

RomeroNews

Issue 34: Autumn 2024

Registered Charity no. 1110069

Martyrs of the UCA XXXV Anniversary



IN THIS ISSUE

I

Martyrs of the UCA

II

**Two “Golden Arches”
Dr Raymond Perrier**

III

Archbishop Welby in San Salvador

IV

**Saint Romero’s Champion
Monsignor Rafael Urrutia**

V

**Windswept Pilgrims of Hope
Fr Jim O’Keefe**

VI

**The Song of the Poor
Tommy Greenan**

VII

An Emmaus Walk

VIII

Romero Trust Pilgrimage

IX

El Salvador Update

X

**Prayer Cards
Books and Resources**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 18th October - 7pm

Romero Lecture

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski

Ukrainian Catholic Church in UK

Romero and Ukraine

**Resilience in the Face of Injustice
at the**

Edinburgh Jesuit Centre

*** * ***

Romero Week 2025

Saturday 22nd March - 11.00am

National Ecumenical Service

St Martin in the Fields, London

Wednesday 27th March - 12.30pm

Mass and Romero School Awards

St George’s Cathedral Southwark

*** * ***

Saturday 13th September

CAFOD & Romero Trust

Pilgrimage to Lindisfarne

Further details to follow

*** * ***

Mid-November 2025

Dates to be confirmed

11-day pilgrimage to El Salvador

Martyrs of the UCA

16th November this year will mark thirty-five years since the massacre, by a Salvadorean military death squad, of six Jesuits and two of their women workers at the Central American University, the UCA, in San Salvador.

Despite decades of efforts and appeals to the Salvadorean Government to bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice, no serious investigation of the deaths has been carried out by the authorities. Only low-ranking soldiers were ever arrested before being released. Despite this, international legal efforts managed to bring former deputy public security minister, Inocente Orlando Montano, to trial in Madrid, sentencing him to 133 years imprisonment for his part in plotting the crime. Watch the film “What Lucía Saw” on the Romero Trust website which recounts the harrowing and moving story of Lucía, the sole witness to the massacre. (see page 19)



TWO “GOLDEN ARCHES”



Dr Raymond Perrier Director of the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban was the Romero Trust’s guest speaker at the annual ecumenical service in Saint Martin in the Fields. Here is his contribution:

We have, in the figures of St Oscar Romero of El Salvador and Denis Hurley of Durban South Africa, two ‘Golden Arches’. Two men who used their position as archbishops in the Catholic church to be ‘a voice for the voiceless’. They operated on different sides of the planet; while Hurley was a leading figure in the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, Romero was relatively unknown outside his home country until his death; and while Romero was an archbishop for under three years, Hurley was a bishop for almost sixty years. Yet there are some remarkable similarities between their lives.

Being of similar age, they both studied for the priesthood in Rome in the 1930s. Frustratingly we cannot prove that they ever met, though Hurley in his memoirs

assumes that they must have attended the same lectures. What we do know is that they had a shared experience of seeing the rise of fascism in Italy and then the conflicted response of the Church in the face of political intimidation. They both spent part of their lives training future priests – really quite bookish men who were unlikely revolutionaries. The appointment of each of them to high office in the Church was surprising, though for different reasons: Romero was chosen because he was the quiet man who had been a rural bishop and, it was thought, would not rock the boat; Hurley, when he was appointed in 1947, was absurdly young: in fact, at 31 he was the youngest bishop in the entire Catholic world.

But once they were in charge of dioceses, both had the experience of being conscientised by their own people and most especially by the poor and marginalised. Romero broke the conventions of the strictly classist Salvadoran society by mixing with peasants and listening to their experiences. There are moving photos on the Romero Trust website of him walking the streets, or sharing a meal

with ordinary families, to connect with the lives of his people.



Hurley broke the even stricter laws of Apartheid South Africa by reaching out to citizens of all colours and hearing at first-hand what injustices and daily humiliations they faced. Hurley also broke the equally strict conventions of his Church at the time by listening to and empowering lay people, women, Christians of other denominations and people of other faiths.

By walking alongside their people, these bishops learnt about the exclusions, oppression and violence that was happening in their countries and that so many other leaders – political and religious – chose to ignore. They thus both became icons in the struggle against injustice having the courage to use the platform they had to speak out in a divided society. And what they said was

often not what people wanted to hear. Of course, that deafness is still true today and we just sang Hurley's own words in the hymn: "We humbly ask your pardon, Lord: the ones who hear are all too few." For their stand against injustice, both archbishops faced intimidation and vilification, a cool reception from members of their church, from their fellow bishops and even from Rome, and warnings from their governments of legal actions and death threats. Romero of course did not survive these. He was assassinated while saying Mass almost exactly 44 years ago on 24 March 1980 spilling his blood at the Offertory in the supreme image of martyrdom. Hurley was spared such violence and lived to see the transition to a democratic South Africa; he died 20 years ago, in his 90th year.

In both these men we see a prophetic stance but importantly it is a prophetic stance that is rooted in prayer and in Scripture. There is a lovely story told of a group of young revolutionary-minded trainee priests in San Salvador, creeping out of the seminary to campaign on the streets, and passing an old priest who was on his knees praying in the chapel.

They mocked him wondering why he could not be more like their great hero the activist Archbishop Romero. And then the old priest stood up and turned around and it was indeed Archbishop Romero.

Through all their actions, Romero and Hurley were doing no more – and no less – than Jesus proclaims in his first public sermon as recounted in Luke chapter 4. Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth, takes out the scroll and reads from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me." Hurley chose as his episcopal motto a phrase from 2 Corinthians which we have just heard read: "Where the Spirit is, there is Freedom". And it is in the power of that anointing by the Spirit that Hurley and Romero find freedom and were able to show others the way to freedom. It is the freedom to preach good news to the poor, to liberate captives, to open the eyes of the blind, to bind up the broken hearted.

