

SALVANET

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The 10th Anniversary of the UCA Martyrs

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were assassinated on the campus of the Jesuit university in San Salvador, the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas", the UCA. Yearly commemorations celebrate their lives and martyrdom. This year marks the tenth anniversary of their death. Those who have visited the memorial rose garden at the UCA know of the impact that the martyrs have had on the Salvadoran people. Following is a brief biography on each of these important individuals.



Father Amando López was born on February 6, 1936 in Burgos, Spain. In 1952 he began his novitiate with the Company of Jesus. He went to El Salvador in the second year of his novitiate and then, in 1954,

to Quito to study classical humanities and philosophy. He went on to receive a theology degree from the Miltown Theology School in Dublin and was ordained in Dublin on July 29, 1965. He earned his doctorate in Religious Studies in Strasbourg, France in 1971.

In 1970 Father López returned to San Salvador to teach at the *San José de la Montaña* seminary where he introduced new theological ideas and was known for his good nature and ready smile. He was well liked by the seminarians, with whom he ate lunch and played soccer. In late 1970 he was named Rector.

Father López found himself in conflict with the Episcopal Conference regarding the kind theology that should be taught at the seminary. He also supported the seminarians as they became more concerned about structural injustices. The bishops were unhappy with the controversial new Rector and eventually decided to remove the Jesuits from the direction of the seminary.

In 1973 and 1974, Father López taught philosophy at the UCA. In 1975, he was moved to the UCA in Managua. His arrival coincided with the final years of the Somoza regime. He helped many suffering people and, during the most difficult moments of Somoza's bombings, Father López opened the campus to families in need.

After the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979, he was named Rector of the university. He helped the public to understand the role of education and the university following the Sandanista victory. The new government named him to the Human Rights Commission. With this position, he traveled all over the country investigating cases. But Father Amando Lopez was to be one of the victims of the division between the Church and the Company of Jesus and of the conflict between the Church and the Nicaraguan State. In 1983 he was instructed to resign from his position as Rector.

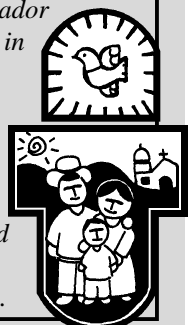
After a year of sabbatical, Father López returned to San Salvador to teach philosophy and theology. He loved to teach and to read and was especially interested in fundamental moral theology, ethics, and systematic theology.

In the last year of his life, he was the pastor of the *Tierra Virgen* community near Soyapango. He allowed the parishioners to take on a participative and expressive role in his Eucharist and he enjoyed talking with members of the community.

Father Amando López had a great ability to counsel and encourage. He had a natural disposition to listen, a big heart, and a contagious laugh. He liked to joke around and he liked for people to joke with him. He was a true friend and a good companion. What else could one ask for in the midst of such dark times? The tenderness of his friendship and the joy of his laughter live among those of us who had the privilege of enjoying them. †

All biographical material is excerpted and translated from Martires de la UCA, edited by Salvador Carranza.

CRISPAZ, Christians for Peace in El Salvador, was founded in 1984. We are a faith-based organization dedicated to mutual accompaniment with the church of the poor and marginalized communities in El Salvador. In building bridges of solidarity between communities in El Salvador and those in our home countries, we strive together for peace, justice and human liberation.



CRISPAZ has four programs:

- † CRISPAZ Volunteer Program (CVP)
- † El Salvador Encounter Delegation Program (ESE)
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CRISPAZ

319 Camden Street
San Antonio, Texas 78215
210-222-2018
email: crispaz@igc.apc.org

CRISPAZ

Apartado Postal 2944
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
011-503-226-0829
email: pazsal@netcomsa.com

THE UCA MARTYRS



Born on November 7, 1942 in Valladolid, Spain, **Father Ignacio Martín-Baró** entered the novitiate of the Company of Jesus in 1959. After his first year of novitiate in Spain, he went to Central America. In 1961 he went to Quito to study classical humanities at the Catholic University. He was then sent to Bogotá, where he earned a philosophy degree in 1965. In 1966, he returned to San Salvador to give classes at the Jesuit *Externado* School and then later at the UCA. He went on to study theology and then began teaching at the UCA and studying psychology. He later earned a masters degree in social sciences and a doctorate in social and organizational psychology from the University of Chicago. Father Martín-Baró returned to the UCA and in 1981 he was named Academic Vice Rector and member of the governing board. In 1982 he assumed the direction of the psychology department. In 1986, he founded and directed the University Institute for Public Opinion (IUDOP). He worked on one of the university publications and was an invited professor at many different universities around the world.

Father Martín-Baró can be briefly described as a writer, teacher, member of the university, and pastor. He was a gifted writer who published eleven books and numerous articles throughout the Americas. He was a great teacher. In his teaching of psychology, he insisted that the discipline address national problems and be based on the history and current social conditions of the popular majority. He felt that his students should learn to analyze human behavior in a context and did not believe in a totally impartial psychology.

