

Oscar Romero and Pope Paul VI: “Filled with apostolic courage”

With the joint canonisation of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero approaching, Francis Stewart, from CAFOD’s Theology Programme, reflects on how Pope Paul VI’s teaching was exemplified by Romero’s life and death.

With their joint canonisation on 14 October 2018, Pope Francis has set the stage for us to reflect on the connection between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero.¹

There are clear personal connections between the two men. Romero seemed to have a particularly fierce affection for Paul VI and knew much of his teaching like the back of his hand.² A fellow priest, Ricardo Urioste, recalls a disagreement he had with Romero on the beach one day about a speech of Paul VI’s: “When I got back to San Salvador, I ran to look for the text of the pope’s speech just to settle the matter. He was right! He’d remembered it exactly. He practically knew it by heart!”³

Crucially, this keen commitment was reciprocated. At a painful time of trial in Romero’s life – the month of the assassination of his friend Fr Rutilio Grande – he visited the pope. The reaction of Paul VI to Romero’s mission in San Salvador, which provoked hostility from some of the clergy as well as some in the Roman curia, was one of complete affirmation:

“Courage!” the pope told Romero, grasping both his hands. “You are the one who is in charge!”⁴

This was a dramatic and crucial relationship for Romero’s mission.

But, surely Pope Francis is also getting at something else by coupling these two figures, nudging us to search for a synchronicity between these two lives which reaches beyond their historical connection. What is it that unites them?

The following offers a particular response to this question, focussing on how Paul VI’s *teaching*⁵ was exemplified by Romero’s *life* and *death*. The hope is to do

¹ Archbishop of San Salvador from 1977-1980.

² See for example Romero’s third pastoral letter, an extensive reflection on Paul VI’s legacy in the light of the feast of the transfiguration.

³ López M V (2000) *Oscar Romero: Memories in mosaic*, Maryknoll, Orbis books, EPICA p32.

⁴ Clarke K (2014) *Oscar Romero: Love Must Win Out*, Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, p94.

⁵ As for Paul VI’s teaching, this is a huge corpus with different degrees of authority (letters, exhortations, addresses, homilies and encyclicals), but we will focus on an intense period within Paul VI’s papacy which is framed by two major documents: *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1974).

justice to Romero's role as "voice of the voiceless"⁶ and advocate of El Salvador's poor; but also his martyrdom, which established him as the "named of the nameless martyrs," in Ignacio Ellacuria's words.⁷ It is estimated that thirty thousand people died at the hands of the military death squads in El Salvador between 1979 and 1981.⁸ Romero's martyrdom helps to ensure that their deaths are not lost as statistics in the sweep of history and are instead marked to forever disturb the Catholic memory.

Both Romero and Paul VI have a prophetic significance for CAFOD's work. As Archbishop, Romero was one of CAFOD's partners, and we worked alongside him to rebuild the archdiocesan radio station after it was bombed repeatedly by the Salvadoran military. As for Paul VI, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, he gave a crucial theological asset to development agencies seeking to be true to the Gospel and Catholic social teaching. Here we find a call for an authentic model of human development, transcending the narrow vision of purely economic growth metrics and calling "all people of good will" to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.⁹

Pope Paul VI's global perspective

Pope Paul VI released *Populorum Progressio* in 1967. It is a pivotal document, speaking *from* a turning-point in the life of the Church¹⁰ *to* the various cultural and historical turning-points of its time. Paul VI recognised these dramatic developments and held them together with doctrine, the reaching of the Church towards unchanging truths. In this sense, poised between confrontation with new things and fidelity to the timeless truths of the Gospel, his teaching parallels Romero's paradoxical life, which was that of a pious priest who stuck to his principles yet, at the same time, recognised the dramatic changes and horrors of his time, allowing them to transform him.

⁶ Romero's thinking, as well as that of CAFOD, developed in the direction of emphasising the agency of the poorest people. The idea is not to advocate or speak *on behalf of the poor* (ie. be their voice) but to give them the chance to raise their own voice. This now central aspect of CAFOD's mission was anticipated by Romero in his speech at the university of Louvain, when he said: "The world of the poor teaches us that liberation will occur not only when the poor become recipients of government or Church benefits but when they themselves become authors and protagonists of their struggle and their liberation, thus unmasking the ultimate root of false paternalisms - even ecclesial ones," Clarke K (2014) p110.