Both Hurley and Romero used their pulpits, and used the media available to them, to preach good news to the people of their own countries. Both men also benefited hugely in their ministry from the support of CAFOD and Christian Aid to

make sure that the truth of what was happening was heard further afield. As we heard from Romero's words earlier: "It is not enough to demand justice. The civilisation of love also demands truth...and truth is what is lacking in our situation...When the truth is spoken it gives offence, and the voices that speak the truth are silenced."

Romero was silenced by his assassination but, as he had predicted: "they may kill an archbishop, but I will rise again in the Salvadoran people". Hurley was also fearless in witnessing to the truth, often standing on his own outside Durban City Hall holding a placard and daring the authorities to arrest him. He was also supremely creative in how he could use the power of religious symbols to tell the truth to the world. Let me give one example.

At the height of the state of emergency, in March 1985, a group of anti-Apartheid activists had been detained without charge in the central prison in Durban and Hurley wanted to show solidarity with them. Strictly speaking it was illegal for him even to mention that they were detained, let alone organise any kind of public demonstration. His great

lieutenant, a layman called Paddy Kearney, came to Hurley with an idea. "Is it not, your Grace, an ancient tradition of the church that a bishop should be able to visit his congregants on Good Friday?". "Is it?" asked Hurley; "well," Paddy replied, "it is an ancient tradition: who knows?"



So, Hurley went to the Chief of Police and explained this ancient tradition to him and the Chief of Police, a loyal member of the Dutch Reformed Church, felt he could not refuse. But then Hurley explained that, since not all the detainees were Catholic, the Anglican bishop and the Methodist and the rest should also be allowed to visit the prison. And so, at dawn on Good Friday, Hurley led a group of fellow Christian leaders into the jail so that they could pray with the detainees; meanwhile a group of other Christians who turned up at the same time stood in a circle around the prison and sang

hymns so the prisoners would know they were not forgotten. And then they all walked away in complete silence, so they did not break the rules on public protests. This was not a protest but a prayer service – a prayerful and prophetic witness – that comforted the afflicted inside the prison and afflicted the comfortable forces of the Apartheid regime. That tradition of a silent ecumenical walk of witness at dawn on Good Friday continues to this day and we will be marking it in central Durban in two weeks' time.

The ecumenical nature of that event is worth noting in this wonderful ecumenical service. We should remember that Romero was honoured by Westminster Abbey many years before he was canonised by Rome. Long before it was encouraged, or even allowed, for Catholics to mix with 'our separated brothers and sisters', Hurley was reaching out to Christians of other denominations and indeed to people of other faiths since Durban has sizeable Muslim and Hindu communities. One of his great collaborators was Ela Gandhi, grand-daughter of the Mahatma. I am proud to say that the Denis Hurley Centre

in Durban is located between the Catholic Cathedral, the largest mosque and the site of Mahatma Gandhi's law office. We are, as far we know, the only building in the world named after a Catholic archbishop which houses a halal kitchen so we can work together with all faiths to feed the poor.

If Isaiah calls us to bind up the broken-hearted, then every act of ecumenical or interfaith collaboration is an opportunity to bind up the broken heart of the one God who created us all.

Romero did not live to see liberation in El Salvador – it came after his death. But he also did not live to see how that liberation would later be squandered by politicians who once fought for the poor and now ignore their plight and feather their own nests. Hurley did live to see liberation with South Africa's first democratic elections 30 years ago in 1994 – that was a moment celebrated especially here in Trafalgar Square where for so many years there had been a valiant protest outside South Africa House next door to us. But Hurley died before the pot of gold in the rainbow nation was found to be empty – stolen by members of a party that claimed to be the

liberators or sold by businesses and political leaders to the highest bidder.

Romero and Hurley might have hoped that their successors as religious leaders in El Salvador or South Africa (or even here in Britain) would have continued the fight against injustice with the same vigour. And some of them do; but by no means all. Can we put our hands on our hearts and say that we have – to use Hurley’s words from 1960 – ‘a true social apostolate, a systematic effort to concentrate the energies of divine light and life on the failings of human conduct’?

Because, of course, the anointing that Jesus mentions in Luke 4 is not just for him or for Romero and Hurley. Each one of us by our baptism has been anointed; the Spirit of the Lord is on each one of us and the manifesto of Isaiah should be the manifesto of all our lives. So, what does this mean for us sitting here today?

64 years ago, Hurley reminded the Church that in a bitterly divided community, its mission is one of salvation. And that while we can hope to draw on the strength of God, we have to constantly be aware of – and challenge – the weakness of humans, starting with

our own frailty. In El Salvador and in South Africa today the work of bringing good news to the poor is far from over.



I would suggest that the same is true of this bitterly divided nation which looks here to Trafalgar Square, as the epicentre for celebration and for

protest. The over-riding need for that good news is something I see every day in central Durban at the Denis Hurley Centre. It is a place where people of all faiths come together to serve the homeless, refugees, drug users, the unemployed – the captives of our economic system who are looking to be liberated. So many wonderful parallels to the work of St Martin in the Fields. Occasionally, especially when there is an election coming up, government with its massive resources does remember that these are the poor and marginalised whom Hurley and others fought valiantly to liberate from Apartheid. But more often than not, the poor are forgotten by the South African government because (to use Hurley’s words) of “the slowness

or the failure or the refusal of humans to respond to the call of God.”

In the face of increasing injustice and indifference – in El Salvador, in South Africa or here in Britain – one temptation for people of faith is to retreat. But as Romero put it: “To pray and wait for God to do something is not holiness, it is laziness.” We are all anointed and called to constantly find ways, small and large, to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted and to open the eyes of the blind – starting with opening our own eyes and then encouraging others to see what they would rather ignore.

