

# St Oscar Romero

## Martyr for the faith

(20 min activity)

### **Ask: Name saints who were martyrs and share what you know about them**

Explain that the Catholic Church says “Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 2473).

Share that people continue to be martyred for their Catholic faith.

Tell participants that the Catholic Church Canonised St Oscar Romero on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

### **Share: the story of St Oscar Romero below, or by using the St Oscar Romero Assembly PowerPoint and timeline of his life**

Archbishop Romero served as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, El Salvador, from 1977 until he was martyred for his faith in 1980.

During that time political violence, disappearances and human rights violations were widespread. Many priests and nuns spoke out on behalf of the victims, and many were murdered because of it. Blessed Oscar Romero’s good friend and outspoken priest, Father Rutilio Grande was killed in 1977. After Fr Grande’s murder, Archbishop Romero spoke out even more strongly on behalf of the poor and oppressed. He heard their stories, and his voice against the violence grew louder and louder.

People in villages across the nation tuned in to radio broadcasts of Archbishop Romero’s homilies, finding strength and comfort in his words. Each week he would denounce the violence and urge people to live out Christ’s Gospel message of peace and love. Archbishop Romero was shot and killed while celebrating Mass on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1980. He was formally declared a martyr by Pope Francis in 2015. He was Canonised as a Saint by Pope Francis in October 2018.

### **Ask: How do you think St Oscar Romero was a witness to the truth of our faith?**

Explain that he was a witness to the truth of our faith because he shared Christ’s message of caring for the poor and standing with the oppressed.

## Distribute: St Oscar Romero quotes cards

Tell participants that they will receive a card with a quote from the sermons or writings of St Oscar Romero, from when he was an Archbishop in El Salvador. They will have 5 mins to read their card(s) and silently reflect on them before discussing.

Write the following questions on a board or flipchart:

- How do you think St Oscar Romero's words challenged people in power?
- How can we be witnesses to the faith through our words and actions?
- How does St Oscar Romero understand Christian discipleship? Do you agree?

Invite participants to discuss their answer in small groups or with the large group

Conclude: by sharing the prayer 'A step along the way' by Bishop Ken Untener and the 'Prayer for Christian Martyrs'



## St Oscar Romero Quotes

**Print these pages and cut out the quotes**

Many would like the poor to keep on saying that it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God. God's will is that all his children be happy.

We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas cribs. We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed tonight with nothing to eat, among the poor newsboys who will sleep covered with newspapers in doorways.

The world does not say: blessed are the poor. The world says: blessed are the rich. You are worth as much as you have. But, Christ says: wrong. Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, because they do not put their trust in what is so transitory.

To be a Christian now means to have the courage to preach the true teaching of Christ and not be afraid of it, not be silent out of fear and preach something easy that won't cause problems.

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

Peace is not the product of terror or fear. Peace is not the silence of cemeteries. Peace is not the silent result of violent repression. Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all. Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity. It is right and it is duty.

## St Oscar Romero Quotes

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The church values human beings and contends for their rights, for their freedom, for their dignity. That is an authentic church endeavour. While human rights are violated, while there are arbitrary arrests, while there are tortures, the church considers itself persecuted, it feels troubled, because the church values human beings and cannot tolerate that an image of God be trampled by persons that become brutalized by trampling on others.

For the church, the many abuses of human life, liberty and dignity are a heartfelt suffering. 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...Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God's image, and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom.

Each one of you must be God's microphone, each one of you must be a messenger, a prophet. The church will always exist as long as there is one baptized person. And that one baptized person who is left in the world is responsible before the world for holding aloft the banner of the Lord's truth and of his divine justice.

The church's social teaching tells everyone that the Christian religion does not have a merely horizontal meaning, or a merely spiritualized meaning that overlooks the wretchedness that surrounds it. It is a looking at God, and from God at one's neighbour as a brother or sister, and an awareness that "whatever you did to one of these, you did to me."

## St Oscar Romero Quotes

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When we struggle for human rights, for freedom, for dignity, when we feel that it is a ministry of the church to concern itself for those who are hungry, for those who are deprived, we are not departing from God's promise. He comes to free us from sin, and the church knows that sin's consequences are all such injustices and abuses. The church knows it is saving the world when it undertakes to speak also of such things.

The great need today is for Christians who are active and critical, who don't accept situations without analysing them inwardly and deeply. We no longer want masses of people like those who have been trifled with for so long. We want persons like fruitful fig trees, who can say yes to justice and no to injustice and can make use of the precious gift of life, regardless of the circumstances.

When we struggle for human rights, for freedom, for dignity, when we feel that it is a ministry of the church to concern itself for those who are hungry, for those who are deprived, we are not departing from God's promise.

What good are beautiful highways and airports, beautiful buildings full of spacious apartments, if they are only put together with the blood of the poor, who are not going to enjoy them?