

HOW MONS. ROMERO CONTINUES TO CHALLENGE ME

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I have written many times about Mons. Romero. I remember the first thing I wrote after his assassination was that “Mons. Romero believed in God”. Throughout these 38 years I have insisted that Mons. Romero lived both from the people and with the people. To separate God and the people in Mons. Romero, to me, is impossible.

In remembering Romero, people usually think of his last homily on the eve of his assassination: “In the name of God and of his suffering people, whose cries reach the heavens more tumultuously each day, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you, in the name of God, stop the repression”. God and the People, thus go hand in hand. But let us analyze this separately for a moment.



1. A few days before, in his February 10 homily, Mons. Romero spoke explicitly and solemnly of God.
“No one really knows oneself as long as one has not encountered God... Oh may it be, beloved brothers and sisters, that the fruit of today’s sermon would enable each one of us to truly encounter God and to live the joy of God’s majesty and of our own smallness!”
2. Mons. Romero lived with and for the people. I remember the clear response of a campesino when asked: “Who was Mons. Romero for you?” Without hesitation, the campesino answered: “Mons. Romero spoke the truth, he stood up for us, and that’s why they killed him.”

Taught by this campesino, I want to insist that Romero was a “Teller of the truth”, without embellishment, with complete honesty. Also, as the bishops in Puebla described him, Mons. Romero acted toward the poor the same way God would. The bishops said: “Simply because they are poor, God defends and loves them.” Mons. Romero loved them. Only the ignorant could ever doubt that. But besides loving them, he followed God’s lead and *defended them*. And as the campesino said: “that’s why they killed him”. A martyr? Yes. But not for defending creedal statements, but “for defending the poor and oppressed”.

3. Before God and with the people he sought to honor and follow the truth. In his last spiritual retreat of February 1980, he spoke openly with Fr. Azcue about the problems his fellow bishops were causing him. Fr. Azcue, who knew him well, provided comfort with these words: “On the small issues you can give in to the bishops, but on the bigger ones, above all, you must remain faithful to the gospel”.

That’s how it was, that’s how he believed in God, that’s how he stood up for the poor and that’s how Mons. Romero stayed faithful to the truth. Without flattery or exaggeration, Ellacuria said in the funeral we celebrated at the UCA: “In Mons. Romero, God passed through El Salvador”.