

OSCAR ROMERO: MODERN PROPHET by John Battle



Mural at San Salvador airport showing Oscar Romero alongside the poor

The recent Oscar Romero Lecture at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds was sponsored by The Romero Trust and the J&P Commission. It was given by the great friend of CAFOD Ruben Zamora whose own life of exemplary high level public service in El Salvador was characterized by his personal contact with Archbishop Oscar Romero, the priest murdered saying Mass for his passionate denunciation of state violence against the poor.

Rather than speak about his martyrdom Ruben Zamora chose to speak about Oscar Romero as a modern prophet. Of course, a prophet it is always important to stress is not a fortune teller sat predicting the future but follows in the long line of the prophetic tradition ranging back into the Old Testament with those such as Amos, Micah, and Jeremiah and in the New Testament John the Baptist. The prophets have been described as the “conscience of Israel” discerning the ‘signs of the times’ whose minds, in the words of Emeritus Pope Benedict writing in the 1970’s, were able “to probe deeper than the slogans of the day, who see more than others because they embrace a wider reality”.

The prophets did not outline the historical future but called people back to face the realities of their times and in the light of them to change their ways.

Archbishop Oscar Romero is solidly in the prophetic tradition and became known in his lifetime through his preaching and pastoral action as the champion of the poor and ‘the voice of the voiceless of El Salvador’ at a time of military dictatorship and violent repression - but he did not start of from there. Rather, he was quite a traditional conservative Catholic, an ‘establishment’ Church figure not rocking the boat until the shocking conversion moments of the murder of priests and thousands of the poor in his Diocese by the government military and their agents. In particular, it was the murder of his friend and guide the Jesuit priest Fr Rutillo Grande that profoundly affected him and led to his courageously outspoken daily challenges to the government of El Salvador to stop the oppression and violence. He reported in his daily Mass sermons on ‘the events of the day’ spelling out the suffering and deaths of the people and



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demanding in the name of God that they cease. He proclaimed that *“when the Church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises”*.

Personal and community pastoral action had to be backed by publicly identifying and naming and spelling out the larger causes, political, military, economic and cultural, and demanding deeper structural change.

Ruben Zamora outlined the characteristics that defined a modern prophet stressing the example not only of Archbishop Romero’s closeness to

the people, listening to their sufferings and being courageously outspoken but also his great “humility” an often-neglected quality in a true prophet. ‘Those who have Archbishop Romero as a friend in faith’, wrote Pope Francis *“who invoke him as protector and intercessor, who admire him, should find in him strength and energy to build the Kingdom of God and work for a more dignified social order”*.

In a recent Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis recommends us to look to the inspiration of the saints. Blessed Oscar Romero is a saint of our turbulent times when our work for both justice and peace is as demanding and crucial as ever.

FAMILY POVERTY: A DIOCESE ACTS – but only if you help! (Paid & Voluntary opportunities)



Can you help our new project that will be a set of parish-based meetings about Family Poverty and how this relates to Catholic Social Teaching. These meetings will explore different aspects of poverty and ask people to reflect on their local situation in the light of the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

Paid Work Opportunity

First of all, we need to find someone to develop the programme of meetings. ***This is a paid piece of work.*** If you are interested in doing this (or perhaps know someone else who might be interested) then please email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and we can send you further details of how to apply to do this work and a more detailed set of notes about what we are looking for.

The closing date for applications to do this work by **Tuesday 15 May**

We also need **volunteer** help with two aspects of this:

1. We need some people to help plan the programme and oversee it. The commitment would be something like 4 meetings a year over two years with a little work in between meetings. If you are interested, then please email chair.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk and we will get in touch.
2. This is only going to work if there are parishes or Churches Together groups who are prepared to take these meetings on. If you think your parish or group might be willing to take part, then please email jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk to express an interest. Two parishes have expressed an interest so far.

TAKE ACTION ON THE SYRIAN SITUATION

Pax Christi UK is urging Catholics in the UK to write to their MP with regards to the recent air strikes in Syria supported by the UK Government.

“We urge our members and supporters to contact their MP NOW to challenge the military actions taken against Syria. Say that you do not support this escalation of violence, it is not done



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in your name. Ask how it is possible for such action to be taken without reference to Parliament. Use some of the practical alternatives suggested in statements below to put a case for diplomacy, engagement, non-military responses to the on-going crisis in Syria, including the use of chemical and other weapons systems.”