Another temptation is to be committed to act but then to wait for the perfect moment. In Luke 4 we are told of the year of the Lord’s favour – that sounds like a great time to act and until then we should just wait, shouldn’t we? Clearly, Romero did not live to see the year of the Lord’s favour: but he did what he could when he could and entrusted the rest to God: accepting that he was a worker not the master builder. In South Africa with the elections 30 years ago it looked as if we had reached that Kairos moment – the year of the Lord’s favour. But of course, 1994 was just the start of another

mountain and at the Denis Hurley Centre we are very aware that we still have a long way to climb. The example of the lives of Romero and Hurley remind of what Jesus tells us in Luke 4: there is no excuse for waiting: for now is the acceptable time, now is the day of the Lord’s salvation.

Archbishop Welby in El Salvador

In June the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, visited El Salvador during a trip to Central America. It was the first time Archbishop Justin had officially visited the country to focus on Anglican and ecumenical relationships, as well as to learn about the ongoing work by the Church to tackle climate change.



Archbishop in Romero’s house with Carmelite Sister Rubi and Ambassador David Lelliott

On day one in the capital San Salvador, the Archbishop took part in a pilgrimage of sites of significance to Saint Oscar Romero beginning with a visit to the Divine Providence Hospital where Romero lived and the chapel where he was assassinated. From there, the group visited his small house and then to the Cathedral to visit the crypt where he is buried.

Speaking afterwards, Archbishop Justin said: "I'm moved beyond words. Oscar Romero had preached extraordinarily powerfully the day before his death, asking the government, begging the government, commanding the government, to cease killing and murdering. In doing so he signed his death warrant. Because the next day as he was celebrating Mass a car drew up outside the open door of the chapel and they shot him. He is an inspiration, a deeply Christian man who loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of that, loved the poor and loved his fellow human beings. And for that he gave his life."

In the afternoon, the delegation visited the University of Central America where they learned about the murder of the six Jesuit Priests and two women at the

university on 16th November 1989, during the Salvadorean Civil War.



With Fr Rodolfo Cardenal, Director of the Romero Centre at the UCA

On his second day in El Salvador, Archbishop Justin preached and presided at a Eucharist in El Maizal, where he planted the first tree in the Anglican Communion Forest in Central America.



The Communion Forest was launched at the Lambeth Conference in 2022 and is

part of the Anglican Communion's efforts to join together in tree growing and ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration across the world. Blessing the forest and welcoming this important environmental project, the Archbishop echoed the original commitment and promise behind the initiative: "To plant is to hope, To restore is to heal, To protect is to love."

Archbishop Justin also visited the Anglican human rights charity, Cristosal, where he heard the devastating testimonies of three women impacted in different ways. Cristosal focuses on victim advocacy, community development and peacebuilding. It comes alongside victims, providing them with practical assistance and protection when they need it most.



Saint Romero's Champion Monsignor Rafael Urrutia

24th March 2025 is the 45th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Romero. For this special occasion our invited guest for the Romero Week events next March is the Chancellor of San Salvador Archdiocese, Monsignor Rafael Urrutia, who was also the Diocesan Postulator for the cause of canonisation of Archbishop Romero.



Mgr. Urrutia, pictured here, was ordained by Archbishop Romero and they worked closely until Saint Romero

was murdered. In this extract from "Memories in Mosaic", he tells of how Romero used to prepare his famous weekly homilies:

"It was a collective effort, with participation every step of the way. Monseñor Romero always planned out his homilies with a group of people, in community. The applause from the

listening congregation each Sunday was the affirmation that completed the circuit. Every week he met for several hours with a team of priests and laypeople to reflect on the situation in the country, and afterwards he would put all of that reflection into his homilies. That was one of the keys to his sermons.

The other key was prayer. The meeting would end, he'd say goodbye to the group and then he'd sit down to organise his ideas and prepare himself. I'm a witness, having seen him on more than one occasion in his room, on his knees, from 10.00 on Saturday night to 4.00 in the morning on Sunday, preparing his homily. He would sleep a little while and then be at the Cathedral by 8.00.

*He never wrote down his homilies. Never. It seemed like he did, but he didn't. The most he ever took to the Cathedral was an outline, a letter-sized sheet of paper with two or three ideas written down. It makes me laugh when someone who never knew Monseñor Romero says that other people used to write his sermons. **If anyone wrote them, it was the Holy Spirit!***

Due to his devotion and commitment to Romero, Monsignor Urrutia, as part of his

duties for the diocese, was appointed the postulator for the cause of beatification of the four martyrs, Blesseds Rutilio Grande, Manuel Solórzano, Nelson Lemus and Cosme Spessotto who were proclaimed in January 2022.

In August 2023 the Vatican announced the opening of the cause for beatification of a further, more numerous group of martyrs. Whilst the full list of those has not yet been published, it is known that it includes the six Jesuit priests and the two women from the UCA as well as the four religious women from the USA assassinated by the army in 1980. Once again Mgr. Urrutia is the man leading the process from San Salvador.



Tribute to the Martyrs of the UCA

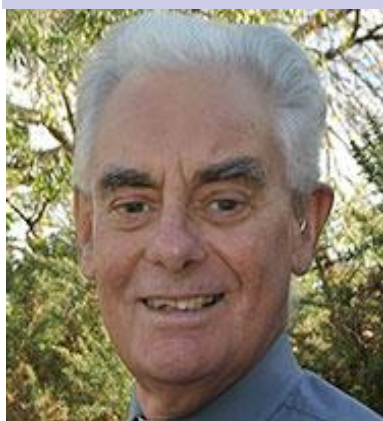
Besides his ordination by Romero, as a youth Mgr. Urrutia was mentored by Rutilio Grande at the seminary in San Salvador. For many years he worked on advancing the sainthood causes for both

men even though he faced many moments of "discouragement".

"For El Salvador, this is a blessing from God," he said about the canonisation of Romero and the developments of the sainthood cause for Father Grande. *"Now it's up to all Salvadoreans to find a way toward conversion that will lead to peace for our troubled nation, a peace both men yearned for. They're calling us to a conversion, to look toward God's gaze and change this society".*

We could hope for no better guest to celebrate with us the 45th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Oscar.

