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Kelly Benitez

Theological Conversation

Paper

April 30, 2015

A Model for the Church Today: Monseñor Oscar Romero

Oscar Romero represents a premier model for the whole church today and he should be held up. Romero provides us with an example of what it truly means to follow Christ and his teachings. Romero was seen as providing strength and hope for the poor and the oppressed people of his country by working with them and for them, and making their struggles his own. He was a very courageous and admirable person and no one stopped him from standing up for what was right and justice. He used the social justice principal of preferential option for the poor as a guide. He focuses on the poor and the marginalized rather than the wealthy to show the poor compassion. Romero gave his life for the church and for the poor people of his country. Even today, Romero still lives on in the hearts of the Salvadoran people. He is seen as the martyr of El Salvador. Oscar Romero's canonization should have moved forward because he like the Church cared about the poor and gave up his life for them.

Catholic Culture defines a saint as someone "who distinguish themselves by heroic virtue during life and whom the Church honors as saints either by his/her ordinary universal teaching authority or by a solemn definition called canonization." A saint is worthy of respect and is seen as helping those on earth for they are seen as someone who is a holy person and close to God (Cunningham 9). Saints are holy people because they demonstrate that they try to do everything to honor God. They set examples for others to follow, "a saint in the Christian tradition is someone whose holiness is recognized as exceptional by other Christians" (Woodward 50).

Saints are men and women who live according to the will of God and are honored for the way he or she lived their life. The way they lived their life is supposed to function as a model for the whole church to follow, “saints are models to be emulated” (Cunningham 46). Saints are examples of how to live a life fully devoted to God and Christ for they put their entire trust in God.

“Saints are those who witness to the reality of God’s kingdom in their own lives” (Woodward 154). Saints do everything that is required of them so that the kingdom of God is able to grow and flourish. The church is holding up a specific model of holiness as an ideal and as a value. Saints are important because they teach us how to honor God and how to submit to His will. A saint is someone who is not a perfect human being but is really close to being perfect, “a person has reached the apex of perfection” (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 14). Saints learn from their mistakes and grow from them. Saints are seen as salvific figures—not only role models but as a means of salvation for other people (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 15). Saints are able to show us how to encounter the kingdom of God on earth and how to earn a place in heaven with God our Father.

In the process of canonization “men and women are recognized who have lived the demands of the Gospel” (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 77). These men and women are using what they learn from the Gospels and applying it to their everyday life. Canonization “represents a desire to encounter exemplary witnesses whose lives have been models of discipleship, following Jesus, and the dedication of his life (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 77). Through all the canonizations “the Church has provided us with an immense number of gospel witnesses who are living examples” (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 77). These witnesses are meant to help us to remain loyal to our faith and God, they “represent the model of the Church which is

meant to be held up at all costs” (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 77). The Church provides us with role models that we should look up to and try to follow their way of living fully for God.

Canonization is a ceremony of magnificent solemnity (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 3). Canonization is honoring a person who is holy and is worthy of praise because they lived a life fully dedicated to God. Canonization is the act of the Pope “inscribing in the book of saints the names of those heroic figures who have shed their blood for Christ or who have spent their lives in the heroic practice of Christian virtue” (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 3). People who are canonized have died for their faith and love in Christ and they are seen as examples that others should follow. A saint “is assigned a feast day for liturgical veneration by the entire church” (Woodward 17). Their memory is commemorated on that day each year.

The Pope raises the heroic figures so that their example may be an inspiration to the whole church (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 3). Heroic figures are important because they are examples we are meant to follow. Through the process of canonization the “faithful are able to realize that a holy life not only merits the eternal glory of heaven but also commands the admiration of those on earth” (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 4). A canonized person is being looked up to and “to canonize means to declare that a person is worthy of universal public cult” (Woodward 17). In canonization the saint is proposed for the universal church (Cunningham 121). Everyone is able to formally honor and pay their respects to the person who has been canonized. Canonization is declaring that a person is with God and people are able to pray to the saint.

