

# The Way of the Cross with Oscar Romero

March 2005 marked the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, Central America. At the time that he became Archbishop of San Salvador, in 1977, a wealthy elite held power in El Salvador through terrible repression and violence.

This Way of the Cross was created by Equipo de Educación Maíz, a DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE partner in El Salvador. It adapts Bishop Romero's sermons as part of a reflection on the continued struggles for justice in El Salvador.

You can complement this Way of the Cross by combing it with personal reflections and/or parts of songs interspersed throughout. Some suggestions for songs are: *Blest Are They* (Haas), *Unless A Grain of Wheat* (Farrell), *Unless A Grain of Wheat* (Hurd), *Eagle's Wings* (Joncas), *God Has Chosen Me* (Farrell).

## **First Station: Jesus is condemned to death**

Then the whole assembly arose as a body and brought him before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation; forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor and saying that he is himself the Messiah, a king." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place." (Luke 23:1-2, 5)

*This is a God who renounces his condition as God, coming down from the happiness of heaven to become a man, a man who doesn't go around mentioning his prerogative as God: "any man", says the Bible today, "Any man" who is tied to the authority of his time and carried to the courts. When Saint Paul says "any man", it occurs to me to think of those people that we are already accustomed to seeing in our newspapers: the handcuffed peasant, the tortured peasant, the laborer whose rights aren't recognized. This is the "any man" that Christ wanted to become.*

Archbishop Romero, 19 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Second Station: Jesus takes the cross upon his shoulders**

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew, is called Golgotha. (John 19:16-17)

*We feel in the Christ of Holy Week, with the cross upon his shoulders, that this is the people who are also carrying their cross. We feel the people crucified in this Christ with the open arms crucified, but it is from this Christ that a people crucified and humiliated will encounter their hope.*

Archbishop Romero, 19 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time**

He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

*Christ is not an insensitive man. Christ is a real person, of flesh and bones, nerves and muscles, just like us. He is a man who feels just like a person feels when he is carried away by the National Guard and taken to a place of torture.*

Archbishop Romero, 1 April 1979

[Song and/or reflection]

**Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother**

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19:25-27)

*Brothers and sisters, the liberation of Christ is tenderness; it's love; it's the presence of a loving mother, Mary. And Mary is the model of those who collaborate with Christ for the liberation of the earth and the acquisition of heaven. Mary, in her song of thanksgiving, proclaims the greatness of God and also proclaims that God rejects the pride of the powerful and exalts the humble.*

Archbishop Romero, 24 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus**

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. (Luke 23: 26)

*Unfortunately, dear brothers and sisters, we are the product of an education which is spiritualistic and individualistic, where we are taught "to gain salvation of the spirit, don't worry about others". Like we say to the suffering, "Have patience that you will get to heaven, endure!". No! That can't be. This isn't salvation, not the salvation that Christ brought. The salvation that Christ brings is the salvation from all the slaveries that oppress people. It is necessary that people break the chains that bind them: starting with the many oppressions and slaveries, fears that enslave their hearts, illnesses that oppress their bodies, sadnesses, preoccupations, terrors that oppress their freedom and their life.*

Archbishop Romero, 9 September 1979

[Song and/or reflection]

**Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. (Matthew 26: 27)

*If we could see that Christ is the needy person, the tortured person, the prisoner, the murderer, the one thrown away with so much indignity on our roads. If we could discover Christ in this rejected one, we would treat this Christ as a medal of gold. We would pick him up with tenderness and kiss him. We would not feel ashamed of him.*

Archbishop Romero, 16 March 1980

[Song and/or reflection]

**Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time**

Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)

*Here, Christ is flesh that suffers. Here where Christ is something, he is persecution: where Christ is men, women and children who sleep out in the country because they can't sleep in their house, where Christ is sickness that suffers because of the consequences of being so unprotected. Here is Christ with the cross upon his shoulders on the road to Calvary, not meditated in some chapel with the way of the cross or lived outside the people.*

Archbishop Romero, 5 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

### **Eighth Station: Jesus consoles the women**

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. (Luke 23:27-28)

*The one who lives with the poor, the miserable, the campesino (subsistence farmer) and who defends them and loves them like Christ our Lord, and who preaches the liberation of the poor, of the oppressed, of the one who suffers, this one is the Christ in our midst.*

Archbishop Romero, 23 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

### **Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time**

Jesus said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come. It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. (Luke 17:1-2)

*No one is vanquished even though he is put under the boot of oppression and repression. He who believes in Christ knows that he is victor and that the ultimate victory will be from truth and from justice.*

Archbishop Romero, 23 March 1980 (the day before his death)

[Song and/or reflection]

### **Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes**

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what scripture says: "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." (John 19:23-24)

*This is the commitment of being a Christian: to follow Christ in his incarnation. And if Christ is a majestic God who becomes a humble man and lives with the poor until the death of slaves on a cross, our Christian faith should be lived in the same fashion. The Christian who doesn't want to live with this commitment of solidarity with the poor doesn't deserve to call himself a Christian. Christ invites us not to fear persecution because, believe it brothers and sisters, the one who binds himself with the poor has to go through the same destiny as the poor: to be disappeared, to be tortured, to be captured, to appear as dead.*

Archbishop Romero, 17 February 1980

[Song and/or reflection]

**Eleventh Station: Jesus is crucified**

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). They offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him and divided his clothes among them casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. (Mark 15:22-25)

*Rome used to crucify many people, but not Roman citizens. Rome used to crucify the people that depended on their empire. And since Palestine depended on Rome (Pilate was the representative of Rome to this oppressed people), Christ had to be humiliated like someone who didn't merit citizenship.*

Archbishop Romero, 19 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross**

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, " Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last word. (Luke 23:44-46)

*While we look at Christ nailed to the cross, he invites us to discern from the sacred word a real mystery. If Christ is the representative for all people, we have to discover the suffering of our people in his suffering, his humiliation, his body scarred by the nails of the cross. This is our people tortured, crucified, spat upon, and humiliated for whom Christ our Lord is represented in order to give our very difficult situation a sense of redemption.*

Archbishop Romero, 24 March 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken down from the cross**

Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered whether he was already dead, and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in the tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. (Mark 15:43-46)

*Mary is the expression of the need of the Salvadoran people. Mary is the expression of the anguish of those who are in prison. Mary is the sadness of the mothers who have lost their children and no one will tell them where they are. Mary is the tenderness that looks with anguish for a solution.*

Archbishop Romero, 24 December 1978

[Song and/or reflection]

**Fourteenth Station: Jesus is buried**

And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was near by, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:42)

*Don't think, brothers and sisters, that our dead have left us. Their heaven, their eternal recompense, makes them more perfect in love. They are still loving the same causes that they died for. That means that in El Salvador this liberating force not only counts those who remain living, but also counts those who they wanted to kill who are more present than before in the people.*

Archbishop Romero, 2 March 1980

[Song and/or reflection]