Honoring the Message of Saint Romero

Oscar Romero (1917-1980), Roman Catholic Archbishop, saw the face of God in the people of his native El Salvador. His love for them compelled him to join them in demanding a more just and compassionate society. He became a “voice for the voiceless,” and his relentless call for justice led to his martyrdom. On March 24, 1980, while consecrating the Eucharist, he was assassinated by a right-wing death squad in the early months of the Salvadoran civil war.

Romero instantly became “San Romero of America” among his people, and the Anglican Church recognized this modern martyr with a statue unveiled in 1998 above the west entrance to Westminster Abbey (at left). On October 14, 2018, Romero will at last be canonized in his own church by Pope Francis. Yet few people in the United States seem to know his name or the message he holds for us today.

While the Salvadoran civil war ended in 1992, like other armed conflicts in Central America, it did not solve the societal problems that led to it. The majority of the people of El Salvador, as well as neighboring Honduras and Guatemala, continue to live in great poverty, beset by newer forms of violence as deadly as earlier wars. Today, violence carried out by gangs, cartels, state authorities, and death squads makes these “Northern Triangle” countries among the most violent in the world, on a par with official war zones.

Fleeing this violence, families abandon their homes. Because many do not find protection from their governments, they have little choice but to cross international borders to seek safety, creating an unofficial refugee crisis now visible on our southern border. Few are welcomed or granted asylum. Most are detained or imprisoned for long periods without representation, and many are deported back to the violence that they fled.

Cristosal, a US 501(c)(3) and official mission partner of the Episcopal Church, is working on the roots of this crisis. We accompany victims of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras via direct humanitarian aid and strategic litigation, building a future in which citizens can claim their rights to live safe, secure lives in their homelands. This fall, honor the legacy of San Romero by supporting Cristosal as together we give a “voice to the voiceless” of today.

Gifts may be made online at www.cristosal.org/give or by check payable to Cristosal mailed to 401 W. Division Street #9641, Syracuse, NY 13290.

The support of our friends in the Episcopal Church gives us the flexibility to tackle new challenges, to take risks, and to innovate novel solutions that save lives and create new pathways for peace in Central America. Thank you!

To learn more and sign up for our newsletter, visit www.cristosal.org.

“We want a Church that is really side by side with the poor. . . . We find that we are gradually uncovering the genuine face of the Suffering Servant of God. We are getting to know closer at hand the mystery of the Christ who becomes human and becomes poor for us.”

—Saint Óscar Romero of El Salvador