Beatification is the permission given by the Pope which allows the blessed person to be honored publicly (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 9). In order for beatification to occur the

Pope “declares that a person who has died lived a life full of merits, virtue and good example” (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 8). The Pope is declaring that a specific person is an example for the whole church and that they should follow in their footsteps. Beatification allows the people who live in the country of where the blessed person is buried are able to honor that person without being told otherwise because “the cult of the saint is local” (Cunningham 121). The process of beatification is different for martyrs, “two miracles are needed for Beatification except in the case of martyrs when miracles are not necessary” (*Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum* 13). Canonization is the process that comes after someone has been beatified (Macken 1).

Oscar Romero represents an important model of holiness for the whole church because he orchestrated his life in such a way that he was with and for the poor at all times. He demonstrated what it means to be a disciple of Christ. “Romero was formed by the reality he saw, by the horror, the violence, the brutality, the injustice he witnessed. He had to speak out” (Dennis 21). Oscar Romero because of his experience emphasizes the Catholic Social Teaching of preferential option for the poor. Romero himself said “the preferential option for the poor is pure Gospel” (Hernandez 48). He also says that “the right medicine is in the preferential option for the poor” (Hernandez 66). Romero knew that the preferential option for the poor was crucial in order for others to understand why he was denouncing the injustices done to the poor. “He makes a preferential option for an oppressed people, not in light of theoretical considerations, but in light of his fidelity to the gospel and because he begins to see in that oppressed people the historicized Jesus that summons him and makes demands from him. This option saves him and puts him in a condition to save” (Ellacuria 289). In the poor people Romero sees Jesus being crucified in which he cannot remain silent. The Catholic social teaching is defined as, “a basic

moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). We are meant to put the needs of the poor first and that is exactly what Romero does. The poor are just as important as anyone. We have to be able to invite and welcome the poor into the church. Romero’s doors were always opened to welcome the poor and to listen to them for he wanted to hear what they had to say and he loved the poor unconditionally. Something else that Romero emphasizes is the theme of *Sentir Con La Iglesia* (Feel with the Church). “For Romero, to feel with the church meant to defend the poor. It meant to be rooted in God and to accept the conflicts that may arise due to the fidelity of God” (Erlick 22). It meant becoming one with the poor.

Romero started to emphasize the preferential option for the poor as an epistemological guide for ecclesial action (Pfeil 103). Romero uses the Catholic social teaching as a guide and as a way to justify why he was speaking up on behalf of the poor. Romero says, “An authentic option for the poor consists becoming incarnate in their world, of proclaiming the good news to them, of giving them hope, of encouraging them to engage in a liberating praxis, of defending their cause and of sharing their faith” (Sobrino and Martin-Baro 182). We have to be able to provide the poor with the things that they are not able to provide for themselves. Romero insisted that a Christian response to violence has to take root in the true peace of Christ (Pfeil 103). Here we see Romero taking a non-violent approach to the violence that was happening. He wanted the church to see that the poorest people in El Salvador were not just marginalized but being killed. Romero wanted people to respond to the violence in a loving and peaceful way and did not want the poor to raise up arms against the military. For this reason Romero entered more fully into the

suffering of the poor (Pfeil 99). Romero made the struggles of the poor his own struggles. Romero said “whoever is in conflict with my people will be in conflict with me” (Hernandez 18). Whatever was done to the poor people, Romero took it as it being done onto him. He viewed the mass killings from the perspective of the victims of violence (Pfeil 103). He like the poor felt the pain that came along with all the violence that was being imposed on them. “Romero was faithful to the poor, he joined his life to theirs and shared the same fate as the poor. Their passion became his passion, their crucifixion his cross” (Wright 140). The poor people were Romero’s teachers and he was able to learn from them. By learning from them he was able to build a very strong relationship with them.

