

## Holy Cross Remarks

Over a year and a half ago, the Speaker of the House appointed me to head a special task force to monitor the Salvadoran government's investigation into the November 16, 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her young daughter. For a guy like me -- who is basically a domestic Congressman -- this assignment represented my first venture into the world of foreign affairs.

And what a journey it has been for me. I have spent countless hours trying to navigate through the massive bureaucracies of our own government. It has been a real challenge trying to obtain the facts about what the U.S. government knows -- never mind what the Salvadorans know! I have traveled to El Salvador. I have found myself immersed in covert meetings in far-out places with some of the most unsavory characters you can imagine. I've often felt like Humphrey Bogart in "Casablanca." It has all been fascinating.

It has also been shocking. To walk through the University of Central America's campus, as I did, and see the blood stained walls of the rooms where the priests were massacred; to interview unrepentent military officers who believe the murderers of the priests are martyrs not criminals; to watch the military stonewall any real progress on the Jesuits' case; to see in the eyes and hear in the voices of virtually everyone you meet, fear and anxiety; and to realize that the United States has sent billions of dollars to

support that military -- that is truly shocking.

My involvement in the Jesuits' case has had a tremendous impact on my life. Not a day goes by when I don't meet with someone or just simply read something on this issue. My wife thinks I've become obsessed -- and perhaps she's right. But, I am determined to do everything in my power to force justice in this case. We cannot let those who murdered the priests get away with it -- as has happened with so many other atrocities in El Salvador.

A resolution to the Jesuits' case is not only important for the sake of justice -- it is also vital to the cause of peace. If the military remains above the law and is allowed to terrorize the people of El Salvador without the fear of being held accountable -- the war in El Salvador will not end.

Let me conclude with a special recognition of the fine efforts of the members of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits in El Salvador and in the United States are the primary reason why the case remains relevant. They won't let us forget. And to that, I say thank God for the Jesuits!

We must not forget and we must continue to devote our energies and prayers <sup>to</sup> ~~on~~ resolving a brutal civil war in El Salvador that has already cost the lives of over 75,000 people.

Thank you very much for honoring me today.