

Martyrs in a Martyred Land

**A Religious Vigil Service to Remember Six Jesuits and Their Two Co-Workers
Murdered by the Salvadoran Military - Nov. 16, 1989
by Maureen Fiedler, SL and William R. Callahan, SJ**

BEFORE THE SERVICE: Give everyone who comes a small swatch of red ribbon with a straight pin. Explain that it will be put on as part of the service.

Parts:	Narrator	Props:	8 candles
	Questioner		red ribbons for everyone
	Readers 1-4; Special Readers (various)		slide projector/screen
	8 Candle Holders/Special Readers (representing the 8 martyrs)		
	Song leader(s)		
	Drummer (preferrably muffled drum sound)		
	Congregation		

Prior to the Service: Review the program and explain the meaning of "Presente!" (*pray-sen-tay*). ("Presente" is an acclamation used in Latin America to affirm the work of the people named and to make them "present" here and now as a sign of our solidarity in their struggle).

ALL STAND

Gathering Song - "Were You There When They Crucified My God?" (2 verses)
(Place dims to darkness. Sound of muffled drums: 8 slow beats, pause, 8 more beats).

Narrator - Ignacio Ellacuria! (*Ig-na-see-o Ay-aah-ku-ree-a*)

Candle Holder #1 - Presente! (*First lighted candle is brought to altar**)

N. - Armando Lopez Quintana! (*Ar-man-do Lo-pez Keen-ta-na*)

CH #2 - Presente! (*2nd candle*)

N. - Ignacio Martin Baro! (*Ig-na-see-o Mar-teen Ba-ro*)

CH #3 - Presente! (*3rd candle*)

N. - Segundo Montes Mozo! (*Say-gun-do Mon-tez Mo-zo*)

CH #4 - Presente! (*4th candle*)

N. - Juan Ramon Moreno Pardo! (*Whan Ra-mon Mo-ray-no Par-do*)

CH #5 - Presente! (*5th candle*)

N. - Joaquin Lopez y Lopez! (*Wha-keen Lo-pez ee Lo-pez*)

CH #6 - Presente! (*6th candle*)

N. - Elba Julia Ramos! (*El-ba Whoo-lee-a Ra-mos*)

CH #7 - Presente! (*7th candle*)

N. - Celina Maricet Ramos! (*Say-lee-na Mar-ee-set Ra-mos*)

CH #8 - Presente! (*8th candle*)

(*As each name is called, candle holder brings lighted candle to front and places it on altar or in holders).

BE SEATED

Section 1 - The Night of the Murders

Questioner - What's going on here? Who are the people whose names were called out?

Narrator - They were six Jesuit priests and two women murdered by the Salvadoran military in November 1989. We have come together to pray and to remember them on the first anniversary of their martyrdom. Here is what happened:

Reader 1 - It was the first hours of the morning on November 16, 1989. There was a military curfew in the

city of San Salvador. The Salvadoran resistance, the FMLN, had launched a major urban offensive five days before. Only soldiers were free to move about.

Reader 2 - There had been ominous signs. Two days before, soldiers, with permission from President Cristiani, had searched the Jesuit residence at the University of Central America. The government radio had broadcast death threats against the Jesuits.

Reader 1 - At 2 a.m., more than 30 soldiers of the elite, U.S.-trained Atlacatl Brigade broke into the grounds of the Jesuits' University. A rocket blew open the door of the Pastoral Center.

Reader 2 - The Jesuits were only half dressed when the soldiers forced open the door of their residence. They were dragged to the patio and forced to lay face down on the ground.

Slide #1 - Dead Jesuits lying face down at murder site

Reader 1 - Then the soldiers shot them in the head, one by one.
(Six candles are slowly snuffed, one by one).

Reader 2 - The soldiers then searched the house, found the Jesuits' housekeeper and her 15 year old daughter huddled in their rooms. They were witnesses. And so they shot them to death.
(Two remaining candles are slowly snuffed, one by one).

Reader 1 - The soldiers spent another hour ransacking the house. They destroyed the offices and put a bullet in the heart of the picture of Archbishop Romero and another in the feet on the crucifix in the chapel.