The church had placed itself on the side of the poor and they were committed to them and their defense (Pfeil 97). The church just like Romero saw that the poor needed their support, “the church has not only turned toward the poor, it has made of the poor the special beneficiaries of its mission because God takes on their defense and loves them” (Sobrino and Martin-Baro 181). God loves everyone and is the defender of the poor. Romero does just that because he said “a pastor has to be where there is suffering” and the suffering was with the poor people (Hernandez 22). The church claims human dignity to even the poorest person, a tortured person, a prisoner, and even a murderer (Pfeil 103). The church is meant to provide the same amount of respect to every human being. Romero thought that the “preferential option for the poor was at the heart of the Church’s mission as a sacramental sign in the world” (Pfeil 105). Through this we are able to understand why Jesus has a preference towards the poor. Jesus has this preference because the poor are those who have placed a challenge and a mission before the Latin American Church (Pfeil 105). Romero led the poor people to “face the truth of their persecution and the suffering that was imposed on them and was not justified by their oppressors as a political

necessity” (Pfeil 106). Romero wanted the poor to realize that everything that was happening to them was not right and that nothing could justify what the military was doing to them. Romero not only wanted the people in his country to see/realize everything that was happening but he also wanted the church to see it. Romero said, “the church cannot remain silent before many abominations” (Carrigan and Weber). We have to speak up when others are afraid to speak up and let others know what our thoughts are on a given situation. The way Romero saw staying quiet rather speaking up was “either we are working for the life of Salvadorans or we are accomplices in their death” (Hernandez 86). If we do not speak up we are accomplices because we are not striving for justice. This also applied to the Church because if the church remains silent before injustice they are considered accomplices (Hernandez 30). Speaking up allows others know what needs to be paid attention and what needs to be worked on. We cannot afford to be silent when injustices are occurring to the people who make up the majority of the church.

Romero was the conscience and the moral leader of El Salvador. Romero was known all over the world as the leader of the poor people. “Romero’s mission was not to defend the powerful but the oppressed,” he spoke the truth which gave value to the words of the people who were silenced, manipulated, and distorted (Carrigan and Weber). Romero was the defending the oppressed because they could not defend themselves. “Archbishop Romero was a staunch defender of the poor and a vocal critic of human rights violations by the military junta that ruled El Salvador,” he is usually referred to as the defender of the poor because he defended and risked everything for the poor, giving them hope just as Jesus had (America Press). Doing what the Gospel asks of us is defending human rights (Hernandez 60). Romero said “I want to reassure you that I will not abandon my people” (Hernandez 26). Romero was going to stand up for the poor no matter what. He was not going to abandon them but continue to be their leader and

pastor. Romero became an inspiration for the poor who looked up to him and loved him. His love was for the people (Hernandez 24). Romero made the poor feel important and special for he wanted to get to know them and wanted to hear their stories. This gave the poor people a reason to keep trying to be given equal treatment and rights.

For Romero, the poor were the ones that revealed the way of the cross as the way to God. Romero compared it to Jesus and the “path leading to Mount Tabor to the cross and to resurrected life and which provided Romero with the ethical horizon to imagine with his people a dignified life for all especially for the poor” (Pfeil 106). Romero said, “The poor have marked the true path of the Church” (Hernandez 49). The sin that was committed by the military was going to need attention because it had a bloody toll on the poorest Salvadorans. Romero was promoting peace when he spoke up against the actions of the military and the National Guard. Romero proclaimed the witness of those who were “brutally and permanently silenced by the political repression” (Pfeil 101). Romero’s goal was to promote peace and justice among all the people in El Salvador. “Christians are peacemakers, not because they cannot fight, but because they prefer the force of peace” (Brockman 99). For Romero “like Jesus, the church was sent to bring good news to the poor” (Walsh 178). This is something that Romero uses when he is with the poor. When Romero speaks of all the injustices occurring to the poor people he always references the bible and the teachings of Jesus. Romero says, “the hope that we preach to the poor is intended to give the back their dignity, to encourage them to take charge of their own future” (Walsh 181). Romero was able to provide the poor with hope by helping them see that they need to stand up for what they believed in. The poor have to be to stand up for themselves and it does not matter the price they will pay. They have to be able to speak up. The gospels all talk about putting the needs of others before our own especially our brothers and sisters who

