



# BEING CHURCH: speaking out with the poor

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A prayer service inspired by the witness of Blessed Oscar Romero

*“A Church that does not join the poor in order to speak out from the side of the poor against the injustices committed against them is not the true Church of Jesus Christ.”*

—*Blessed Oscar Romero*

**faith. action. results.**



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## MATERIALS

- AV equipment and internet access for photo gallery
- Basket
- Bible opened to Luke 4:16-21
- Copies of “Being Church: Speaking Out With the Poor” prayer service for leader and readers
- Items for prayer space: candle, crucifix, world map, image of Blessed Oscar Romero, etc.
- Music for “The Cry of the Poor” (John Foley, SJ, Spirit & Song)
- Reflective music and player/speakers
- Slips of paper and pens or pencils for each participant

## PREPARATION

- Set up a prayer space with the basket, candle, crucifix, Bible, world map and image of Blessed Oscar Romero.
- Invite and prepare cantor to lead “The Cry of the Poor”
- Test and cue reflective music and/or slideshow presentation.
- Select and prepare one leader and four readers.
- Before the prayer service begins, distribute slips of paper and pens to each participant.

## opening prayer

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### LEADER

In the name of the Father, and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit ...

Christ of the margins,

Help us to recognize you in the faces of the  
poorest and most vulnerable people.

Be with us as we gather together and pray  
that your justice will reign throughout the earth.

We pray that we may, in the spirit of Blessed Oscar Romero,  
be courageous enough to speak out on behalf of those who  
face injustice, no matter the cost.

In your name we pray.

Amen

## scripture reading

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### READER ONE

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:

[Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,  
and went according to his custom into the synagogue  
on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed  
a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll  
and found the passage where it was written:

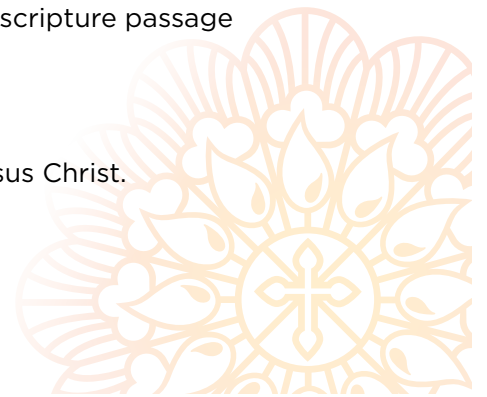
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed  
me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery  
of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to  
proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and  
sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently  
at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage  
is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**RESPONSE:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



## song

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“The Cry of the Poor” (John Foley, SJ, Spirit & Song)

*Note: Invite participants to sing the response.*

## reflection

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### LEADER

Blessed Oscar Romero served as Archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador, a nation in Central America, during a period of violence against the poor, especially rural farmers, or “campesinos.” As the violence intensified, and his friends were being murdered for standing with the poor, he began to speak out. Archbishop Romero became known for using his position to decry the violence and stand up for the oppressed. He was martyred for his faith on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass.

What resonance does Blessed Oscar Romero’s life have in our lives today? He spoke often about injustice. His weekly homilies were broadcast by radio. A month before he died he said, “A Church that does not join the poor in order to speak out from the side of the poor against the injustices committed against them is not the true Church of Jesus Christ.”

In the reading we just heard, Jesus reads the words of the prophet Isaiah that speak of bringing glad tidings to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and setting the oppressed free. He says to those gathered: “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Blessed Oscar Romero’s life reflected the words of the prophet Isaiah, which eventually led to his being martyred. Like Blessed Oscar Romero and the faithful who have come before us, we are invited to continue to fulfill Christ’s call by standing with the oppressed in our communities and around the world.