Questioner - My God! What a horrible crime! Why were they killed?

Narrator - They were killed because they committed their lives to the poor of El Salvador. They were killed because they proclaimed the truth about El Salvador. The army blamed their preaching of the Gospel for causing unrest among the poor.

Questioner - But surely preaching the Gospel and working for social justice is not a reason for cold-blooded murder!

Narrator - It is in El Salvador, and has been for over 50 years. Listen to the story of this martyred land.

Section 2 - The Reality and History of El Salvador

Slide #2 - Map of Central America

Reader 1 - El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America, about the size of Massachusetts. It has 5 million people. In the late 1800's, a government favoring rich landowners proclaimed private property laws which threw the Indians and peasants off the land they had farmed communally. The people rebelled. The military crushed the peasant revolt. And so began an alliance between brutal security forces and an oligarchy of rich landowners and business people who controlled land, politics and economic life while most of the people lived in misery.

Reader 2 - The peasants again revolted in 1932, demanding land and justice. This time, the military killed more than 30,000 people in only six weeks.

Reader 1 - In the 1970's after many non-violent efforts to change El Salvador's unjust economic system were repressed violently, a political movement called the FMLN rose up to challenge the military. At that time, some clergy and religious, called by the social teaching of the Church and the Second Vatican Council,

began to work more directly with the poor. Touched by their misery, these church people began to support the cry of the poor for land, education and health care.

Reader 2 - The military and political elites called them "communists." Right wing death squads distributed flyers with the words, "Be a patriot. Kill a priest." A Jesuit priest, Fr. Rutilio Grande, who did pastoral work among the poor, was shot by the military in 1977. His killing converted the new archbishop of San Salvador to preach the Good News that God has special love for the poor. The Archbishop's name was Oscar Arnulfo Romero. The oligarchy and military quickly labelled him too a subversive and a "communist."

Slide #3 - Archbishop Romero

Reader 3 - Following a military coup in 1979, right wing death squads escalated their brutal killings, murdering thousands of the poor, especially in the countryside. They focused on catechists, labor leaders, teachers, and several priests. Anyone who spoke of the misery of the poor and encouraged people to organize for social reform became a potential target. The political leaders of the FMLN were among the victims, assassinated during a public meeting at a Jesuit high school. The FMLN went underground and launched a guerilla war.

Reader 4 - Archbishop Romero was a tireless and prophetic voice denouncing the violence on both sides and defending the poor. In February 1980 he wrote to President Carter and begged him to stop military and economic aid to El Salvador. He said:

Special Reader 1 - "Your government's contribution, instead of favoring the cause of justice and peace in El Salvador, will surely increase injustice here and sharpen the repression against the people's organization fighting to defend their most fundamental human rights."

Reader 3 - On March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass in a convent chapel, Archbishop Romero was shot to death. No one has ever been tried for the crime although strong evidence indicates that Roberto D'Aubuisson and his allies in the ARENA Party carried out the killing.

N. - For Oscar Romero, shot down for preaching the Good News of freedom and God's special love for the poor, we cry out:

ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Reader 4 - The U.S. government ignored Monsenor Romero's advice and continued to send aid because it said that the guerrillas of the FMLN were communists and had to be defeated by the forces of so-called "democracy." In 1980, ten thousand of the poor were assassinated by right wing military death squads.

Slide #4 - Four U.S. Churchwomen

Reader 3 - In December 1980, four United States churchwomen were abducted, raped and murdered by the Salvadoran military. Their "crime" was their work with the poor and their refusal to flee El Salvador even when threatened with death.

Reader 4 - U.S. aid was stopped for a few weeks. Some low-ranking soldiers were accused of the killing and jailed. The higher-ups who authorized the crime were never brought to justice. U.S. aid was quickly resumed.

N. - For Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kazel and Ita Ford, we cry out:

ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Reader 3 - The U.S. not only did not *stop* its military and economic aid in the wake of these killings, it *increased* it until the aid totalled more than a million dollars a day! The armed forces and their death squads had free rein to kill whomever they wished.