Windswept Pilgrims of Hope



Romero Trustee, Fr Jim O'Keefe, led the joint CAFOD - Romero Trust Pilgrimage to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne over the summer. Born and brought up just a few miles from Holy Island, here Fr Jim reminds us of the origins and significance of the annual pilgrimage

It was a wet, a very wet, Saturday in July when 200 people gathered on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne to give thanks to

God for CAFOD and St Oscar Romero. CAFOD'S headquarters in London is called 'Romero House', St Oscar is an inspiration to an increasing number of people because of his compassion, courage, prophetic witness and holiness. His murder by a death squad on 24th March 1980 while he celebrated mass in the hospital chapel across the road from his small bungalow, resonated around the world. He was canonised, along with Pope Paul VI and four others, on October 14, 2018.

CAFOD grew out of a project initiated by a small group of Catholic women in 1960. They wanted to raise funds for a 'mother and baby clinic' in Dominica, so they organised a *Family Fast Day* with the money saved from not buying food for themselves to be sent to the project. They raised just over £6000. In 1962 *Family Fast Day* became CAFOD. Last year CAFOD'S revenue was almost £68 million.

There are some hardy Catholic and other Christian friends around, so Pilgrims came from London, Preston, Liverpool, Nottingham, Scotland and the dioceses of Middlesbrough and Hexham and Newcastle. Bishop Stephen Wright,

bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, celebrated mass with them all in the Anglican Church of St Mary. We have celebrated mass in St Mary's for many years, for 3 reasons. It means we're kept dry on our inclement summer Saturdays, the local Catholic church dedicated to St Aidan is too small for the group, and it is a long-standing Ecumenical partnership reflecting the relationship between worshipping communities on the Island. I suspect there would have been prayers uttered in silence for the England football team about to take on Spain in Berlin the following evening. I'm certain prayers would have been said in Spain for their team – I'm not getting into whose side God was on! I suspect, however, that many of those praying, were not aware that one of the stalwarts of the many conquering Lionesses team, Lucy Bronze, was brought up on Holy Island. Before we gathered to celebrate mass, 50 of us followed the 'Pilgrims' Way' from the mainland of Northumberland to the Island itself. It's a 3 mile walk and can only be done in bare feet if you really want to be a proper Pilgrim. In places you can sink up to your knees in jet black mud. The real experts reckon this is

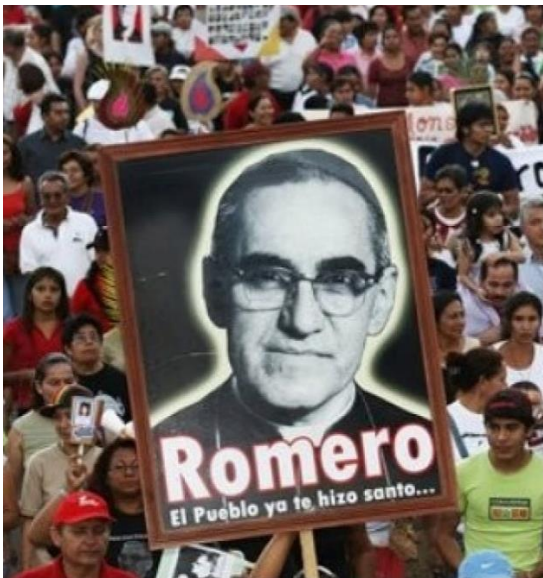
equivalent to an extremely expensive spa treatment on the shores of the Dead Sea. Others find it a pain. You also have the unequalled opportunity to walk on upturned shells and other bits of detritus left by the leaving tide. Both the Pilgrims' Way and the metalled Causeway have a cabin on stilts in which people can, and do, take refuge when caught out by the incoming tide. The tide on Holy Island doesn't so much 'come in' as 'come up' from the sand below, and it does so very quickly.



We stop and pray on four occasions during the Walk. We reflected on being 'Pilgrims of Hope' – the theme of the 2025 Holy Year, as well as quotes from St Oscar and paragraphs from the 1996 Bishops' Conference Document, 'The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching'. All of this was prepared before the Prime Minister

announced there would be a General Election in July – so some of the phrasing was ever so slightly out of date...

But there are many of Romero's words that will never be out of date: *This is the hope that inspires us as Christians. We know that every effort to improve society, especially when injustice and sin are so widespread, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us... We have the assurance that we will never fail in all the work we do on earth if we infuse it with Christian hope.*



On another occasion St Oscar Romero said: *What a beautiful hope we have! Even when the work we do now seems to be against the grain, even when our preaching seems to be ploughing the sea, we know that someday we'll find it*

producing much fruit of conversion and holiness.

In his Homily, Bishop Stephen invited us all to remember that when we come together, we do so in: 'Thanksgiving, faithfulness and solidarity with the poor'. Among the poor he included those who suffer as a result of war, human rights abuses and all those suffering from criminal and political oppression.

He noted that in the prophet Isaiah we're 'all called to be missionaries – 'Send me'! The Angel touches the tongues of all of us, urging us to act and speak in a way that 'sets people free'. Our lips are to speak out on behalf of the poor, the oppressed and those with no voice.

Bishop Stephen concluded by saying that we are to see Jesus in the presence of the poor – echoing the words of St Oscar Romero: *'This preference for the poor does not mean an unfair discrimination between various classes of society. It is an invitation to all regardless of class, to take up the cause of the poor as if they were accepting and taking up their own cause, the cause of Christ himself. What you did for the least of my brothers you did for me.'*

This Pilgrimage is a well-established event. It began over 40 years ago in Hexham and Newcastle diocese. It is only over the last 3 years that it has been joined by the Archbishop Romero Trust – but such a great ‘coming together’, given St Oscar’s inspiration for CAFOD. It is remarkable that whatever the weather, people gather to talk to each other, laugh/complain about the weather, share stories, renew friendships and pray. If you’ve never joined us, you don’t know what you’re missing.

If you want to join us, simply put Saturday 13th September in your diary for next year, make a weekend of it, be inspired by the whole prayerful event.