⁷ <http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/martyrs/other-martyrs>, accessed 10 August 2018.

⁸ Clarke K (2014) p117.

⁹ The "live simply" campaign was based on this exegesis of this basic message of *Populorum Progressio* to mark its 40th anniversary in 2007.

¹⁰ It is a contentious question as to whether the second Vatican council, which set the tone for *Populorum Progressio*, was called in order to 'bring up to date' the Church to respond to the modern world (often referred to as *aggiornamento*) or to re-root the Church in the lost liturgical, scriptural and theological sources (*ressourcement*). The interpretation of Vatican Two has thus been polarised between two camps to varying degrees. By referring to *Populorum Progressio* as "pivotal," I do not mean to side with the former interpretation of Vatican Two or argue that the encyclical represents a clean break with the Church's social teaching. The question of how the universal, eternal truths running through the social documents relate to their historical relevance and attentiveness is a very interesting one which requires a whole discussion of its own.

Though offering a witness to the eternal, the encyclical speaks from a particular historical moment and its social and political analysis has real limitations, which become clearer with hindsight. In bringing to bear the Church's social teaching on the question of authentic human development, it lacked an anticipation of the environmental considerations of development, which led later popes (as well as the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew) to call for an "ecological conversion".¹¹ It also lacked a proper consideration of the neglected contribution of women's work to livelihoods and the importance of valuing and remunerating this contribution as part of sustainable development.¹²

Yet, being shaped in this way by its era also manifested in a profound attention to various pressing historical turning-points. The Vietnam war and the Cold War arms race weighed heavily on the minds, hearts and lives of many in the East and West. It was also a time of de-colonisation. Many countries had recently gained their independence.¹³ Paul VI celebrates this but qualifies his support in ways that, certainly with hindsight, sound patronising to those who have worked hard for their country's political freedom. He is appreciative of certain developmental "benefits" that colonisation brought, rather than renouncing it completely.¹⁴ Yet we can see this in connection with the pope's recognition that "political freedom is not enough"¹⁵ – that it is no good to celebrate the independence of a nation whilst they are 'left in the lurch' economically, having depended for so long on their colonisers. It is a call not to neglect the economic issues, such as a community's reliance on one crop, leaving them at the mercy of price-fluctuations.¹⁶ We are prompted by this encyclical to consider the weight of debt on such countries, such as Madagascar, who despite their political independence from France in the 1960s, remained economically indebted.¹⁷

¹¹ Pope Paul VI's apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, on the other hand, does warn of the "ill-considered exploitation of nature" and the risks this poses to human development (section 21). Paul VI's teaching does display a recognition that if the relationship of human beings to the things they produce and consume is not properly ordered, humans "having rationally endeavoured to control nature" now risk becoming enslaved to objects (paragraph 9). This anticipates and influences Pope Francis' diagnosis of the spiritual and philosophical malaise that might lie at the root of the ecological crisis in chapter 3 of *Laudato Si'*.

¹² Although Catholic social teaching arguably still lacks a proper consideration of this, *Laborem Exercens*, the encyclical of John Paul II on work, contains the theological basis for such a discussion, in that it is about valuing and remunerating all kinds of work (not just wage-labour) and preserving and respecting women's distinctive contribution to this field of human life.

¹³ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, 26 March 1967, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html, #62.

¹⁴ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #7.

¹⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #6.

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #7.