Reader 4 - Throughout the 1980's the killings continued. By November 1989, more than 70,000 people were dead.

Slide #5 - Peasants of El Salvador

Reader 1 - Although some deaths came from fighting between the army and the guerillas of the FMLN, most of those assassinated were poor peasants like these peasants who took over some abandoned land. They died at the hands of death squads formed in the heart of the military establishment who killed with weapons bought by U.S. funds.

Reader 2 - Father Ellacuria, one of the martyred Jesuits, Rector of the Jesuit University of Central America, described it in 1985:

Special Reader 2 - "El Salvador is a lacerated reality, almost mortally wounded, shaken by more than fifty thousand killed and hundreds of thousands of exiles, displaced or refugees; it is a reality in which the majority of the population has neither bread to eat, salary to earn, nor political air to breathe..." (Excerpted from: "The UCA regarding the Doctorate given to Monsenor Romero," ECA, #437, March 1985).

Reader 2 - By 1990, 75,000 people had died in this brutal war.

N. - For the peasants of El Salvador, killed in this brutal war, we cry out:

ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #6 - Crucified Peasant of El Salvador

Questioner - But why does the U.S. continue to support the brutal military and the economic elites against the poor?

N. - The answer is blunt and pragmatic. It flows from the Monroe Doctrine which declared Latin America a U.S. sphere of influence. The U.S. government wants regimes which will protect its strategic and economic interests. Robert Olds, the Under Secretary of State in 1927, expressed it succinctly:

Special Reader 3 - "We control the destinies of Central America, and we do so for the simple reason that the national interest (of the U.S.) absolutely dictates such a course...Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those we do not support, fail."

N. - And so U.S. funds kept flowing, flowing, flowing.

SONG: (one verse) "Were you there when they crucified the poor?"
(Muffled drums beat slowly, 8 beats, pause, 8 more beats).

Section 3 - "Martyrs of Justice"

Narrator - In the midst of this violent reality, the Jesuits and their co-workers lived and labored. Theirs was the mission which Jesus quoted from Isaiah:

Special Reader 4 - "The Spirit of God has been given to me,
for God has anointed me.

God has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim God's year of favor." (Luke 4: 18-19)

Slide #7 - Ignacio Ellacuria

Special Reader 5 - Best known was Ignacio Ellacuria, the Rector of the University. He was a philosopher, considered one of the outstanding intellectuals in Latin America. A Basque by birth, he devoted his life to El Salvador's reality: writing, speaking, appearing on television. He spoke out unceasingly for justice and the rights of the poor. A sharp critic of U.S. policy in Central America, he spent the last months of his life working to end the war by a negotiated solution.

N. - For Ignacio Ellacuria, assassinated on November 16, 1989, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #8 - Amando Lopez Quintana

Special Reader 6 - Amando Lopez Quintana, a Spaniard, was a Professor of Theology. He was known as a quiet gentle person with a quick wit and a compassionate heart, who regularly celebrated liturgies in the barrios of the poor. He wrote to a friend in 1985, " when I go to say Mass in the barrios, and they read the list of their martyrs...there are times when I can hardly hold back the tears."

N. - For Amando Lopez Quintana, murdered by the Salvadoran military, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #9 - Ignacio Martin Baro

Special Reader 7 - Ignacio Martin Baro was born in Spain but became a Salvadoran citizen. He was Vice-Rector of the University and a social psychologist famous for his Salvadoran opinion polls. A great preacher, with a gift for speaking to the people in their own images, he spent his weekends celebrating Mass and playing his guitar for the people in the barrios where everyone called him "Nacho."

N. - For Ignacio Martin Baro, shot down by U.S.-financed bullets, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #10 - Segundo Montes Mozo

Special Reader 8 - Segundo Montes Mozo was a Spanish Jesuit who also became a Salvadoran citizen. He directed the University's Institute of Human Rights and taught as a Professor of Sociology. A blunt and fiery man, he was especially devoted to the plight of refugees and displaced people in Central America and in the United States.