**Holy Island Pilgrimage
13th September 2025
More details to be announced**



Statue of St Aidan on Holy Island

Book Review - The Song of the Poor Tommy Greenan



Soon to be published is this searingly moving new book set during the civil war in El Salvador. Friend of Tommy (above), Clare Dixon, reviews this rich compilation of his diary reflections

In March 2010, the Archbishop Romero Trust’s guest speaker for the annual Romero Lecture tour events was Tommy Greenan, a theologian and passionate scholar of Oscar Romero.

In 2020 Tommy Greenan died at the tragically young age of 64 in his home diocese of St Andrew’s and Edinburgh, leaving a treasure trove of writings, many of them unpublished, alongside his academic theological books on Oscar Romero’s pastoral thought and practice.

When he was 30, as a young priest deeply inspired by the example of Oscar Romero, Tommy travelled in 1986 as a missionary to El Salvador at the height of the civil war to dedicate his life to the service of the poorest and oppressed.

He was sent to work pastorally in Chalatenango, one of the most intense arenas of the conflict, a land where day labourers had toiled for decades in coffee plantations for starvation wages. A land where bombings, death-squads and military attacks blighted the lives of the poor, landless and exploited farm-workers. A land where a US-funded army war machine fought against a straggling band of young guerrilla fighters, armed with only shotguns, mainly home-made weapons and dreams of social justice.

Tommy submerged himself in the pastoral theology of Romero and in the lives of his parishioners – God’s poor - blending his emotions and experiences into a passionate and loving litany of snapshots of the lives of the communities with whom he shared his life.

His writings transport us to the reality of the daily lives, pains and joys of those for whom Saint Romero sacrificed his life. The book is a delight to read, with

hundreds of short vignettes granting a window into a world that few of us have the chance to experience.

In a moving testament, Tommy’s writing has an elegiac quality. His book is a tender, loving, simple, passionate lament which brings to life the mundane, the everyday, the dramatic and the tragic. They make you laugh and make you cry almost simultaneously. We can feel Tommy’s anguish for the “crucified people” but his are not words of pity but of admiration and awe for the people’s generosity and resilience. They are, in the words of Ignacio Ellacuría, (the vice-chancellor of the UCA Jesuit University, murdered in 1989),

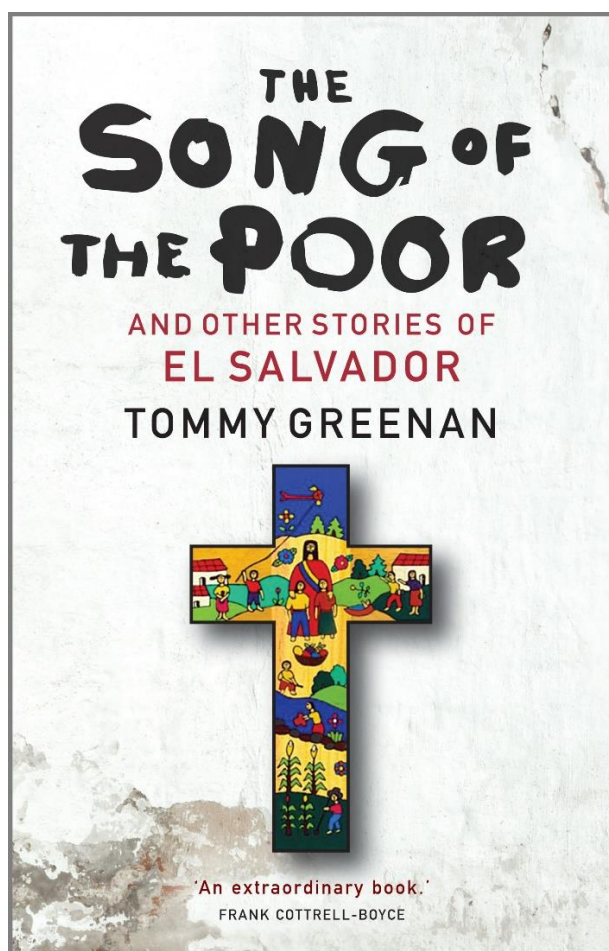
“The poor **with** spirit”.

In an introductory tribute to Tommy, Fr Henry McLoughlin, who shared many years working together with him in El Salvador, quotes from Tommy’s previous book “Archbishop Romero’s Homilies: A Theological and Pastoral Analysis” where Tommy wrote:

“The key to Romero is in his option for the poor. Their affliction tore open his heart . . . He was moved by entering into direct contact with the poor and came out bravely in their defence. He had

compassion for them . . . With metaphors and popular idiom within the reach of the most humble . . . his theology was directed to the poor themselves, for the most part unable to read and write, as his privileged recipients”.

As Henry says: “Here Tommy is writing of Romero, but he is also revealing himself.”



**Pre-publication orders from
Hardback 208pp Price £19.99
DLT website click on link below**

**[The Song of the Poor
dartonlongmantodd.co.uk](http://dartonlongmantodd.co.uk)**

An Emmaus Walk

*Extract from “The Song of the Poor”
Tommy Greenan*

It was early morning and I walked glumly towards San Francisco Morazán from San Rafael, a distance of four kilometres, taking over an hour to complete. On the road ahead old Don Félix hobbled at a tortoise’s pace. I drew nearer, but he did not see me, his eyesight, like himself, was very poor. Félix walked with his old straw hat doffed to his chest, making the sign of the cross several times, whispering sotto voce. Maybe he was afraid. Fear impregnates the fibre of life in El Salvador. The vulnerable and defenceless often fall prey to military brutality with the soldiers accusing them of subversive activity.

Meeting old Félix deep in prayer on a lonely road was a moving experience. Maybe it could be described as being an experience akin to that undergone by the two disciples whom the death-defeating Christ accompanied along the Emmaus road. Meeting the vulnerable and weak Félix was for me a religious experience. I felt enlightened and moved by it. A bit like

the frog that had been transformed into a prince. We came face to face and he peered at me. I greeted him, he recognised my voice, and his face lit up into a smile. 'You're saying your prayers, Don Félix?' He nodded assent. 'You're an example to us all. I won't disturb you further.' I moved on.