¹⁷ Anthropologist David Graeber asks whether these debts are to pay the cost of Madagascar's own colonisation, which the population did not agree to: see Graeber D (2011) *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing, pp4-5. On the subject of debt in official Catholic social teaching, Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, written on the jubilee year 2000, is very instructive in offering a very direct, Biblical response to a global debt crisis. In section 51, John Paul II writes, "in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world,

So, aside from its status in relation to other social teaching documents, *Populorum Progressio* is pivotal at the level of its attention and its ambitions. It is more than a cautious commentary or a wary warning from the magisterium about where things are heading – it is an ambitious and widely-addressed commission:

Delegates to international organizations, public officials, gentlemen of the press, teachers and educators—all of you must realize that you have your part to play in the construction of a new world order.¹⁸

Previous social encyclicals had energetically defended the rights of the poor¹⁹ – this was not the novelty of *Populorum Progressio*. What was novel was the attempt to speak to the experience of the whole global community in recognition of dramatic historical changes. In this sense, the encyclical was *touched by the experience of the poor*, of those on the margins of the global community. In scriptural terms, *Populorum Progressio* was especially attentive to the “signs of the times.” This followed the mandate of the Second Vatican Council, based on Jesus’ warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees: “you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times!”²⁰ Paul VI was the first pope to travel the world, experiencing first-hand the extreme poverty beyond the western-European doorstep. In the years that followed, these signs – so familiar to so many of the global Catholic community – were brought officially to the attention of the Church hierarchy.

Renewed attention to the poor

In 1968, the Latin American Bishop’s conference in Medellín, Colombia, officially consolidated the principle of the “preferential option for the poor” in Catholic social teaching, re-emphasising the integral nature of this ancient keystone of the Gospel to Christian life.²¹ The same year, Pope Paul VI addressed a homily to the Colombian *campesinos* in Bogotá. In 1971, the issue of justice was brought to the second World Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, resulting in a controversial document called *Justice in the World*. Much consternation and debate flared up over a sentence which said that working for justice, struggling for liberation from “all that oppresses” humanity, was “constitutive” of preaching the Gospel. Some feared that if justice became too central to the basic Christian

proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations.”

¹⁸ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #83.

¹⁹ See for example *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Mater et Magistra*, *Pacem in Terris*.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, “*Gaudium Et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*,” in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery O.P. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996, sec 4. Matthew 16:3.

²¹ Latin American Bishop’s Conference, Medellín, Colombia: *Poverty of the Church*, 6 September, 1968, accessed 20 August, 2018, <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/medpov.htm>.

task, the faith would be reduced to a purely 'horizontal' - political, social or historical - project.²²

Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, was written in the wake of these tumultuous times after the third assembly of the Synod, in 1975. The theme is evangelisation, yet it is a broad and ambitious document which seeks to integrate all of these historical, social, economic and cultural aspects of the Church's mission into the task of proclaiming the Gospel. It responded to the worries about 'horizontalism' and strongly critiqued any reduction of the rich whole of the Gospel message, but also took a very affirmative tone to the centrality of working for justice and liberation that *Justice in the World* emphasises. Most strikingly, though, the themes of the Gospel's liberation and the preferential option of the poor are affirmed *from an evangelical perspective*. The encyclical says that the poor are frequently the most receptive to the Gospel,²³ revealing that the preferential option is not made purely out of generosity or a balancing of the scales of justice but because of an active role which those who are poor have in shaping our understanding of the Gospel.²⁴ The poor might here be understood as those whose collective experience witnesses to the sinful structures from which the Gospel announces humanity's ultimate liberation.²⁵ In Paul VI's teaching, the requirements of justice which had previously been articulated more philosophically, in terms of natural law and the 'fraternity' of the classes, emerges as more directly related to preaching the Gospel.²⁶

Pope Paul VI affirms what has always been the task of the Church, to preach the Gospel and bring about the profound interior transformation that it announces.²⁷ So what sounded so radical about these ideas to some of the bishops at the Synod?

The interior change that the Gospel ignites does not leave the exterior undisturbed – it is also affective of our work to transform the world, and responsive to encounters. Jesus himself was at times profoundly touched – by the woman with a haemorrhage, by the Syrophenician woman, for example.²⁸ This is what Paul VI seemed to understand so well, and hence he is deeply interested in the relationship between the once-and-for-all truth of the Gospel and the diverse experience of different cultures.²⁹

²² Murphy C (1983) 'Action for Justice as Constitutive of the Preaching of the Gospel: what did the 1971 Synod mean?' in *Theological Studies*, Vol 44, 2 June 1983, p300.