need it the most and “by putting ourselves alongside the poor and trying to bring life to them we shall come to know the eternal truth of the gospel” (Walsh 187). Romero said “To give life to the poor, one has to give of one’s own life, even to give one’s life itself. The greatest sign of faith in a God of life is the witness of those who are ready to give up their own life. And we see this daily in our country. Many Salvadorans, many Christians are ready to give their lives so that the poor may have life. They are following Jesus and showing their faith in him. Living within the real world just as Jesus did, like him accused and threatened, like him laying down their lives, they are giving witness to the word of life” (Walsh 185). Many people were starting to do exactly what Romero had been doing for the poor. They were following in his footsteps because they believed that what he was doing was right.

Romero said, “Hence the church has good news to proclaim to the rich as well; they are to turn to the poor and thus share with them in the riches of God’s reign that belong to the poor” (Brockman 226). Even though Romero was only the Archbishop of San Salvador for three years that was “enough to sow the seeds of God’s word and to make present the countenance of Jesus to his people” (Ellacuria 286). All Romero ever wanted the rich and the military to do was to turn away from sin and treat their poor brothers and sisters with respect. Romero himself says “I don’t hate my enemies. I don’t want revenge. I wish them no harm. I beg them to be converted, to come to be happy with the happiness of the faithful people” (Brockman 33). He wanted them to convert and stop sinning by not killing the poor in order to be with the poor and be able to understand their suffering. He would also call them to conversion (Pfeil 113). Romero wanted to move people to follow Jesus (*No Salvation* Sobrino 127). Romero once said “I beg you not to mistreat the poor people. Do not mistreat your own brothers” (Carrigan and Weber). Romero goes to the extremes of begging the assassins to stop mistreating their own brothers and sisters.

When Romero died and was taken to the hospital 40 or 50 beggars were gathered at the main doors of the hospital (Carrigan and Weber). That demonstrates how important Romero was for them. Romero became the brother of those who felt like nobody would ever love and care for them. The poor believed that “the only one that understood them left, the one that believed in them” (Carrigan and Weber). The one that encouraged them to stand up for themselves was gone, he one that the poor came to love unconditionally just as he had, was taken away from them. Romero was seen as being the only one that truly understood the needs of the poor people in El Salvador. He placed himself alongside of the poor and became the person that showed them the respect they wanted the military and the National Guard to show them. “The roots and the fruits of his own life were in the poor community that he had come to love and call his own” (Dennis 12). For Romero the poor people were his brothers and sisters and they became his family.

Romero said, “To the oligarchy, I repeat what I said before: Do not look on me as a judge or an enemy. I’m only the shepherd, the brother, the friend of this people, the one who knows of their suffering, of their hunger, of their affliction” (Brockman 216). Romero didn’t want to be seen as the enemy or judge of the oligarchy but wanted them to realize that he knew the poor and was able to understand what they were experiencing. He became their shepherd. Romero acted the way he did due to the circumstances at the present time and he wrote in one of his letters to Rome “that he had always tried to do whatever God asked him and he felt that he had to act as he did in the circumstances he found in the archdiocese, especially because of the persecution of the Church’s priests and small communities” (Hodgson 11). Not only were the poor being persecuted but so was the church and specifically the priests and small church communities.

Romero on several occasions was told by many people that he should have some body guards. Romero responded to them by saying “before assuring my personal security I would like security for everyone who suffers” (Hernandez 92). The suffering people/the poor people were the ones that were being killed and they were the ones that needed the body guards the most. “Even though he had been threatened for months, Romero never sought the least bit of protection” (Ellacuria 286). Romero was a very humble man and he believed that he did not deserve protection because he “was accepting the same fate as the people” (*No Salvation* Sobrino 112). Romero did not want protection when he knew that the lives that needed the most protection were the lives of the poor people.