The next morning, after the Sunday Eucharist, Félix approached and handed me a ten-centavo coin. 'That's for the Blessed Sacrament,' he said with a smile. Obviously, he had made a promise to the Christ of the Eucharist to keep him safe on his journey and this was the fulfilment of his promise.

This ten centavos coin (equivalent to one penny sterling) has taken on a value beyond money. It is no longer ordinary currency. This particular coin has become a sacrament of the poor, a sign of simplicity, generosity and sacrifice. I intend to carry it with me as a sign of Christ, the Bread of Life.



NOW AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE "WHAT LUCÍA SAW"



"What Lucía Saw" recounts the fateful story of Lucía Cerna, the sole witness to the November 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests and two women by a U.S.-trained death squad at the residence of the UCA Jesuit University in San Salvador.

This feature film is the real-life true story of Lucía and her husband Jorge, who, with the help of the church and Spanish and French diplomats, are spirited out of the country to Miami, where they hope to find safe haven. Once in the U.S., however, they fall into the clutches of the FBI and a Salvadoran military colonel, who interrogate the couple in an effort to discredit Lucia's testimony. A gripping and chilling tale of an attempted cover-up of the UCA massacre. **Highly recommended!**

ROMERO TRUST PILGRIMAGE TO EL SALVADOR NOVEMBER 2025



The view of the San Salvador volcano from the Loyola Centre pilgrimage accommodation.

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE 2025 PILGRIMAGE TO EL SALVADOR

Since 2010 the Romero Trust has organised four pilgrimage tours to El Salvador, each with some thirty participants: admirers of Romero from UK, Ireland, USA, Australia, Kenya, DRC and New Zealand. Each visit has been a unique and unforgettable experience for all the pilgrims. We travel in the steps of Saint Oscar Romero, learning about the hopes, the sufferings and the joys of the people of El Salvador who inspired Saint Oscar to say, **“With these people it is easy to be a good pastor”**.



The Chapel of Divine Providence, site of the martyrdom of Saint Oscar Romero

In November 2025, to coincide with the 36th anniversary of the UCA martyrs, we hope to organise a further 11-day visit to this beautiful and inspiring land and to meet the people for whom St Oscar Romero and so many martyrs offered their lives. This will be a unique and life-changing opportunity to get close to the lives of the Salvadorean people and their martyrs, accompanied by the Romero Trust’s co-chairs, Julian Filochowski, a friend of Saint Romero, and Clare Dixon, who worked closely with the Jesuits of the UCA. The tour will be arranged by expert pilgrimage organiser Anthony Coles.

**PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON
AS YOU CAN TO MAKE SURE THE
PILGRIMAGE CAN GO AHEAD**

The cost, covering accommodation, local travel and all meals will be around £1,150 excluding flights (approx. £800).

If you are interested in joining the pilgrimage please contact: romerotrust@gmail.com or Anthony Coles: 020 7431 3414
Email: arctc@btinternet.com



Saint Romero's tomb in the Cathedral

Scenes from the Romero Pilgrimage



Centro Loyola – Our home from home



Ciudad Barrios - Romero's birthplace



Divine Providence Chapel



El Mozote – Martyrs' Monument

El Salvador Update

National elections



With great pomp and circumstance reminiscent of a Ruritanian coronation, on 3rd June President Nayib Bukele was inaugurated to an unconstitutional second term of office. His swearing in was not a celebration of democracy, but the celebration of an unquestioned ruler. All of the symbolism of the day was about the power and authority of El Salvador's strongman. There was the honour guard in military dress uniforms, wearing capes while holding automatic weapons.

In his Trumpian address to the crowds in the city centre's Plaza Barrios, Bukele offered no specifics of plans for the country over the next five years, other

than insisting on the people's unquestioning loyalty.

Bukele invoked divine providence on his project for the nation, stating "We achieved the unimaginable and we have done it here, but not with our strength or our intelligence, but only with the glory of God and the wisdom of God."

Bukele concluded his lengthy speech by asking those gathered to raise their hand and repeat: "We swear to defend unconditionally our national project, following it to the letter, each of the steps, without complaining...We swear to never listen to the enemies of the people."

Continuing State of Exception

Meanwhile, August became the 29th month under the State of Exception, with the government reporting over 81,000 taken prisoner under the emergency measure. Last week the Anglican church-linked human rights group, Cristosal, released a 126-page report titled "Silence is not an option" which reviews torture, deaths, and the absence of justice under the ongoing State of Exception. The new report is an important, and damning, account of what the Bukele government has been willing

to do in its war to exterminate the gangs. Among the findings of the report regarding prison deaths:

Cristosal could verify the deaths of 261 adults and four children in prison.

Two of the four children were living with their incarcerated mothers when they became ill and died, two were unborn, lost in the final weeks of pregnancy.

176 children have been left orphaned as a result of parents dying in the prisons

At least 88 deaths in prisons showed evidence that they were from violence

At least 45 persons died as a result of illnesses contracted while in prison.

Only 24 of 261 deaths were persons who had gang-related tattoos on their bodies.

Romero Pilgrimage in El Salvador



Cardinal Rosa Chávez led the seventh pilgrimage in honour of its first saint and martyr, Óscar Arnulfo Romero, from 1 to

3 August. More than 700 participants travelled 160 km from San Salvador to Ciudad Barrios, Romero's birthplace. The first pilgrimage was held in 2017 to celebrate the centenary of St Oscar's birth. This year the pilgrimage's theme was: '500 years of encounter with Christ' to coincide with 500 years of the country's evangelisation.

A Small Victory for Justice

In the last edition of Romero News we reported on the unfounded imprisonment of José Santos Alfaro Ayala, a well-known community leader in Guarjila.