²³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. apostolic exhortation, Vatican website, 8 December, 1975, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html, #6.

²⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Vatican website, #6.

²⁵ Sobrino J (1982) Analysis of Romero's life and works in *Romero: Martyr for Liberation London: CIIR* p62.

²⁶ Murphy C (1983) p307.

²⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #18.

²⁸ Mark 7:24-29, Mark 5:25-34.

²⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #20.

If we are to read Paul VI through this lens, we can start to discover his special connection to Oscar Romero. The renewed centrality of liberation, brought by a renewed attention to the poor, was not doctrinal innovation dreamt up by a vanguard of theological subversives, but an encounter with the Gospel in a different cultural expression. This article proposes that it was also an encounter which changed Romero, brought him home to himself, and set him on his courageous path of martyrdom. But first it is important to reflect on how Romero's martyrdom reflects Paul VI's teaching about social justice and the faith.

Romero the martyr

His canonisation is great cause for celebration, but it is most crucial that Romero has the status of a martyr. This means he is officially held up as a victim to the "hatred of the faith," rather than, say, an inspiring witness who was killed by his political opponents, or a great person who tragically and fatally got mixed up in politics. As Thomas Reese highlights,³⁰ Romero was killed by professed Roman Catholics – did they hate the faith? Or did they hate Romero? Or did they hate the political implications of his mission?

Romero's status as a martyr suggests that all the authentic elements of his mission, such as (for example) his direct invitation to members of the army to disobey orders to shoot fellow *campesinos* on the basis of their conscience,³¹ are true forms of Gospel witness, which the Christian life might one day require of us. Evangelisation, understood rightly, involves itself in these prophetic acts demonstrated by Romero, as we are reminded in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

But evangelisation would not be complete if it did not take account of the interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelisation involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realised, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life, without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace and justice- a message especially energetic today about liberation.³²

Perhaps this is why Romero so frequently expressed his social mission, and the Church's task to examine itself and respond to the cry of the poor, in evangelical terms. "We need constant conversion," he urged in a homily on Ascension Sunday in 1977.³³ The call to personal conversion and examination of conscience was, for Romero, a horizon never to be lost, but he never invoked it as a way of taking zeal away from the social dimension of mission – it remained a centre

³⁰ <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/oscar-romero-martyr-faith>, accessed 10 August 2018.

³¹ Romero O (1982) *Romero: Martyr for Liberation* London: CIIR p31.

³² Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #29.

³³ Luciani R, Palazzi F, Filochowski J (ed) (2015) *A Prophetic Bishop Speaks to His People: The Complete Homilies of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Volume 1*, translated by Joseph Owens SJ, Convivium Press; Miami. p116.

which held all threads together. Kevin Clarke asks how Romero could sustain his work as advocate of the *campesinos* without burning-out, and reports that his most intimate friends testify that his mental and physical endurance stemmed from his daily prayer life.³⁴ Romero continued to see testifying on behalf of the people as in complete continuity with a deep piety.

The violence that gravitates towards those who champion all aspects of the Gospel message, a similar violence which ultimately crucified Jesus, is also something which Paul VI's teaching reminds us of.³⁵ The hearts of the powerful harden to the rich whole of the Gospel, which may not be monopolised, manipulated or reduced to "any ideological system."³⁶ Maybe this disturbing reality is what lies behind the alarming slogans which could sometimes be seen on fliers and bumper stickers in Central America in the late 1970's: "Be a patriot, kill a priest."³⁷ The idea of Romero as a martyr to "hatred of the faith" ought not to domesticate or sterilize his radical legacy or mask the political significance of his assassination. Rather, it enshrines his whole mission, including the aspect of "prophetic denunciation"³⁸ of oppressive policies and false promises, as central to Christian commitment.