Romero made an appeal to the soldiers. He told the soldiers in his last homily, “Brothers: you are of part of our own people. You kill your own *campesino* brothers and sisters. Before an order to kill that a man may give, God’s law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. No one has to fulfill an immoral law... In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!” (Romero Trust). Romero here is telling the military and the National Guard that they should not be killing their own brothers and sisters. He also references one of the Ten Commandments to make his point. The day before Romero made this appeal he talked to a friend of his that was a lawyer and asked him for advice regarding the appeal he wanted to make to the soldiers (Carrigan and Weber). The lawyer told him that making the appeal would be seen as a crime by the soldiers (Carrigan and Weber). This appeal was a desperate plea for peace (Carrigan and Weber). Romero wants the military to realize that what they are doing is wrong especially when they are taking the lives of innocent people. Romero says, “Why are they killed? They are

killed because they get in the way” (Hernandez 71). Romero says, “A Christian who defends unjust positions is no longer a Christian” (Hernandez 55). All Romero ever wanted was peace. He wanted the military to treat their poor brothers and sisters with respect.

Romero turned to prayer and he prayed the rosary when the violence got worse. Romero died loving his enemies and pointing the way to forgiveness and life and loved everyone in the same way even the people who hated him (Wright 131). The poor were the reference point of many of the things Romero said in his homilies (*No Salvation* Sobrino 111). Romero in his homilies tried to call for peace when the violence in El Salvador got worse. Romero said in one of his homilies that, “These homilies try to be this people’s voice. They try to be the voice of those who have no voice. And so, without doubt, they displease those who have too much voice” (Brockman 183). The people that had “too much voice” did not like Romero being the voice of the voiceless. They would have liked for the poor to continue to be silent and not stand up for themselves. Romero many times asks the soldiers to stop killing the innocent poor people but his voice was never heard.

Romero lived and acted how Jesus did. We see all throughout the Gospels Jesus taking the side of the poor, he talks to the marginalized and to the poor and to the people nobody pays attention to. “The authentic church is one that does not mind conversing with prostitutes and publicans and sinners, as Christ did—in order to bring them salvation’s true message” (Brockman 123). “The people are the main reference point of Jesus’ life and without the people we cannot understand his everyday life” (*No Salvation* Sobrino 115). Romero, as Jesus would, sided with the poor because they were the ones being treated unjustly and killed by the military. Romero wanted to show the poor people that they too were the children of God and were loved unconditionally by God. The people’s suffering is what lead Romero to be deeply moved by

them (*No Salvation* Sobrino 115). Romero has often been compared to Jesus and Ignacio Ellacuria says that “Archbishop Romero was a model follower of Jesus of Nazareth” (*No Salvation* Sobrino 121). Ellacuria saw Romero as a pastor, a prophet, and a martyr who was faithful to the end to the God who sent him to save the people and “he saw the same fundamental things that he saw in Jesus” (*No Salvation* Sobrino 121-122). Romero even compares himself to Jesus and says “I am a little like Jesus Christ who also was an object of scandal” (Hernandez 100). In the Gospels we see that Jesus was what everyone was talking about because he did the opposite of what anyone else would do. Romero when he first became the Archbishop of San Salvador was someone that was conservative and he was not for or against anyone. He was caught in the middle. As time passed he started to see how things really were and he started to change. He changed to help the poor and become their leader. Romero then ended up becoming the object of scandal because compared to when he first became the Archbishop nobody thought he would do anything and that he would remain conservative. They were wrong and “more and more surely he demanded an end to the repression and confidently spoke words of hope into the violence” (Dennis 21). As each day passed Romero was being filled courage which then allowed him to speak up for those that could not.

Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life (John 12:24-25). Romero in his last homily talks about this passage “But, to the contrary, you have just heard in Christ’s gospel that one must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us, and that those who try to fend off the danger will lose their lives, while those who out of love for Christ give themselves to the service of others, will

live, live like the grain of wheat that dies, but only apparently. If it did not die, it would remain alone. The harvest comes about only because it dies, allowing itself to be sacrificed in the earth and destroyed. Only by undoing itself does it produce the harvest” (Romero Trust). Romero does just what he says in his own homily. He was like the grain of wheat that died but only died apparently and not in the hearts of the Salvadoran people. Romero became the sacrifice and many things got worse when he died but then they started to change for the better. Through Romero’s death we see that he died in order to produce the harvest. Even though he died he still continues to be alive in El Salvador.

