

# BLESSED OSCAR ROMERO: a martyr for the faith

**BLESSED OSCAR ROMERO** served as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, El Salvador, from 1977 until he was martyred for his faith in 1980. During that time, political violence, disappearances and human rights violations were widespread.

Many priests and nuns spoke out on behalf of the victims, and many were murdered because of this. Blessed Oscar Romero's friend and fellow priest, Father Rutilio Grande, was killed in 1977 just as Blessed Oscar Romero began serving as archbishop. After Father Grande's murder, Blessed Oscar Romero spoke out even more strongly on behalf of the suffering and marginalized.

Blessed Oscar Romero heard the stories of the poor, and his voice against the violence grew louder and louder. People in villages across the nation tuned in to Blessed Oscar Romero's radio homilies, finding strength and comfort in his words. Each week he would denounce the violence and urge people to live out Christ's Gospel message of peace and love. He used his position of prominence to become what many called the voice of the voiceless.

Blessed Oscar Romero was shot and killed while celebrating Mass on March 24, 1980. He was formally declared a martyr by Pope Francis in February 2015 and beatified in May 2015.

**“[Those] who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere.”**

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2448*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

### What are you willing to risk for your faith?

Blessed Oscar Romero's conversion deepened through his relationship with people who suffered.

- How has your faith been affected by suffering—your own or the suffering of others?
- Do you know someone who has suffered because of injustice or inequality?

Violent oppression persists in communities around the world. It can be easy to feel overwhelmed or helpless, but our faith invites us to stand for the oppressed.

- What's one way you can act on behalf of those who suffer violence?



Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered while celebrating Mass at Hospital Divina Providencia Chapel on March 24, 1980.

*Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS*

## THE CHURCH IN EL SALVADOR TODAY

Thirty-five years later, poor communities in El Salvador face a different kind of violence. Violence has grown in the past decade as street gangs and drug cartels, many tied to the United States, expand their influence. But the Church continues to stand with the poor. Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, works with the Catholic Church in El Salvador to promote peace. We help at-risk youth and their families overcome violence and poverty through life skills, vocational training and job placements. Our program has served more than 6,000 young people.



CRS partner Fe y Alegria provides vocational training to girls and boys in El Salvador. Many come from high-risk communities.

*Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS*



## prayer

Christ Jesus,  
We ask that like Blessed Oscar Romero  
we will not be afraid to risk all that we have  
to follow you,  
to stand with the poor and oppressed.  
May you grant us the same courage you gave  
Blessed Oscar Romero:  
That we will feel what we are afraid to feel  
That we will not be overwhelmed  
by all that needs to be done—  
but that we will follow you,  
And trust that you will walk with us  
on our journey of discipleship,  
wherever it may lead.  
May our walk be one of true solidarity  
As Blessed Oscar Romero's was.  
And in life and death  
May we bear much fruit.  
Amen