Santos hugs his elderly mother on his release from prison

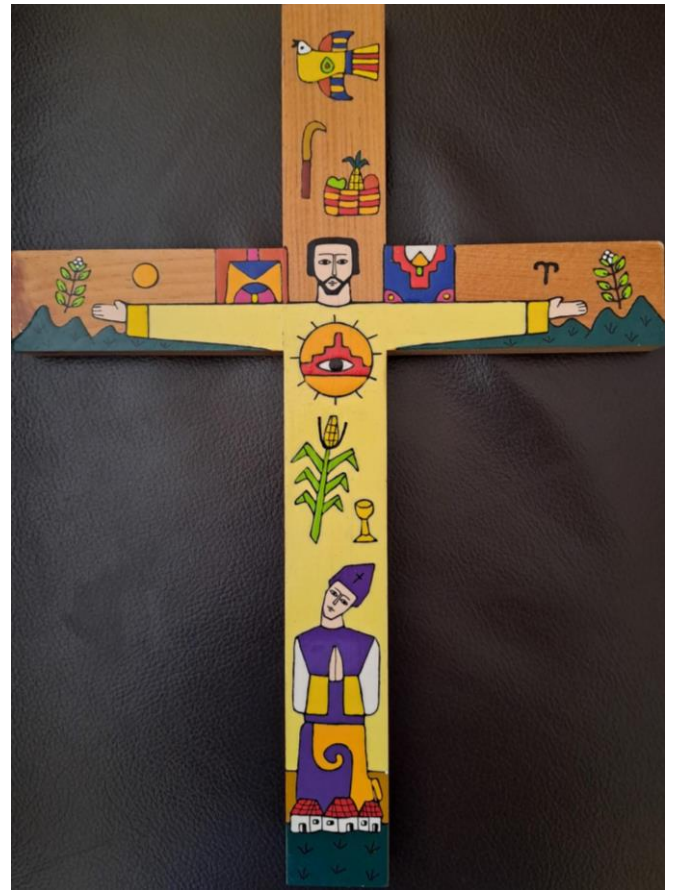
Santos was released without charge in April and the Guarjila community organized a thanksgiving Mass celebrated by local Bishop Oswaldo Escobar Aguilar of the Diocese of

Chalatenango, who celebrated the Mass in a field. "God did with Santos what he did with the apostles on many occasions, liberating them from prisons." Santos said that without his community of faith, "who put their hands in the fire" for him, writing letters, giving testimony of his character, and most important, praying for him, he would not have been freed. He wanted to be an example for them, not of hate, but of love and faith.

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 and costs **£5 or 3 for £12 (+ p&p)**
 The large double-sided cross with a stand measures 12 inches and costs **£15 (+ p&p)**



Front of Cross represents Christ and Romero



Reverse of cross represents the People of God

MARTYRS OF EL SALVADOR PRAYER CARDS

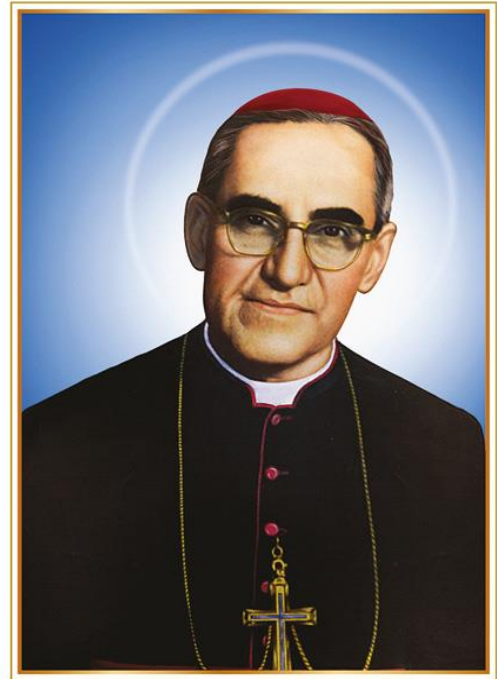


The Romero Trust has produced prayer cards of this beautiful portrait of Rutilio Grande and his companions, Manuel Solórzano and Nelson Lemus, by Salvadorean artist Cristián Lopez.

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 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*

Find all the videos on:

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

CARDS, BOOKS AND RESOURCES

All available from

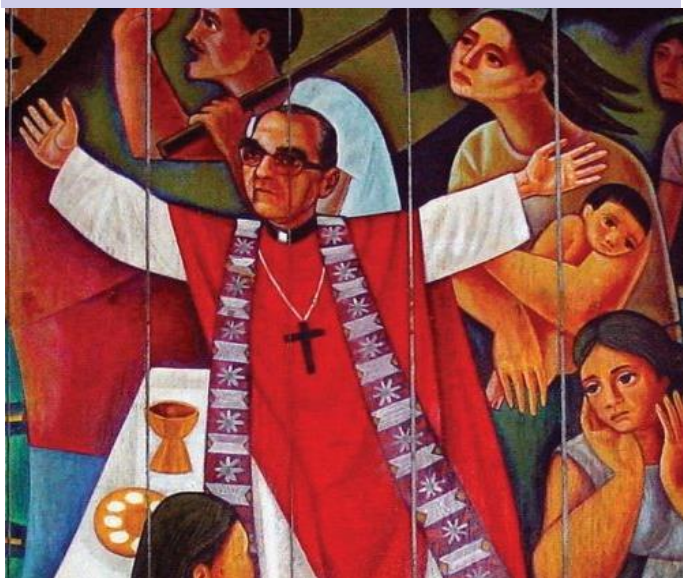
romerotrust@gmail.com

or by post

Archbishop Romero Trust

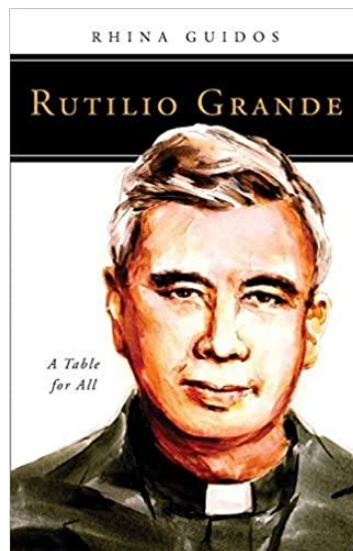
PO Box 70227

London E9 9BR



BOOK OFFERS

'Rutilio Grande - A Table for All' by



Rhina Guidos.