N. - For Segundo Montes Mozo, whose voice was silenced by the death squad, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #11 - Juan Ramon Moreno Pardo

Special Reader 9 - Fr. Juan Ramon Moreno, a Spanish Jesuit, was a Professor of Theology and a noted retreat Director. A shy and scholarly man, he spent most of his life in Salvador, but volunteered for the great 1980 National Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua. During a retreat in 1987 he said: "Throughout history, accusations of being 'subversive' and 'involved in politics' have been used by the powerful to challenge the

legitimacy of God's plea for justice... They accused Monsenor Romero of the same thing."

N. - For Juan Ramon Moreno, shot down by soldiers to stifle a voice for the poor, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #12 - Joaquin Lopez y Lopez

Special Reader 10 - Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, at 71, was the oldest of the slain Jesuits and a native Salvadoran. The son of a wealthy coffee grower, he set aside the interests of his wealthy class and aligned himself with the poor, devoting his life to a religious education program called "Fe y Alegria" (Faith and Happiness). That program served 40,000 primary school children throughout the country.

N. - For Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, shot down in the night by a death squad from the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Brigade, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #13 - Elba Julia Ramos

Special Reader 11 - Elba Julia Ramos, 42 years old, cooked and kept house for the Jesuit community. Her husband, who found the 8 bodies the morning after the killings, worked as a gardener for the community. She spent most of her life as a domestic, joining her husband on coffee plantations at harvest time to earn a bit of extra money. Her first two children died at birth. The violence of 1979 forced her family from their land in the countryside to find work at the Jesuit university. She was known as a woman of deep insight who often counselled those who were sad.

N. - For Elba Julia Ramos, killed with her Jesuit co-workers, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

Slide #14 - Celina Maricet Ramos

Special Reader 12 - Celina Maricet Ramos was 15 years old when she was killed, the only daughter of Elba Julia Ramos. A lively student, she had just completed her first year of high school where she had a scholarship. She had recently become engaged. The night of the assassination she and her mother feared the fighting going on near their own home and sought safety at the Jesuit residence. She and her mother were killed because they were witnesses to the crime.

N. - For Celina Maricet Ramos and the legion of young people assassinated in El Salvador in the last ten years, we cry out:
ALL - Presente! Presente! Presente!

(Muffled drums beat slowly).

SONG: (one verse) "Were you there when they shot them in the night?"

Section 4 - The Long Road to Liberation

Questioner - What has been done to solve the horrible crime and bring the killers of these eight people to justice?

N. - Very little. El Salvador is a land where no military officer has ever been tried for murder and where the military are not prosecuted for their crimes. They act with lawlessness and impunity.

Congressman Joseph Moakley heads a Special Task Force in the House of Representatives investigating this case. Their description of the Salvadoran military is especially candid:

Special Reader 13 - "We are convinced that the military's contribution to the problems of human rights and a paralyzed judicial system are not caused by a few renegade officers; they reside at the heart of the armed forces as an institution. Decades of power, tempered only by the need to maintain a working alliance with wealthy landowners and businesspeople, have created an upper echelon within the armed forces that too often finds deference to civilian authority neither necessary nor desirable."

N. - Within weeks after the murders, investigators revealed that a death squad made up of soldiers from the elite, U.S.-trained Atlacatl Brigade was responsible. Nine soldiers were indicted, including a colonel, three lieutenants and five enlisted men. But in El Salvador, no indicted person can testify against another under indictment. The investigation has been stymied at every turn.

Reader 1 - The head of the military school at which the death squad assembled has admitted burning the logbooks that showed who was present that night. Other evidence has disappeared. Witnesses have perjured themselves. And the colonel charged in the case lives in luxury.

N. - All who know El Salvador realize that no colonel, acting on his own, would order the murders of such prominent religious figures without approval from the highest levels of the armed forces. Yet no one is moving the investigation to higher levels.

As in the case of Archbishop Romero, where the killers are also known, it is unlikely that anyone will ever be convicted of this crime. In August, Congressman Moakley put it bluntly when he said:

Special Reader 13 - "I believe that the High Command of the Salvadoran armed forces is engaged in a conspiracy to obstruct justice in the Jesuits' case."

