

## GOOD TO KNOW: REFLECTIONS ON MARTYRS

A Sermon for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, May 14, 2017

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### NOTES ONLY

FROM CHICAGO, an important and relevant story as we continue to work through the Book of Acts - Oscar Romero

- Funny how some experiences and images stay with you, for a lifetime . . . The Movie: Romero (hold on to your stomach)
- Óscar Romero (August 15, 1917 - March 24, 1980) was a prominent Roman Catholic priest in El Salvador during the 1960s and 1970s becoming Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977.

### BIOGRAPHY

After witnessing numerous violations of human rights, he began to speak out on behalf of the poor and the victims of repression. This led to numerous conflicts, both with the government in El Salvador and within the Catholic Church. After speaking out against U.S. military support for the government of El Salvador, and calling for soldiers to disobey orders to fire on innocent civilians, Archbishop Romero was shot dead while celebrating Mass at the small chapel of the cancer hospital where he lived.

In February 1980 he addressed an open letter to U.S. President Jimmy Carter in which he called upon the United States to discontinue military aid to the regime. "We are fed up with weapons and bullets, "he pleaded.

The archbishop had foreseen the danger of assassination and had spoken of it often, declaring his willingness to accept martyrdom if his blood might contribute to the solution of the nation's problems. "As a Christian," he remarked on one such occasion, "I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I shall rise again in the Salvadoran people."

Sounds familiar doesn't it. (Good Friday)

TEXT - Acts 7:55-60

But **filled with the Holy Spirit**, he gazed into heaven and **saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

#### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

In the Bible, an intimate relationship with God usually sends people's lives into chaos.

#### WHAT WE DO NOT HAVE HERE

- Is a good model of inter-faith dialogue
- Anything but an inclusive dialogue

## WHAT WE DO HAVE HERE

- An early and amazing faith commitment under pressure
- An example of how the Church takes on the *cruciformity* of Christ
- A reminder that God's Holy Spirit can and does fill, animate, and sustain people
- A mirror-image of Christlike sacrifice and suffering – necessary in some places and at some times so that justice can be done
- Something so profound, so daring, so courageous it is almost impossible to believe

## HYMNTEXT

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

## ANALYSIS

The relevant question, how is such faith and conviction possible?

- Through **forces beyond ourselves, God the Holy Spirit**
- Through **acceptance of the gospel message**, that life is more than an experience of flesh and blood, that we are indeed people with a future in God and not in each other or of the earth as we currently experience it

## JOHN

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that **I go to prepare a place for you?**

Good to know