The International Secretariat of Pax Christi (which has member organisations in about 60 countries) has issued a statement saying: *Syria has reached a dangerous turning point with violence-inciting rhetoric and call upon world leaders to immediately stop any further military steps. It is our view that a fully inclusive and nonviolent political process through diplomacy and dialogue is the only way to end this brutal conflict.*

We strongly affirm Pope Francis's message in response to the latest chemical weapons attack in Douma in which he condemned the attack and stated that 'there is not a good or a bad war, and nothing can justify such instruments that exterminate defenceless people and populations.' He also asked us in his message to pray that the responsible politicians and military leaders choose another path: that of negotiations, the only one that can bring peace.

Not sure who your MP is?

Just follow this link and put your postcode in <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

Want more background?

Try this excellent article by Paul Rogers:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/attacking-assad-to-do-or-not-to-do>



DAY OF REFLECTION WITH THE WOOD HALL CARMELITES – 14 April 2018

Having to re-arrange the date of this event meant that there were less people who were able to go. However, the dozen people who were able to attend had a delightful day. The Wood Hall Carmelite sisters are so welcoming and have much wisdom to offer – and they do it with such humility and a sense of fun that you can't help but enjoy yourself. The contributions from the sisters led to much discussion and it was good that, on the first really nice day for a while, there was also space to walk around the beautiful grounds surrounding the monastery to mull things over. The day started with mass and finished with an adapted Vespers that focussed on issues of Justice & Peace – so there was opportunity for communal prayer as well. These Days of Reflection are now becoming a regular part of the schedule of events organised by the Commission. Hopefully, they might invite us back before too long!



Subject to funding, we are aiming to organise another Day of Reflection in the Autumn.

CAFOD IN ACTION IN EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA by Sophie Aulton

I have recently returned from a two-and-a-half-week trip to El Salvador and Nicaragua as part of my gap year on CAFOD's Step into the Gap programme for 18-30 year olds. Before the trip, I had few expectations never having visited a country in Latin America. I could only read up on CAFOD's notes on the history and current situation in Central America to prepare myself for the visit. The training days filled with warnings of dengue fever, sexual assault, armed robbery and gang violence made me slightly uneasy about making the 10,500-mile trip to some of the most dangerous and gang ridden areas in the world.

To my utter bemusement, upon arrival and the subsequent days I spent in El Salvador and Nicaragua I did not feel unsafe once. This meant I was able to concentrate on what I had been sent out to do: experience the work that CAFOD does first hand.

Our time in El Salvador was split into two. The main chunk of our time was spent in the rural area of Guaymango. There we were able to experience life with families who had received help from CAFOD's partner Solidarity Services Association CVX. All the families were farmers who had been struggling to produce enough food to eat and sell. This was largely due to the loss in traditional farming techniques and crops. Solidarity Services Association CVX was able to help the farmers by teaching them farming techniques that had worked for many years and giving them traditional crops that could survive in the harsh monsoon climate of El Salvador. In addition, families were also given assistance with their bee keeping.

Before this help, the bee hives were hard to get into, and the honey comb could form naturally meaning that the process of getting honey was

slower and less efficient. By giving the farmers bee keeping frames, more honey could be generated, meaning the farmers were able to sell more honey.



The rest of our time in San Salvador was spent with CAFOD's partners in the city, one of whom was a group of nuns that lived in a gang ridden area. One of the projects we saw was the 'Saturday Club'. This was a place where children could go to do activities such as dance, sport, and music. The idea of the club is to build up a sense of community whilst preventing children being on the street and exposed to gang violence and the pressures of joining a gang. Another project was a weekly occupational therapy group for women of the same area. When we visited, they were making cards. The activity only used simple materials like ribbon, card and wrapping paper with pictures on to decorate, however the effect that making something so simple was immediately obvious. When the women were making their cards, there was endless chatter (all in Spanish of course!). We immediately saw the sense of community that the meetings created, and the effect that it had on the women personally. Each person was so proud of what

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they made, some would give them to family members, others would use them for decoration in their own home, it didn't matter what they would do with the cards afterwards, the process of making one item was enough to bring joy to all of them.

We spent less time in Nicaragua. However, we were able to spend several days with two of CAFOD's partners, John XXIII Institute and Mary Barreda Association. With the John XXIII institute we saw the positive effects that loans had on individuals and families. The way the loans worked was simple. An amount of money would be borrowed, and an agreement would be made as to how frequent and how much the repayments were. In addition to the flexibility of the loan, only half of the amount that was borrowed had to be repaid, meaning that individuals were not lumbered with debts they could not repay. One man we met who had used John XXIII loans had been able to open a shop with his mother. The money they borrowed had been used to buy a fridge and a freezer, with these they bought and sold things like milk and cheese from their own house, and had a profitable business, and source of income.



