

Reflections for Lent

Week One

Lent is the 40-day period (not counting the six Sundays) before Easter. It is traditionally used by the Christian Church as a time for reflecting on what it means to follow Christ, and resolving to live as a follower of Christ in the world.



Mathew 5:1-12 The Beatitudes

Beatitude comes from the Latin word *beatitudo*, which means blessed, happy, or fortunate. Almost all of us recall the opening line of the passage: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit..." The idea is that if you live the way Jesus lays it out, you will be truly happy, truly fulfilled. But, as we know, the best things in life always demand the best we can be and the greatest effort we can put forth. The life of beatitude to which Jesus invites us demands no less.

Oscar Romero was the archbishop of San Salvador, the capital of the tiny nation of El Salvador in Central America. In his native Spanish, the word *beatitudo* is translated *bienaventuranza*, literally "good adventure to you." We all know that adventure means risk, the courage to defy the odds, the refusal to play it safe.

This is how Oscar Romero might have paraphrased the Beatitudes: *'Good adventure to you whose hearts are genuinely with the poor: you are under God's protective rule. Good adventure to you who are without power: the whole world shall be yours. Good adventure to you who are hungry and thirsty for justice: your cup will be filled. Good adventure to you who look for truth with singleness of heart: you shall see God. Good adventure to you who work for peace: you shall be called children of God. Good adventure to you who are persecuted for the sake of justice. You, too, are already under God's protective rule; rejoice, be very happy, when others say evil things about you falsely because you are mine. God is preparing a great reward for you. Don't be surprised, prophets have always been an endangered species.'*

Archbishop Romero was assassinated in March 1980 as he conducted a funeral mass; he had been outspoken in his criticism of El Salvador's military junta for the fierce repression of their own people and of the American government for supplying the weapons enabling it. Concern for civil and human rights, and the advocacy of justice for the poor and truth in the public domain brought him into conflict with powerful interests. The gunman's bullet did not succeed in silencing him though, because like Jesus, whom he loved and served, Oscar Romero lives on in the hearts of the people of El Salvador.

What risks are you prepared to take on the adventure of identifying with Christ? Who can you pray for who is experiencing persecution for their insistence on justice for the poor and oppressed?

*May the love of God be the strength of your mind and heart.
May the grace of Christ be the salve for your bruises and wounds.
May the friendship of the Spirit be the joy of your resilient soul.
Now and ever more.
Amen.*

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