Romero the saint

Throughout his life, Romero seems to have been a man of books and words, to the extent that some who knew him disparaged him for it, calling him a "pastor to his paperwork".³⁹ Even though his understanding of his mission was, by the later years of his life, far removed from that of a secretary buried under bureaucracy, he never left behind this commitment to words of truth and doctrinal orthodoxy. This commitment ran through his preaching as well as his advocacy for the poor through the YSAX Archdiocesan radio station. Integrated into Romero's homilies were testimonies of the "hechos de la semana" – the events of the week – which served as one of the few truthful sources of information on the extent of the killings and political repression in El Salvador,

³⁴ Clarke, K. (2014) p122.

³⁵ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #11. This passage alarmingly claims that "the kingdom of God belongs to the violent," referring to the words of Jesus about how since John the Baptist, the Kingdom of heaven is available to all who can force their way into it (Matthew 11:12). It is important to interpret this kind of apocalyptic imagery through the lens of the violence which is often directed against those who preach real peace and challenge structures that are inherently violent. Romero said that the only violence or vengeance Christian's ought to practice is the violence of love, which is "the violence we must do to ourselves to overcome selfishness and cruel inequalities among us [...] the violence that chooses to beat weapons into sickles for work" (Kevin Clarke, p. 114). Ultimately, what may be the final straw that prompted the death squads to assassinate Romero was his direct response to the letters he received from soldiers asking if they were obliged to kill their fellow *campesinos*. He urged, in his penultimate address, that the only law the soldiers are expected to answer to is the law of God, which is "thou shalt not kill." (*Romero: Martyr for Liberation*, 1981, p. 31).

³⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #32.

³⁷ Clarke K (2014) p79.

³⁸ Sobrino J (1982) Analysis of Romero's life and works in *Romero: Martyr for Liberation* London: CIIR p52.

³⁹ Vigil M L (2000) p59.

as well as signs of hope.⁴⁰ He believed so much in the importance of keeping people well-informed as well as well-formed in the faith, that he continued in this endeavour despite the military bombing of the radio station.⁴¹

Transformed by encounters

Since he was such a man of books and words, it is especially striking that Romero's re-awakening was set in motion by his encounters with the truths of the Gospel which cannot be transmitted by words alone. According to Arturo Rivera y Damas, it was in praying over the body of his friend Fr Rutilio Grande that Romero became "filled with apostolic courage"⁴²- the courage with which he embarked upon his mission. Though this is often thought to be a pivotal moment, Romero himself spoke figuratively of a burning coal that had already been lit by the time of Father Grande's death: "you don't have to blow on it much to get it to flame up again."⁴³

Perhaps, then, we can speak of a *series* of encounters. Romero was sent to minister for a short time as Bishop of Santiago de Maria, where he gradually "came to himself"⁴⁴ and was re-acquainted with his own humble roots in conversations with *campesinos*. He had set up a night shelter for coffee-harvesters who were sleeping on the streets in the bitterly cold harvest season and was prompted by his conversations to visit the plantations himself. He saw the working conditions and unjust practices, such as the recruiting of 'helpers' who were not registered on the payroll, not fed and paid only according to the weight of coffee they harvested. As recalled by his fellow priest Father Juan Macho, he began to come to terms with what had been said at Medellín.⁴⁵

This dynamic relation between Romero, the man of words, and Romero, the man touched by the poor, is almost uncanny in its fidelity to Paul VI's tracing of the tensions of living the Gospel. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* insists on the fundamental importance of the Christian message being *preached* and *heard*, yet it also recognises the waning of modern humanity's attention to mere words.⁴⁶ We are called to recognise a kind of "wordless witness" which lives the Gospel.⁴⁷ If the Gospel, as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* suggests, can permeate all cultures whilst allowing their distinct particularities to shine through,⁴⁸ and different cultures

⁴⁰ Clarke, K (2014) p91.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Filochowski J (2016) 'Rutilio and Romero' in Romero News, Issue 18, July 2016, p7.

⁴³ Cesar Jerez recalls this in Vigil M L (2000), pp159-159.

⁴⁴ As Jesus describes the prodigal son, upon realising that he must return home: Luke 15:17.

⁴⁵ Vigil M L (2000), p72.

⁴⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #42.

⁴⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #21.

