

Commemorating November 16: First Anniversary of the Jesuit/Co-Worker Martyrs

Ideas and Suggestions

Organizing the Religious Service, "Martyrs in a Martyred Land:" N.B. Our goal is 1,000 celebrations across the United States!

1. Pick an appropriate church/synagogue or other site. Hold it at Jesuit-run parish/chapel if there is one in your vicinity.
2. Seek to attract as large a turnout as possible, especially those who are new to the issue, not just the "converted." Organize wide publicity: flyers, church/synagogue bulletin announcements, 30-second radio spots, advance newspaper stories, posters, etc.
3. Invite local religious and political leaders to take part. Invite local Jesuits to participate by doing readings, etc. It's also an excellent time to test the commitment of those newly elected or re-elected to office in November. You might invite your local congressperson, for example, to do one of the readings.
4. Feel free to use the service "as is," or make any changes appropriate for your local area. However you design it, use the service as a time to pray, reflect, tell stories about El Salvador, sing, remember and celebrate the lives of the eight martyrs and the other Salvadorans who have lost their lives since 1979. It can also be a time to share information on Central America, announce upcoming events and welcome newcomers.
5. If it's appropriate and you have time, incorporate firsthand testimony about El Salvador into the service. If there is a Salvadoran refugee community in your area, invite one or more refugees to tell their stories. Include stories from someone who has travelled to El Salvador recently.
6. Be sure to announce the event to your local media: TV, radio, daily and weekly papers, religious press, union newsletter, etc. Ask someone in your organizing group to greet members of the press at the service and give them a copy of a statement explaining the reason for the event.
7. We encourage you to take up a collection at the service to support justice and peace efforts for El Salvador. You may choose to use all or part for:
 - a. Your own local organizing work
 - b. *The Search for Justice*, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782.
 - c. *SHARE Foundation*, Box 16 - Cardinal Station, Washington, DC 20064. (Humanitarian aid for repopulation settlements).
 - d. *CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador)*, 1314 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. (General grassroots organizing).
 - e. *National Agenda for Peace in El Salvador*, P.O. Box 15554, Washington, DC 20003. (Work with the Congress on U.S. policy).
 - f. A special project of Jesuit Refugee Services to repatriate a community of 610 Salvadorans returning to El Salvador in November 1990 after 10 years of exile in an isolated area of Panama. They are making a special plea to faith-based and humanitarian organizations to aid them with economic support in this first phase of their return. Checks payable to: *Jesuit Missions/Refugee Services/Romero*, 1424 16th St., NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036.
 - g. *CRECEN (Salvadoran Refugee Committee)*, P.O. Box 43603, Washington, DC 20010.
 - h. *CARECEN (Central America Refugee Center)*, 3112 Mt. Pleasant St., NW, Washington, DC 20010.
8. The religious service includes petitions as a concrete form of commitment to work for the people of El Salvador. Be sure to send them to those listed on the petition sheet, with copies to the *Search for Justice*, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782. We want to be able to tell you and the media how many services were held.
9. Include an announcement of your local activities leading up to December 2, the 10th Anniversary of the martyrdom of the 4 U.S. churchwomen. Link these two events spanning the 1980-90 decade. Some groups are planning a series of events between November 16 and December 2. To obtain a religious service and organizing packet for December 2, contact: *Religious Task Force on Central America*, 1747 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009. (Packet is \$5, prepaid).

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Prepared by: *Search for Justice*, A Project of the *Quixote Center*, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782. For more information: 301-699-0042.

Organizing Other Events for November 16:

It's important that this day be commemorated in as public and visible a way as possible. The following are suggestions:

1. *The Search for Justice is organizing a national "Red Ribbon" campaign in honor of the Jesuit/co-worker martyrs. (Red is the color of martyrdom). Work with your local churches, synagogues, unions, schools, universities, peace groups, etc. to make this a visible local witness.*

2. Select a public place in your city which is seen by lots of people on a daily basis: a public park, the front of a federal building, a post office sidewalk, a mall, the center of a traffic loop, a university campus, etc. Set up eight large symbols there to commemorate the eight martyrs. If possible, make it an all-day commemoration. Symbols might include: 8 large candles, 8 symbolic coffins, 8 people holding candles or flowers, etc. Whatever you choose, include signs with the names of the eight martyrs. At least one person should be present to leaflet passers-by with information on the reason for the event.

3. Include some symbol(s) to remember the 75,000 Salvadorans who have been killed in the violence since 1979. Especially powerful is a symbol which produces sustained noise. We suggest dry beans, gravel or marbles poured slowly into a metal container to symbolize the extent of the killing in the last 10 years. You might begin with eight beans or rocks, dropped one by one, to symbolize the Jesuit/co-worker martyrs. Then make the point that these eight represent tens of thousands more and pour the beans or rocks slowly so the sound is loud and piercing for several minutes. If you have the use of a public setting all day, you might repeat this several times. If you choose beans, you might donate them to a local soup kitchen at the end of the day, making the link between military spending and hunger. On the other hand, if your Senator/Congressperson is pro-military aid, you might want to dump the beans or rocks at the door of his/her office with a message explaining why. (Alternatively, you might choose to use a smaller, numerous version of your major symbol such as small candles, flower petals, wooden crosses, etc.).

4. If you can stage an all-day commemoration in a public place, consider ongoing testimonies and storytelling from El Salvador as a way to attract and hold interest. If you don't have enough local "testifiers," we suggest readings from: *El Salvador: A Spring Whose Waters Never Run Dry*, available from: EPICA, 1470 Irving St., NW, Washington, DC 20010. Price is \$6 plus \$1.50 postage and handling.

5. The husband of Elba Julia Ramos is the gardener at the Jesuit University in San Salvador. A few weeks after the murders, he planted eight rose bushes in the place where the bodies of his wife and daughter and the six priests were found. You might seek to plant eight bushes or trees (or even one "peace tree") somewhere as a symbol of new life coming from these eight deaths. It would also be an action supportive of our natural environment.

6. Consider a public procession from the site of any public commemoration to the place where the religious service is being held.

7. Use the occasion to promote the boycott of Salvadoran coffee. Develop a special leaflet which remembers the eight martyrs and could be distributed at local supermarkets on November 16. (For more information on that boycott, contact: *Neighbor to Neighbor*, 2601 Mission St., #400, San Francisco, CA 94110).

8. Visit the editorial board of your local paper in advance of November 16 and urge a special commemorative editorial on that day. If the paper won't write one, ask them to consider a guest column from someone in your group, or at the least - a letter to the editor.

9. Approach your local city council and urge them to pass a resolution making November 16 "Peace in El Salvador Day," calling for an end to all U.S. war-related aid to that land. Be sure that any resolution is sent to your Representative, Senators and the Bush Administration.

10. Make November 16 a special day for "tabling" (distributing printed information) on local streets or in malls. Include a petition campaign against U.S. aid. Pass out red ribbons. Make people aware of the coffee boycott.

11. Approach your local churches/synagogues and ask them to remember the eight martyrs in their Sabbath services closest to November 16 so that people who do not come to the special service are still aware of the anniversary. Prepare "bulletin announcements" for distribution in advance. Ask them to toll their bells at noon on November 16.

12. Religiously affiliated schools and universities might consider special assemblies on November 16 with speakers who can inform about the reality of El Salvador. If nothing is happening locally in such institutions, approach the administrators and suggest educational forums, speakers, etc.

13. *Let us know your ideas!*