The fridge & Freezer bought with the loan

The Mary Barreda Association was set up to help with Nicaragua's prominent sexual exploitation and trafficking issue. Mary Barreda Association helps young women who are being sexually abused, exploited, or in a situation of prostitution. They are able to work to remove them safely from these situations, then follow that up with help to give them skills that provide opportunities for employment. Their work also centred on young people, making them protagonists combatting physical, psychological and sexual violence



Some of the women helped by Mary Barreda association with the Step into the Gap volunteers

Returning from the trip made me reflect on just how much I had learnt from these experiences. Actually seeing CAFOD's work in action made me realise the very real connection between those fundraising in the UK and the people that were being helped on the other side of the world. It forcefully slotted into place the process that CAFOD goes through: building relationships with people and partners to ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved and ensuring that people's donations are going to projects that will carry on helping people as much as possible. I feel extremely privileged to have been given the



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opportunity to go to Central America, not only because of the people I encountered, but the skills I learned when I was there. I can now say that I have been in multi lingual meetings discussing project development and outcomes of funding! I have worked through a translator while still having a personal encounter with individuals;

I have represented a charity overseas, acting as a mouth piece for people both in the UK and then back home for those from El Salvador. It was a truly unique and enlightening experience that has allowed me to grow as a person.



COME AND HEAR MORE ABOUT IT



Friday 27 April from 11:30 – 2:00-pm @ The CAFOD Volunteer Centre, St Monica's – to the right of the Main Hinsley Hall building in Headingley LS6 2BX

The Leeds CAFOD Volunteer Centre are hosting a shared lunch where Sophie will talk more about her experiences and be available to answer any questions anyone might have.

Come for as long or a short a time as you are able and bring a some food to share – but **please** email the CAFOD office if you intend to come along: leeds@cafod.org.uk

It's free to come along to this event but there will be a collection to go towards the money that Sophie has to raise towards the cost of her trip.



LIVE SIMPLY AWARD UPDATE

Since the Commission ran a workshop about this award last June this is what has happened:

- Our Lady of Kirkstall parish has formally signed up to the scheme, as reported about 'creating a buzz in Leeds', in a recent newsletter
- Good Shepherd Mytholmroyd are working through the process of whether, as a parish, they can sign up to work towards this award

Now, a meeting has just been held in Settle where the scheme has been promoted in St Mary & St Michael parish. New parishioner, Paul Kelly, comments

I'm pleased to confirm we profiled LiveSimply at Masses in Settle last week-end. Led by the parish priest the congregation prayed the CAFOD LiveSimply prayer cards at the start of Mass and we spoke about the scheme before the end of Mass. The response was fantastic with 9 people signing up to form a LiveSimply group, plus Maggie McSherry (Faith and Justice worker for the Lancaster Diocese) and myself. We're hoping to have our first meeting in a couple of week's time and also register the parish on the LiveSimply page of the CAFOD web site.

Are there any other parishes out there who might be thinking about signing up to work towards this award ? – it is a fantastic way of creating a spirit of parish renewal

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2018**REFLECTION: JESUS INVITES US TO LOOK AND SEE – 3rd Sunday of Easter**

The disciples are sharing their stories about the risen Lord. There is a general hubbub, and it is not clear who is listening to whom, if anyone is. Into this atmosphere, the Lord steps and announces 'Peace'. Naturally, this causes great alarm, terror even. This is not unfamiliar to us. Anyone who announces peace will find it does not go down that well. A politician who insists that war is not the way or that innocent blood will not be spilled will find that alarm and fear predominates, even among those who maintain that peace really is what they want.

To try to calm the general outbreak of anxiety, Jesus gets the disciples to look and see. The truth is physical, something to be touched and known, made up of hands, feet, flesh and bones. Then he gets them to pay attention to the marks of suffering in this body. It is not what it was, not in pristine condition, but they know how the marks got there, they know how this happened, and maybe they even know why it happened. Doubts linger, so Jesus tries another angle. There are some basic human needs. Jesus demonstrates one of them before their eyes. He eats the fish. It's not a slap-up meal, but it's good for you, and it's good to share what you have,



and for some of you, remember, this is why I chose you, you fishermen.

And at last Jesus is able to move to the Scriptures. This realisation of Peace, this physical reality, this battered body, these basic needs met, it is all there to be retrieved from the sources, just as we discussed so many times before, on the road to Jerusalem. The hard knocks are inevitable, it seems, but so is the rising. Now, remember all this when you go to places I have never been.

