice and working for a more just world where everyone has what they need.

### Lord, hear us

In silence, we make our own prayers. (Pause)

**Let us pray:** Lord, strengthen the people of El Salvador and all the people of God that – like Romero – we may be a 'voice for the voiceless', speaking out against injustice so that all God's children can be happy.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the name of the Father...

The cross pictured here is made by one of our partners and has become known in England and Wales as 'the Romero cross'. You can purchase Romero crosses, in various sizes, from the CAFOD shop: [shop.cafod.org.uk](http://shop.cafod.org.uk)

## How you can help CAFOD's work

- **Raise awareness...** about the causes of poverty and injustice using CAFOD's educational materials [cafod.org.uk/education](http://cafod.org.uk/education)
- **Fundraise...** to help poor communities around the world to change their lives [cafod.org.uk/fundraise](http://cafod.org.uk/fundraise)

- **Campaign...** with CAFOD to change the policies and practices that keep people poor [cafod.org.uk/campaign](http://cafod.org.uk/campaign)
- **Pray...** with CAFOD and our global neighbours for a just and fair world [cafod.org.uk/pray](http://cafod.org.uk/pray)
- **Volunteer...** get involved with CAFOD and help to bring poverty to an end [cafod.org.uk/volunteer](http://cafod.org.uk/volunteer)

## CHILDREN

[cafod.org.uk/primary/romero](http://cafod.org.uk/primary/romero)

### Our resources for children include:

- The front and reverse of this poster as a downloadable PDF
- PowerPoint telling the story of Romero, suitable for assemblies
- El Salvador RE pack for KS2
- El Salvador Geography pack, including films, poster, photo cards and activities
- 'Aspire to be more' liturgy for Year 6 school leavers

Find out more about El Salvador in our award-winning Geography pack at: [cafod.org.uk/geography](http://cafod.org.uk/geography)

## YOUNG PEOPLE

[cafod.org.uk/secondary/romero](http://cafod.org.uk/secondary/romero)

### Our resources for young people include:

- The front and reverse of this poster as a downloadable PDF
- Short film telling the story of Romero
- PowerPoint telling the story of Romero, suitable for assemblies
- Romero cross reflective activity, similar to that in the liturgy
- Film of Isabel talking about the traditional crosses of El Salvador
- 'Aspire to be more' transition liturgy for Y7 pupils entering a new school
- Aspire postcards (free) and ideas for how these can be used

## ADULTS

[cafod.org.uk/romero](http://cafod.org.uk/romero)

We hope you find the following resources useful for your own personal prayer and spiritual development or for use in parish groups:

- The front and reverse of this poster as a downloadable PDF
- Prayers inspired by the life of Romero
- Quotations from Romero
- Crosses, cards and posters available from our shop: [shop.cafod.org.uk](http://shop.cafod.org.uk)

The Archbishop Romero Trust website has the full text of Romero's homilies, an archive of images, information on events, and a wealth of other information: [romerotrust.org.uk](http://romerotrust.org.uk)

"Many would like the poor to keep on saying that it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God. God's will is that all his children be happy." Romero, 10 September 1978