



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR
ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEATIFICATION
OF MONSIGNOR ÓSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO GALDÁMEZ**

*His Eminence José Luis Escobar Alas
Archbishop of San Salvador
President of the Bishops' Conference of El Salvador*

Dear Brother,

The beatification of Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero Galdámez, who was Pastor of your beloved Archdiocese is a cause for great joy for the Salvadorian people and for we who rejoice by the example of the *best children of the Church*. Archbishop Romero, who built peace with the power of love, bore witness to the faith with his life, totally committed to the extreme.

The Lord never abandons his people in difficulties, and is always alert to their needs. He *sees* oppression, He *hears* his children's cries of pain, and comes to their aid to free them from oppression and bring them to a new, fertile and spacious land, that "flows with milk and honey" (cf. Ex 3:7-8). As He chose Moses one day so that, in His name, he would guide His people, according to His heart He continues to raise up pastors, who feed their flocks with knowledge and prudence (cf. Jer 3: 15).

In the beautiful land of Central America, bathed by the Pacific Ocean, the Lord granted his Church a zealous bishop who, loving God and serving brothers and sisters, became the image of Christ the Good Shepherd. In times of difficult coexistence, Archbishop Romero knew how to lead, defend and protect his flock, remaining faithful to the Gospel and in communion with the whole Church. His ministry was distinguished by particular attention to the most poor and marginalized. And at the moment of his death, while he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of love and reconciliation, he received the grace to identify himself fully with the One who gave his life for his sheep.

On this feast day for the Salvadorian nation, and also for the neighbouring Latin American countries, let us give thanks to God because He granted the martyred Bishop the ability to see and *hear* the suffering of his people, and molded his heart so that, in His name, he could direct them and illuminate them, to the point of making of his work a full exercise of Christian charity.

The voice of the newly Blessed continues to resonate today to remind us that the Church, a convocation of brothers around their Lord, is the family of God, in which there should be no division. Faith in Jesus Christ, when correctly understood and its final consequences accepted, generates communities that build peace and solidarity. This is what the Church in El Salvador is called to today, in America and in the whole world: to be rich in mercy and to become a leaven of reconciliation for society.

Archbishop Romero invites us to good sense and reflection, to respect for life and harmony. It is necessary to renounce “the violence of the sword, of hate” and to live “the violence of love, that left Christ nailed to the Cross, that makes each one of us overcome selfishness and so that there be no more such cruel inequality between us”. He knew how to see and experienced in his own flesh “the selfishness that hides itself in those who do not wish to give up what is theirs for the benefit of others”. And, with the heart of a father, he would worry about the “poor majority”, asking the powerful to convert “weapons into sickles for work”.

May those who hold Archbishop Romero as a friend of faith, those who invoke him as protector and intercessor, those who admire his image, find in him the strength and courage to build the Kingdom of God, to commit to a more equal and dignified social order.

It is a favourable moment for a true national reconciliation in front of the challenges we are facing today. The Pope participates in your hopes, and joins in your prayers so that the seed of martyrdom may flourish and become entrenched in the true paths of the sons and daughters of that nation, which proudly hears the name of the divine Saviour of the world.

Dear brother, I ask you to please pray and ask [others] to pray for me, while I impart my Apostolic Blessing to all who come together in various ways to celebrate the newly Blessed.

Fraternally yours,

From the Vatican, 23 May 2015

FRANCIS

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