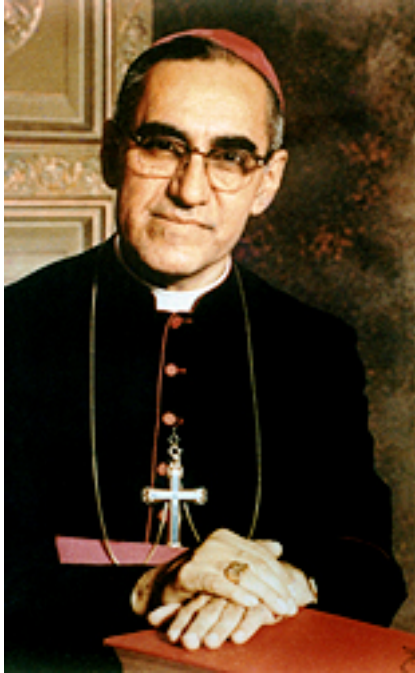


Óscar Romero (1917-1980), bishop of San Salvador, and all the martyrs of El Salvador

Observed 24 March



Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez is for many a primary image of a modern martyr and a source of courage and inspiration for sacrificial service in our own time. Romero showed an early love for Christ and his church, as well as extraordinary aptitude in his studies. After completing the very limited public schooling available, he had private tutors and then engaged in advanced study in Rome, where he was ordained a priest in 1942. His studies were cut short by the dangers of life under Mussolini. Once home in El Salvador, he worked faithfully in various parishes, the seminary, and the diocesan newspaper. Many considered him too conservative, too aligned with old values and structures to be helpful in the growing commitment to liberation theology with its devotion to the cause of the poor and oppressed. However, when his good friend and fellow priest, Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande, was killed because of his work among the poor, Romero, now himself a bishop decided that he must devote his life to the same ‘little ones’”. He began speaking openly in opposition to rampant assassinations, abuse of the poor, inadequate

education, and other injustices in his society. His voice was heard internationally and he had the opportunity to explain his inability to support the oppressive government to Pope John Paul II. When the oppressive government was ousted by an even more oppressive military junta, Romero appealed to President Jimmy Carter to stop military support of the dangerous group. He called the world’s attention to the severe attacks on churches and other institutions and on nuns and priests seeking to care for the poor and needy. Father Romero was assassinated by a death squad while celebrating the Eucharist in a hospital chapel on March 24, 1980. His blood mixed with the blood of Christ spilled from the chalice across the altar linens. Thousands came to the funeral of this servant of Christ and his people, only to be fired on by government snipers. Between thirty and fifty people were killed. Romero remains an inspiration to all who seek to follow the path of Christ in service to their fellows, regardless of personal danger. He is remembered in this feast along with the many other servants of Christ who died at the hands of vicious officials during the late 20th century.

Lessons Isaiah 2:5-7; Psalm 31:15-24; Revelation 7:13-17; John 12:23-32

Collect Almighty God, you called your servant Oscar Romero to be a voice for the voiceless poor, and to give his life as a seed of freedom and a sign of hope: Grant that, inspired by his sacrifice and the example of the martyrs of El Salvador, we may without fear or favor witness to your Word who abides, your Word who is Life, even Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be praise and glory now and for ever. Amen.