Slide #15 - *Caskets of the eight Martyrs*

Questioner - How is the U.S. government responding to these revelations?

N. U.S. aid continues to flow in spite of it all. Congress sought to cut that aid by 50%, but the Bush Administration tried to block even that partial measure. And funding will continue until the U.S. people demand an end to the decade of killing done in our name and with our tax dollars.

STAND

Section 5 - Litany of Commitment

N. - Let us stand to make our commitment.

ALL - What can we do? How can we help?

N. - The first need is to take up the work of these martyrs, to live and spread the Good News of God's special love for the poor of the earth. But before you commit yourselves, it is well to know the price that may be demanded for your commitment. Let us listen to the words of one of the eight martyrs, Ignacio Ellacuria:

Special Reader 2 - "The preferential option for the poor, an active option, is what brings persecution on the church; being incarnate among the poor is what brings on the church in El Salvador all kinds of persecution, from calumny and harassment to exile and death." (From: *"Persecution for the Sake of the Reign of God," in Companions of Jesus, Orbis Books, 1990*).

N. - Knowing all this, will you nonetheless resolve to keep Oscar Romero in your heart and live in solidarity with the poor here in the United States, throughout the world and especially in Central America?

ALL - We Will! We Will!

N. - Will you remember the 4 martyred U.S. churchwomen and share their loving service of the poor?

ALL - We will! We Will!

N. - Will you remember the 75,000 dead of El Salvador, martyrs in that martyred land during the 1980's? Will you too be "subversive" by pledging to work for peace with social justice in El Salvador and throughout the world?

ALL - We will! We Will!

N. - Will you keep in your hearts the six martyred Jesuit priests and their two co-workers and press the U.S. Congress to stop the U.S.-funded violence in El Salvador?

ALL - We will! We Will!

N. - Then the light of these martyrs will burn brightly in our world through your lives. (*Relight all 8 candles, one by one.*)

Receive, then, this remembrance of the Salvadoran martyrs whose lives and gifts we have celebrated. (*Sheet with drawings of the 8 is passed out to congregation.*)

N. - You have received a special remembrance of these eight Martyrs of Justice. Now, as a special sign of your commitment to the poor, it is time to take out the red ribbon you were given when you entered tonight. Red is the color of martyrdom. This ribbon will stand as a sign of your willingness to take up the work of these "Martyrs in a Martyred Land." It will serve as a sign of your resolve to work for justice and peace in El Salvador and all of Central America.

Now, in the spirit of community, turn to your neighbor and pin the ribbons on each other.

N. - (*Wait an appropriate time as people pin ribbons on each other.*) Now you will have opportunities to act out your commitment. Circulating among you are two petitions, one to our Members of Congress urging an end to all U.S. war-related aid to El Salvador, and another to the Salvadoran Government demanding that justice be done in the case of these eight martyrs and other cases. Sign them if you wish. Copies of both will be sent to the Jesuit Community in San Salvador as well. (*One copy of each of the petitions should be available for every 7-10 people so the process is not overly long.*)

Also circulating is a basket for contributions to further critically important work for justice and peace in El Salvador. (*Here, someone should make a "pitch" for funds, describing the particular group or groups that will receive the money, to whom checks should be payable, etc. This can continue as baskets are passed. Background music can fill any remaining time.*)

N. - (*After the petitions and collection are finished*): Now let us bring together the work we have done as a community as we prepare to go forth and continue to make our voices heard in Congress, in the media, in the White House, in our churches and among our friends. (*People bring petitions and collection forward to the altar.*)

Let us close by acting on our faith in the God of the poor. Let us extend our hands in blessing. (*Congregation extends right hands in gesture of blessing.*)

This final blessing is for El Salvador and our own mission of peace.

ALL - May Almighty God Bless us,
 God Who creates us,
 Jesus Who saves us,
 and the Spirit of Peace and Love Who sets us free.

N. - Let us go forth in confidence and commitment to work for peace in El Salvador.

ALL - Amen! Amen! Amen!

Song - "We Shall Overcome" or another appropriate selection (*with drums*)