He was further involved in the university community through IUDOP. Through this work, he sought to channel—without filters or partisan mediators—the experience of the Salvadoran people. He was also very careful not to endanger or sensationalize the surveyed or the surveyors.

Father Martín-Baró was also a pastor to the community of Zacamil and the parish of Jayaque. He came to life among the people in the communities. He was joyful, he smiled a lot, and was affectionate,

especially with children. He was always ready with a song on his guitar and liked to carry sweets for the children.

In one of his last writings, Father Martín-Baró wrote, "Public expression of reality and, above all, the unmasking of the official story . . . are considered to be 'subversive' activities. This is true, because these actions subvert the false order that has been established. This creates the paradox of a person who dares to name reality or denounce abuse who then becomes a prisoner of justice." †

Father Juan Ramón Moreno

was born in Navarra, Spain on August 29, 1933. After entering the Jesuit novitiate in 1950, he went to El Salvador. He earned a degree in classical humanities in 1955 and in philosophy in 1958 from the Catholic University at Quito. In 1965 he earned a theology degree in St. Louis, Missouri.



In 1958, Father Moreno was sent to teach chemistry at the Central American College of Granada. After finishing his theological studies, he taught at the *San José de la Montaña* seminary in San Salvador. Initially he was instructed to specialize in sciences, but later told to study dogma and morality. He was then sent to the United States to help open a seminary. While there, he taught history, civics, math, English, geography, and biology at the high school level.

In 1969 he was sent to Rome to take spirituality courses in order to return, in 1970, to El Salvador and direct the novitiates. In his work with the novitiates, he struggled to find a balance between traditional teaching and new ideas. During this time, he was also working at the seminary, teaching at the UCA, and was Rector at the *Externado* School for a short time.

Continued . . .

In 1974, Father Moreno left the novitiates to begin two years of sabbatical in Rome. In 1976 he went to Panama to found the Ignatian Center of Central America in order to promote Ignatian spirituality and spiritual exercises. He was the director of the Center from 1976 to 1980. During this time, he built up the Center's library and he founded the publication *Diakonia*, whose aim was to spread information on liberation theology and spiritual theology. In 1980, when he was sent to the UCA in Managua, the Center and the library were transferred as well.

In 1985 he went to San Salvador to teach theology and to organize the Center for Theological Reflection's library at the UCA. He was able to acquire some of the best theology and spirituality books from around the world. He had become a computer expert and spent hours learning how to run the programs. He eventually computerized the library catalogue of thousands of books. He also supervised the construction of the Monseñor Romero Pastoral Center at the UCA.

At the end of his teaching career, he had specialized in morality but also taught fundamental theology and systematic theology. In teaching his classes, he was both dynamic and serious. He was well accepted because he had the gift of inspiring commitment through the search for faith-based justice.

Father Moreno said two masses every Sunday in Santa Tecla where he was famous for his fiery homilies. He longed to work in a rural parish and go to San Salvador just to give theology classes. But he found himself in the city, tied to his administrative responsibilities at the UCA.

Father Moreno's fiery word, wise counsel, and passion to preach the Reign of God were planted all over Central America. We now watch and wait as these seeds bear fruit. †



Father Segundo Montes was born in Valladolid, Spain on May 15, 1933. He entered the novitiate with the Company of Jesus in 1950 and went to El Salvador.

He earned a degree in classical humanities in 1954 and in philosophy in 1957 both from the Catholic University of Quito. He earned his theology degree in 1964 in Innsbruck and was ordained there in 1963.

In 1957, upon completing his philosophy studies, Father Montes returned to San Salvador to teach physics at the *Externado* School. He later became the Discipline Prefect and Administrative Director. He served as Rector from 1973 to 1976, a time in which the school was undergoing great crisis. However, he was unruffled by this crisis and he used his strong personality and great energy to lead the school through years of change. He was very popular among the former students of the *Externado* and wherever he went he ran into someone he knew.

Responsibilities at the UCA called him away from the *Externado*. He taught scientific vision and sociology, and was dean of the Human & Natural Sciences Faculty from 1970 to 1976. He then went to Spain where, in 1978, he earned a doctorate in social anthropology.

Rejuvenated, he returned to San Salvador and began to give sociology classes again. He was involved with the UCA publication *ECA* and gave many conferences at national institutions, schools, labor unions, cooperatives, political parties, etc.

Father Montes radiated energy in everything that he did. He loved to teach to big classes and his favorite spot to give classes was the auditorium with microphone in hand. He enjoyed being at all of the parish celebrations amidst the joy of the people. He had a big heart and was very affectionate.

Father Montes was also a prolific writer. He took data from surveys done in collaboration with his sociology students to write many articles and books. His favorite subjects were education, social relations and structures, military officers, refugees and the displaced, and human rights. His scientific research and humanitarian concern led him to visit Salvadorans in the far corners of the country and at the refugee camps in Honduras.

He earned international recognition for his research on the displaced, refugees, and human rights. He gave conferences in the United States on these topics and went to Washington several times to testify before Congress in defense of the rights of Salvadoran refugees in the U.S.