In the figure of Romero, Christ passed through El Salvador (Carrigan and Weber). Romero imitated many of the things that Jesus did and Christ through the person of Romero passed through El Salvador. Romero said, “The Church preaches in the midst of the poor, and we are never ashamed to say the Church of the Poor, because among the poor Christ wanted to put his classroom of redemption” showing that Jesus became the teacher of the poor and taught them about the Gospel message (Sobrino 314). We see again and again in the gospels that Jesus was always talking to those that nobody wanted to talk to. Romero himself said “the church will not tire of denouncing all that produces death” (Hernandez 106). This shows that no matter how difficult things got Romero was not going to give up. He was going to continue doing what he had already been doing. For Romero every life is precious and that was the point he was trying to get across (Hernandez 9). “The church, entrusted with the earth’s glory, believes that in each person is the Creator’s image and that everyone who tramples it offends God. As holy defender of God’s rights and of his images, the church must cry out” (Brockman 31). Innocent people were being killed and in the eyes of God and the Church that was a sin and an offense to God. “Death is the sign of sin, and sin produces it so directly among us: violence, murder, torture,

hacking with machetes, throwing into the sea—people discarded! All this is the reign of hell” (Brockman 171). The military was committing sin and that is why Romero places an emphasize on conversion and repentance. He was letting them know that killing another person was going against what God teaches.

Romero said, “Christ has representatives here and now in the world: us, his church, the community. And so when I focus on the week gone by, I attend to a work that is proper for the church. It should be the principal task of us priests, nuns, and faithful—of all pastoral workers. We are not involved in politics; we turn the gospel’s light onto the political scene, but the main thing for us is to light the lamp of the gospel in our communities” (Brockman 182). We are meant to be Christ’s representatives on earth. Romero, when he would speak up through his homilies and the radio broadcasts he had, was speaking up for what the church should be paying attention to. Romero said, “we cannot be silent in such a corrupt and unjust world” (Hernandez 52). That was the task that everyone in the church community had. Even Romero himself says that he was not involved in politics. Romero and the church were using the gospel as a guide in order to apply it to the politics surrounding the war. The commitment of everyone is to go out and be with the poor (Hernandez 83). Whenever Romero spoke up he would always reference the bible and teachings of the church and he paid close attention to the Beatitudes. He was devoted to God in every aspect.

Romero said “As a pastor I am obliged by divine mandate to give my life for those whom I love, and they are all Salvadorans, even for those who would assassinate me. If they carry out their threats I offer my blood right now for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador. I don’t believe that I am worthy of martyrdom, but if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, let my blood be the seed of freedom and a sign that hope will soon be a reality. If my death is accepted

by God let it be for the liberation of my people and as a testimony of hope for the future. If they kill me, you can say that I forgive and bless those who do it. Hopefully they will be convinced it is a waste of time” (Hernandez 117). Romero received many death threats throughout the three years he was the archbishop of San Salvador and yet never even once thought about stepping down from his position. Here again we see Romero acting like Jesus did before he died. Romero loved everyone even the people that hated him the most. Romero knew that if they killed him that the poor people were not going to stop doing what he taught them and that he would be alive more than ever since he provided the people with hope that things would get better.

Romero tried to instill Christian non-violence, but the poor people were convinced that the power of love would not fix the situation, only violence would (Carrigan and Weber). That was when the poor people of El Salvador formed guerillas. Romero did not want so many people to die through this violence. He wanted to avoid having a civil war (Hernandez 96). Romero himself “never instigated violence” (Hernandez 85). He wanted “to make a new call to leave behind the paths of violence” (Hernandez 47). Romero said “The church is calling to sanity, to understanding, to love. It does not believe in violent solutions. The church believes in only one violence, that of Christ, who was nailed to the cross” he believed that there were nonviolent solutions to the poor people’s problems (Brockman 12). Violence was something that Romero did not like.