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

£10 (incl. p&p)

The Life, Passion and Death of the Jesuit Rutilio Grande 482 pages

This is **THE definitive** biography of

Rutilio by his

colleague,

historian and

theologian

Rodolfo

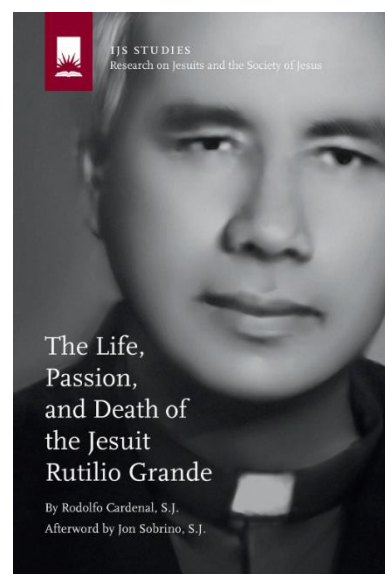
Cardenal SJ.

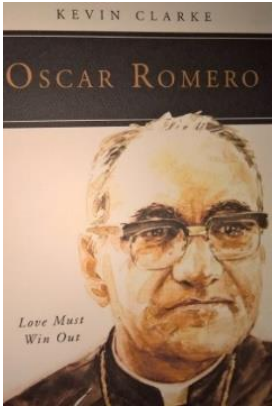
With an after -

word essay by

Jon Sobrino SJ.

£18 (incl. p&p)

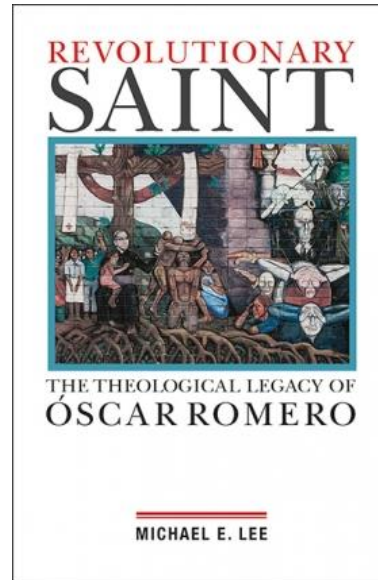




Oscar Romero – Love Must Win Out by Kevin Clarke. An excellent and very readable short introduction to the life and times of

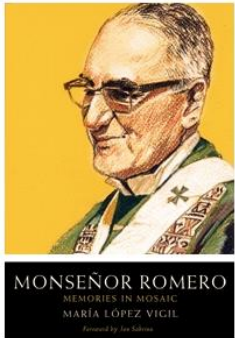
Archbishop Romero.

£10 (incl. p&p).



Revolutionary Saint – The theological Legacy of Oscar Romero Michael E. Lee. Orbis Books. Highly recommended!

Available in bookshops at £20: from the Romero Trust at the special price: **£16 (incl. p&p)**



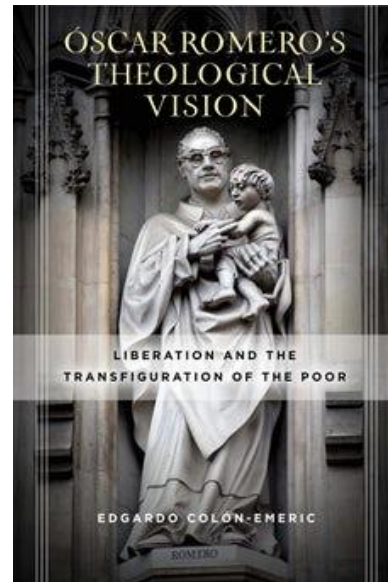
Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic Romero remembered by the people who worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him

compiled by María López Vigil.

Arguably the best book on Romero. Unput-downable. Highly recommended.

£17 (incl. p&p)

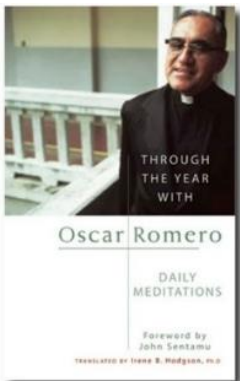
Oscar Romero's Theological Vision by Edgardo Colón-Emeric:



Throughout this remarkable book the author takes us ever deeper into the theological development of the martyr bishop Saint

Oscar Romero.

Special price of **£25 (incl p& p)**



Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations Powerful and moving selections from Saint Oscar Romero's homilies. **£10 (incl p&p)**

FRIENDS OF ROMERO

Join us as a 'Friend of Romero'. Your support will help the Archbishop Romero Trust's work 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 put on events like Romero Week and the Romero Lecture.

The Trust's reserves are modest, and we rely entirely 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 website:

www.romerotrust.org.uk/support

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

SPECIAL REQUEST

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

romerotrust@gmail.com

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Trustees: Julian Filochowski, Stephen Davies, Clare Dixon, Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Rev Richard Carter, Frank Turner SJ, Jan Graffius, Sr. Eileen McLoughlin SHJM, Rev Jim O'Keefe, Treasurer: Mike Egan, Minutes Secretary: David Skidmore, Membership Secretary: Jenny Rossiter, Romero News Editor: Clare Dixon

Patrons: Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop Leo Cushley, Emeritus Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Lord Rowan Williams, Lord John Sentamu, Sister Maria Julia García, Mons Rafael Urrutia, Rev Dr John Hall

Picture credits and acknowledgements:

Front cover: UCA
Archbishop Justin Welby
Fernando Llort
Cerezo Barredo
Canonisation Office – San Salvador
CNS, NCR, ICN
El Salvador Perspective