⁴⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #20. It is important to read this through the lens of inculturation, whereby the diversity of cultures permits a diversity of expression of the same Gospel message. Paul VI critiques, in *Populorum Progressio*, the tendency of missionaries in the past to have confused their worthy project of bringing the Gospel with the project of imposing their own cultural form. *Gaudium et Spes*, and the

speak with different words; we can deduce that such an encounter with the Gospel is not only possible but crucial.

Formed by encounters

It is easy to get a sense from reading the testimonies of his friends and fellow priests, that Romero found his unstoppable voice through these encounters with the “wordless witness” of those – like Father Grande – ministering to base communities, of the *campesinos* in the plantations, and, ultimately, of Father Grande’s death. We could say, to draw on Jon Sobrino’s words, that these encounters took him beyond the idea of “the poor” as a “sum of individuals,” who are “at most, a source of ethical demand upon us;” towards a “a view of the poor as a collectivity the very existence of which – and increasingly so as it grows in self-understanding – is the sign of a social conflict.”⁴⁹

Perhaps these encounters are so crucial because of their power to draw together elements of God’s voice which many of us prefer to leave disparate and compartmentalised – to let these distinct elements illuminate each other. They might draw together the suffering of groups of people with the analysis of their situation, politically and economically (as with the coffee-harvesters of Santiago de Maria). But they also might draw together the task of preaching the Gospel with the need to confront structures which militate against its message. It seems, in Romero’s case, to hold together a deep prayer life, a strict commitment to priesthood,⁵⁰ and a call to prophetic denunciation of oppression, each of which was essential to both his resilience and his integrity.

Staying true to transformation

Many around the world know all too well the principles that Paul VI taught and Romero lived – universal access to the fruits of the earth, the dignity of the human person, the preferential option for the poor. Nevertheless, when powerful forces and structures seem impervious to these values, it is very easy to become jaded and to reduce God’s call to something narrow and manageable. As certain public intellectuals have put it, for the Hollywood dream-factory, it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than an alternative economic model.⁵¹ Where might we find the resilience and integrity to persevere in the struggle to live out the Gospel? We could ask a similar question of Oscar Romero’s mission in his particular historical and cultural context. What was the inextinguishable fire that sustained Romero in his commitments, when they brought him violence and persecution from all corners? Perhaps it is the “profound change of mind and

International Theological Commission’s 1988 document *Faith and Inculturation* also outline the Church’s understanding of the Gospel’s relation to cultural difference.

⁴⁹ Sobrino J (1982) Analysis of Romero’s life and works in *Romero: Martyr for Liberation* London: CIIR p62.

⁵⁰ Sobrino J (1982) Analysis of Romero’s life and works in *Romero: Martyr for Liberation* London: CIIR pp54-55.

⁵¹ Frederic Jameson: “Someone once said, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.” Jameson F (2003) ‘Future city’ *New Left Review* 21, May-June 2003: Accessed 20 August, 2018, <https://newleftreview.org/11/21/fredric-jameson-future-city>.

heart,⁵² prompted by the interaction between his deep faith and his various encounters, which sustained him in his apostolic courage. The “culture of encounter”⁵³ that Pope Francis urges us to cultivate is what makes saints like Romero – saints who have the courage to resist the “globalisation of indifference”.⁵⁴

Pope Paul VI’s teaching announces the vision of a Church being transformed and renewed by encounters with the experience of those who are poor around the globe. It was also such encounters, where the Gospel shone through the particularity of El Salvador’s context, that formed and transformed Saint Oscar Romero. So, it seems apt that an old Salvadoran called Mariano was an original prophet of this long-awaited canonisation. Mariano worked by making small wooden figurines of saints. Upon hearing that his precarious work was under threat from the imports of other plaster-cast saints from overseas, Romero asked Mariano what he was going to do:

“What am I going to do? I’ll wait a little while. I have a feeling that we’re going to make a saint of our own, out of Salvadorian wood, the kind that doesn’t crack. And for that, I’ll wait. I’m not going to die until I can see him, until I can touch him.”⁵⁵

⁵² Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #10.

⁵³ Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, ‘For a culture of encounter,’ Vatican website, 13 September, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html.

⁵⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, 24 May, 2015. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html, #52.

⁵⁵ Vigil M L (2000), p78.