Romero would gather all the data of discernment of the crimes being committed in a given week and talked about them during his homilies which consisted of newspaper reports of the current political and economic events going on, urgent messages from other parishes and base communities that had to do with persecutions and things that had to do with violating human rights (Pfeil100). He would also talk about the number of people that would get arrested

for political reasons. Every single one of them was a part of the “campesino” (peasant) population and there was not a single person from the landowning class (Pfeil 106). The people that were the main targets of the military and the National Guard were the poor people. He said that “preaching that does not denounce sin is not preaching the Gospel” (Hernandez 28). Romero used the Gospel as a way of teaching others what the Gospel was really trying to tell/teach them.

Romero would always let the people that followed him know about all the injustices/violence that went on every week. He really wanted the people to know about all the violence that was going on. “As followers of Christ we are to speak for the voiceless and to defend the defenseless” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). Romero spoke out for the poor because the poor could not speak up for themselves and became the voice of the voiceless poor people in El Salvador. He understood and believed in the poor people (Carrigan and Weber). “He saw in the voiceless people, the very voice of God; in the crucified people, God the savior” (Ellacuria 289-290). Just as Christ spoke for the voiceless so did Romero.

There was a cost paid for those who were faithful to the teachings in the Gospel it was paid on the side of the poor, and those who offered their lives because of the love they had for others and that cost was death (Wright 132). The church in El Salvador was persecuted because it placed the poor at the heart of their identity and their mission (Wright 133). The church’s first priority is the poor and it “cannot step back from its commitment to the poor” (Hernandez 67). The poor were at the heart of the church’s identity and they were their mission because Romero connected the violence against the church with violence that was directed at the people (Shortell 92). The violence directed at the church was also directed to the poor people. Romero always reminded the world that the privileged place of the church is among those who suffer (Wright 134). He said “our commitment compels us to go out and be with the poor” (Hernandez 83).

Romero lived his life in service of the church. The church has to be for and with the poor at all times because “a church which does not unite itself with the poor is not a true Church of Christ” which is entirely made up of the poor (Hernandez 50).

On February 03, 2015, Pope Francis recognizes that Romero was killed in hatred of the faith. Pope Francis signed a decree recognizing Romero’s assassination as martyrdom (Origins 600). Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia who is the official promoter of the cause of canonization of Romero said, "Martyrs help us live, help us understand there is more joy in giving than receiving. This is why we need to preserve their memories" (America Press Inc. 6). This is the reason why Romero becoming a saint is so important. He still lives on and his memory needs to be preserved. This has also opened up the beatification process for Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande who was the first priest to be killed in El Salvador and was a close friend of Romero (Ignatian Solidarity Network). Pope Francis said that Romero “was certainly an important witness of the faith, a man of great Christian virtue who worked for peace and against the dictatorship and that his death was truly credible and it was a witness of faith” (Catholic News Agency). Throughout Romero’s life we see that his faith was what kept him going beside the poor people. Romero was a pious priest, bishop, and archbishop. Pope Francis said that “if he were pope, the beatification and canonization of the slain archbishop would be the first thing he would pursue” (America Press Inc. 7). Pope Francis even before being elected Pope knew how important Romero had been and still is for so many people.

After being elected, Pope Francis said that “it is very important to quickly move forward Archbishop Romero's cause but the process has to be followed and the Lord too has to give his sign and if he wants to do it, he will do it” (Catholic News Agency). For Pope Francis Romero was a man of God (Catholic News Agency). Romero was a man of God who gave up his life for

his people. Pope Francis has been the pope for 2 years and he has been working hard in order to move Romero's cause forward. He has been able to accomplish what many thought would never be accomplished. On March 11, 2015, Pope Francis announced the date for the beatification ceremony for Romero (Associated Press). It will take place on May 23, 2015 in San Salvador, El Salvador (Associated Press). This will allow Romero to be that much closer to becoming a saint.

