

The life of St Oscar Romero

15th August 1917 – Oscar Arnulfo Romero is born into a family of ten, in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador.

1930 – He attends junior seminary, a boarding school to prepare boys for vocations to the priesthood, at 14 years old.

1937 – Oscar goes to Rome to study theology and stays there during World War II.

4th April 1942 – He is ordained a priest.

1944 – Fr Oscar returns to El Salvador and celebrates his first Mass in Ciudad Barrios with his family. He is made Director of the Diocese of San Miguel.

1944-1967 – He delivers many famous sermons and does a lot of pastoral work like visiting prisons and working with Caritas to provide food to the poor.

1967 – He is appointed as a Monsignor and moves to San Salvador, where he meets Fr Rutillio Grande; a fiery champion of the poor and oppressed. They become good friends.

21st June 1970 – Monsignor Romero is appointed as Bishop, but people are angry that he seems to be supporting a government that is oppressing the people.

1974 – A month after he becomes Bishop of the Diocese of Santiago de Maria the army kill three people in the village of Tres Calles. He comforts the families and writes a pastoral letter to the president to protest about the murders.

February 1977 – He becomes the Archbishop of San Salvador. He was considered a 'safe' appointment, someone who would maintain the status quo.

12th March 1977 – His good friend Fr Rutillio Grande and two other people are shot and killed. The event has a profound effect on Archbishop Romero and says he now knew he would take up where Fr Grande left off, advocating for the poor in the Diocese, in the face of violence from para-militaries.

1977 – In his homily after Fr Grande's death, Archbishop Romero says *"the Liberation that Fr. Grande preached was inspired by faith. A faith that speaks to us of eternal life. The liberation that ends in the happiness of God. The liberation that comes from repentance from sin. The liberation that is founded on Christ, the only force of salvation"*. Archbishop Romero's homilies are regularly recorded and broadcast on the radio. He often criticises the government and denounce violence and urge people to live out Christ's gospel message of love and peace.

1979 – Archbishop Romero visits the Pope, John Paul II, in Rome to outline the injustices in El Salvador. He doesn't have much support from the church at this time, and was receiving death threats from those outside the Church.

11th November 1979 – After a very serious death threat Archbishop Romero says: *"I want to assure you, and I ask your prayers that I be faithful to this promise, that I will not abandon my people, rather I will run the same risks with them that my ministry requires."*

23rd March 1980 – The day before his death, Romero's denounces the government and the army for their repressive policies. *"In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I beg you, I implore you, I order you, in the name of God, stop the repression!"*

24th March 1980 – Archbishop Romero is shot and killed as he says Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence. His last words were "May God have mercy on the assassin." His funeral was attended by 250,000 people. He is buried in the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador.

1981 – Archbishop Oscar Romero is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, having been nominated in 1978.

1983 – Pope John Paul II prays at Archbishop Oscar Romero's tomb during a visit to El Salvador.

1992 – An investigation is set up and concludes that ex-mayor General Roberto D'Aubuisson ordered ex-captain Alvaro Saravia to kill Romero. No one has ever been prosecuted for the assassination.

2007 – Pope Benedict XVI says *"Archbishop Romero certainly was a great witness to the faith, a man of great Christian virtue."*

2009 – Mauricio Funes is elected president of El Salvador and announces that his government will be inspired by Romero and the *'option for the poor'* (choosing first to help the most vulnerable).

2010 – The UN proclaimed 24th March as the 'International Day for the right to the truth concerning gross human rights violations and for the dignity of victims' in recognition of the role of Archbishop Romero in defence of human rights.

24th March 2010 – On the 30th anniversary of Romero's death President Funes offers an official state apology for Romero's assassination. He says that those involved in the assassination *"unfortunately acted with the protection, collaboration or participation of state agents."*

3rd Feb 2015 – Pope Francis declares Archbishop Romero a martyr and confirms he was killed *"in hatred of the faith"* – and not for purely political reasons.

23rd May 2015 – Romero is beatified in San Salvador and 250,000 people gathered in the capital to celebrate. In his homily Cardinal Angelo Amato says that *"The beatification today of Mgr. Romero is a feast of joy, of peace, of brotherhood, of welcome, of forgiveness. Romero is not a symbol of division, but of peace, of harmony, of fraternity. Let us bear his message in our hearts, in our homes, and give thanks to the Lord for this his faithful servant who gives the Church his holiness and to all humanity his kindness, his gentleness."* He then becomes known as Blessed Oscar Romero.

15th August 2017 – On the anniversary of 100 years since his birth, SCIAF adopt Blessed Oscar Romero as our patron. His courage, faith and love for the poor inspire us in our work every day.

14th October 2018 – Pope Francis officially recognises Blessed Oscar Romero as a Saint, at a Mass in St Peters Square, Rome. Saint Oscar Romero *"left the security of the world, even his own safety, in order to give his own life according to the Gospel, close to the poor and to his people, with a heart drawn to Jesus and his brothers and sisters."* Pope Francis said in his homily.