This reflection was written by Paul McGowan. Paul is a member of the Pax Christi Executive Committee and the Coventry Justice and Peace Group. It is one of a series for each of the Sundays of Easter that are available on the Pax Christi UK website www.paxchristi.org.uk

EVENTS**Sat 21 Apr****MISSION EARTH 2***All Saints Lower School, Nunnery Lane, York YO23 1JG*

At this special event organised by the Justice & Peace Commission of the Middlesbrough Diocese they will be launching their Diocesan Environment Policy – something they have been working on for a little while now. Special speaker: Ellen Teague of the Columban Justice & Peace team. Middlesbrough J&P extend a warm invitation to anyone from the Leeds Diocese who is interested in attending. See our website for more details. Take a packed lunch – other refreshments provided.



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 Sun 22 Apr	<p>EARTH DAY 2018 The Global Catholic Climate Movement invites Catholics across the world to especially remember creation on this Sunday and their special website for this day includes liturgical resources to help communities do this in an appropriate way. http://catholicclimatemovement.global/earth-day-2018/</p>
 Wed 25 Apr Thur 26 Apr	<p>SCREENING OF SHADOW WORLD organised by Yorkshire CAAT <i>WED 25: The Rose Bowl, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds LS1 3HB 19:00-21:00</i> <i>THUR 26: University of Huddersfield, Oastler Building OA7/31, 19:00 – 21:00</i> This is a film that explores the shocking realities of the Arms Trade. Following the screening there will be a discussion with Andrew Feinstein, author of the book of the same name.</p>
 Thur 26 Apr	<p>CONSCIENCE & THE IMAGE OF GOD : REFLECTIONS FROM ACCOMPANYING REFUGEES <i>The Friends Meeting House 6 Mount St Manchester M2 5NS 19:00 – 20:30</i> This is the title of the Newman Lecture which, this year, will be given by Sarah Teather, former MP and Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service. This event is free to attend but booking a place is essential – please email dcq@mac.com to book a place.</p>
 Fri 27 Apr	<p>CAFOD'S WORK IN EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA <i>CAFOD Volunteer Centre, St Monica's Hinsley Hall, Leeds LS6 2BX 11:30 – 14:00</i> Come along and hear about a recent visit to El Salvador and Nicaragua by Sophie Aulton, the CAFOD Step into the Gap volunteer based at Leeds Trinity. Stay for as long a period as you are able. Lunch will be provided so please email leeds@cafod.org.uk to let them know so they have enough for everyone!</p>
 Sat 28 Apr	<p>HOW ARE WE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET? <i>The Mirfield Centre, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield WF14 0BW 10:30-15:30</i> A day conference led by freelance Catholic journalist Ellen Teague exploring the key themes of Care of Creation of Love for the Poor. Cost is £21 including lunch. email bharper@mirfield.org.uk to book a place.</p>
 Sat 05 May	<p>SONGS OF HOPE AND PROTEST <i>Quaker Meeting House 188 Woodhouse Ln Leeds LS2 14:00 – 17:00</i> This singing workshop is to mark Naqba day and will be given by Frances Bernstein. No Singing experience is needed. Suggested donation is £10 or pay-as-you-can. All proceeds go to Medical Aid for Palestine. Booking a place is essential please email frances@naturalvoice.net to do this.</p>
 Wed 16 May	<p>IS A MORE PEACEFUL WORLD POSSIBLE? <i>St Mary & St Michaels Parish Hall, Tillman Close, Settle BD24 9RA 19:30 – 21:00</i> The Speaker is Professor Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor at the Bradford School of Peace Studies who will, no doubt, bring his incisive analytical skills and vast knowledge of the field of conflict to look at this thorny issue. This event has been organised by the Settle Churches Together J&P Group.</p>
 Wed 13 Jun	<p>COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP OF SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILIES <i>St Mary & St Michaels Parish Hall, Tillman Close, Settle BD24 9RA 19:30 – 21:00</i> The speaker for this evening meeting will be Sean Ryan, National Caritas Community Sponsorship Co-ordinator. If you want to do more about refugees and live in Craven district, then this is a great opportunity to find out more about this scheme and how whole church communities can become involved. This event has been organised by the Settle Churches Together J&P group.</p>
 Find us on Facebook	Follow us on Facebook to help keep up to date with the key campaigns that the Commission is supporting.

Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.

See our website for full details of these and other events that may be of interest