There have been many debates on whether Romero was truly a man of God and whether or not he should be canonized. Romero's sainthood cause opened in 1993 at the Vatican (Origins 600). His cause was opened for 21 years and it was not going anywhere. His sainthood was delayed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and by previous popes. Romero's cause was also delayed for many years because there was a debate between Romero being killed for his faith or for taking political positions against the Salvadoran government and the death squads (Origins 600). Romero's canonization had been stalled "as a result of efforts made by some to manipulate, politicize or use Romero's image" (Clarke 12). The military and the National Guard would have done anything so that Romero's image would be distorted. Romero was hated the most by the military and the National Guard in El Salvador. "The wise and prudent of this world, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, and the wealthy and powerful accused him of being in politics instead of being the church; they accused him of fomenting class struggle instead of proclaiming love; they accused him of preaching violence instead of spreading love" (Ellacuria 290). They would say things that were the total opposite of what Romero was really doing and teaching. People who were against Romero's cause "have claimed his assassination was politically motivated (America Press Inc. 7). Many people then and even till this day are not fond of Romero for many reasons. Monsignor Urioste says that "Romero was the most loved and most hated Salvadoran in the country" (Bingemer, Queiruga, and Sobrino 132). "The media

attacked Romero relentlessly calling him a communist, a subversive and a mad man” (Hodgson10). Even the National Guard would insult Romero saying “Evil priest, disgraceful priest, you are the leader of the communists, and the leader of the terrorists” (Carrigan and Weber). They never treated Romero with respect. To them he was one of the poor people that turned against them.

Romero is held up as a model of holiness in El Salvador already and canonization in Rome would recognize what millions already believe. Romero for the people in El Salvador has always been a saint. They declared him a martyr and a saint a long time ago. “Romero is only a servant of God but for the poor and those with good hearts he is Saint Romero of America” (Sobrino 308). Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI spoke of Romero as a martyr. “Both Pope Francis and Benedict XVI hold Archbishop Romero in high regard” (Catholic News Agency). They looked up to him and saw him as a very courageous person who stood up for those that could not stand up for themselves.

Even though Romero has been dead for 35 years he is still alive today in El Salvador. “The spirit of Oscar Romero, through his memory and through his word, continues to be a prophetic presence in El Salvador, offering the poor the comfort that they are not alone, and the promise that things can change” (Wright 138). This one of the many reasons why each year on his death anniversary thousands march and his death is commemorated. Romero will never be forgotten he lives on in the hearts of the Salvadoran people. Throughout El Salvador there is a lot of wall art with his sayings and him embracing the poor with love. Romero was a source of inspiration for many and still is. Something that Romeo said was “I have often received death threats. I must tell you, that as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me I will rise again in the Salvadoran people” (Hernandez 117). This is exactly what has

been happening for the last 35 years in El Salvador. Even after Romero was killed the government was trying to cover-up his death so that his assassination would be forgotten (Carrigan and Weber). As we can see that did not work. Romero is alive and always present in El Salvador. Something else that Romero says is “my voice will disappear but my words will remain in people’s hearts” he truly does remain in the hearts of everyone who loved him. Romero also says, “a bishop will die but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish” (Hernandez 112). This not only pertains to the bishops but also to him who was the archbishop. Romero may have died but the Church of God has not died and continues to live on just like he has.

Romero has been a saint for the people of El Salvador for 35 years. It only took three years for the poor people to love him unconditionally just like had loved them. Romero became the role model that the poor people looked up to and followed. Romero fits the definition of a saint and why someone should be canonized. We see consistently throughout Romero’s life that he was a man of God that promoted peace and non-violence at all times. He put all his trust in God and his faith is what led him to continue speaking up for the poor who could not speak up for themselves. The poor people became his inspiration and motivation to continue denouncing all of the injustices that were being inflicted on them. He would always speak on their behalf. Romero defended the poor to the very end and nobody stopped him from speaking on behalf of the poor.

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