## READER TWO

We ask God to give us the courage and grace of Blessed Oscar Romero so we may stand with the poor, reach out to the oppressed and embrace those cast aside by society. And so as Christ's disciples, we call upon those saints and holy ones who have helped fulfill the words of Isaiah the prophet. May they be in solidarity with us today. To these invocations, we respond: "**Presente.**"

St. Lawrence of Rome, who declared the poor, the sick, the widow and the orphan to be the true treasure of the Church, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, who looked upon a world of exploitation and indifference and rejected it, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

St. Damien of Molokai, whose solidarity with the leper ran so deep that he ultimately lived and died as one of them, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

St. Frances Cabrini, who tenderly loved the forgotten immigrant, reaching out as a mother from the slums of New York to the dark mines of Colorado, we call on you in solidarity ...

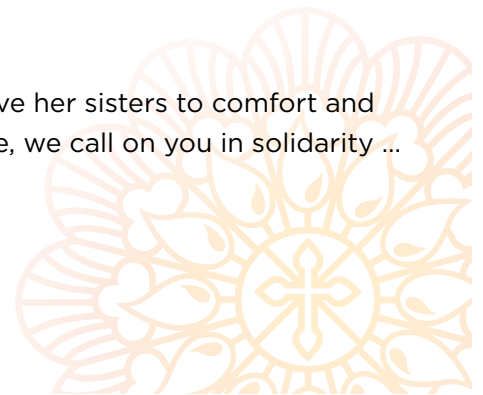
**RESPONSE:** Presente.

St. Maximilian Kolbe, who protected our Jewish brothers and sisters during World War II and died in a concentration camp so they might live, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who drove her sisters to comfort and affirm the dignity of those cast aside, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.



Dorothy Day, servant of God, who challenged society to reach out to the stranger, to offer the best seat at the table to the poor and broken, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

And Blessed Oscar Romero, and those in El Salvador who spoke out against the atrocities visited upon the poor of El Salvador and upon the body of Christ, we call on you in solidarity ...

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

All you saints and holy ones, who walked in solidarity with God's people and brought the Gospel to life within our broken world, be with us in solidarity today.

**RESPONSE:** Presente.

Amen

## ritual

### LEADER

Like the saints and holy ones who have gone before us, Christ invites each of us to offer our gifts and talents as his disciples. We will take a moment now to silently reflect on how Christ might be calling us to participate in building God's Kingdom by standing against injustice. Please take some time to reflect on one way you can commit to this in your own life, and write it on the slip of paper. When you have finished writing, place your paper in the basket at the front of the room.

*Note: While people are reflecting and writing, play reflective music or the [photo gallery](#), featuring photos from around the world and quotes by Blessed Oscar Romero.*

## prayer intentions

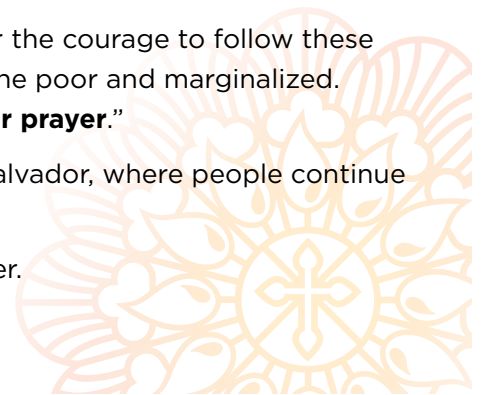
### READER THREE

*Invite those gathered to stand.*

We gather together to ask Christ for the courage to follow these holy men and women in service to the poor and marginalized. Our response will be, "**Lord, hear our prayer.**"

That Christ's peace will reign in El Salvador, where people continue to suffer violence, we pray ...

**RESPONSE:** Lord, hear our prayer.



That we may find ways to comfort those who suffer around the world, especially victims of violence, those who go without food or water and all who continue to live in fear, we pray ...

**RESPONSE:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For political leaders, that they will put the poorest and most vulnerable around the world first, we pray ...

**RESPONSE:** Lord, hear our prayer.

For all of us gathered here: That we will not be indifferent to the suffering of our brothers and sisters around the world but that, like Blessed Oscar Romero, we will rise up on their behalf, even when it is uncomfortable or unpopular, we pray ...

**RESPONSE:** Lord, hear our prayer.

We offer all these prayers through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen

## closing prayer

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### READER FOUR

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...

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 Archbishop Romero's was.

And in life and death  
May we bear much fruit.

Amen