Starting in 1980, Father Montes dedicated part of his weekend to pastor parishes. In the community of Quetzaltepeque, Santa Tecla he earned the affection of the people through his generosity and by the way he treated them. He would tell the parish of his travels to the refugee camps, the repopulated communities, and the United States. He used stories of other poor people in his evangelization.

Father Montes is remembered for his light beard, his bright face, and his blue eyes. At the UCA, he was called "Zeus." But children were not afraid of him and they would run to him and put their faces in his beard.

On November 12, the Offensive kept Father Montes from going to Quetzaltepeque. The community had planned to give formal recognition of an award that he had received on a recent trip to Washington. The community felt like a part of his work for the poor and they wanted to publicly announce their pride. He was never with them again, but he continues to live on in the community, the students and professors of the UCA, and his friends. †



Elba Ramos was born in Las Flores, Santiago de María, El Salvador on March 5, 1947. In the late 1960s she met her husband with whom she lived until November 16, 1989. He was an overseer on a plantation and she worked as a domestic in San Salvador. During the coffee harvest, she would leave her domestic job to cut coffee at the plantation where her husband worked.

They later moved to Jayaque where her husband worked as a watchman and farmed corn and beans. On February 27, 1973 their daughter **Celina Mariset** was born. This was Elba's third child, but the first two died at birth. In 1976, another son was born.

In 1976 the family moved to Acajutla where Elba began to sell fruit while her husband worked on the docks. But in 1979 they left Acajutla. Increased violence had radically reduced port activity and Elba's husband lost his job. They moved to Santa Tecla where he worked as a gardener and then later as a night watchman.

In 1985, Elba began to work as a cook at the Jesuit theologian's residence. In 1989, her husband was employed as the gardener and watchman of the new university residence. Father Segundo Montes offered him the job along with a newly-built house near the residence for the family.

Elba was an exceptional person. She was faithful, discreet, intuitive and joyful. She was able to recognize the theology student's moods by looking at their faces. She comforted those who were feeling down and was very sensitive to the needs of others. She was always taking care of details. Her laughter brightened the kitchen of the residence.

Celina went to primary school at the Escuela Luisa de Marillac in Santa

Tecla. She then went to the José Damián Villacorta Institute in Santa Tecla where, in 1989, she finished her first year of high school. She had obtained a scholarship but had to maintain good grades in order to keep it. She left the basketball team and the marching band, two activities that she really enjoyed, in order to concentrate on her studies. At the age of 14 she met her boyfriend and they planned to get married pending her mother's approval! †



Father Joaquín López y López was born in Chalchuapa, El Salvador on August 16, 1918. He entered the novitiate with Mexican Jesuits in El Paso, Texas in 1938, as the Central American novitiate was yet to be established. He earned a degree in classical humanities in 1943 and a degree in philosophy in 1946. He began his theological studies in the United States, but completed them in Spain in 1951. In 1952 he took his vows with the Company of Jesus.

Father López y López taught at the *Externado* School from 1947 to 1949 and again in 1957. At the *Externado*, he motivated a team of 800 students to give catechism classes in poor communities. As a result, 20,000 children from marginalized communities received catechism.

In 1964 Father López y López worked for approval of the university law which would eventually help to start the UCA. He would always be considered a part of the UCA community and was very concerned about the university and its problems.

In 1969, together with a group of women, he raised the money to found the organization *Fe y Alegría* project started two carpentry workshop, and three primary communities. Father López of *Fe y Alegría* until his death. educational centers were and 48,000 people were ben- y López considered this solution to one of El problems: lack of education. was a need for structural people had immediate needs that could not wait.



(Faith and Joy). The workshops, a sewing schools in marginalized y López was the director During this time, 30 opened across the country eficiaries. Father López work to be the immediate Salvador's most pressing He did not deny that there change, but he felt that the

Though he often appeared to be someone who acted only in the moment, Father López y López had a vision of the future. He often said: if your projects are for five years, plant wheat; if your projects are for ten years, plant a tree; but if your projects are for 100 years, educate the people.

Father López y López suffered a lot during the last year of his life. He had two operations due to urinary tract problems. After much resistance, he received treatment and was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. He knew that he would probably not live much longer, but continued to work without rest.

Father López y López continues to live in the Salvadorans that have benefited from the works that he made possible: the *Externado*, the UCA, and *Fe y Alegría*. Thousands of Salvadorans have been educated or have learned a trade thanks to the commitment of Father López y López. Many remember with great thanks the gifts that he gave them. †



Father Ignacio Ellacuría was born on November 9, 1930 in Vizcaya, Spain. He entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1947 and he went to El Salvador in 1949, the year that the novitiate in Central

America was founded. He then went to study classical humanities in Quito. He earned a degree in philosophy in 1955. He went to the *San José de la Montaña* seminary in San Salvador where he taught philosophy and modern existentialist thought. He also helped to care for the seminarians outside of the classroom. He organized hikes and other activities for them on the weekends. He helped to organize a small classical library so that the seminarians would be able to have access to a variety of literature. He convinced the seminarians to save some of their lunch money from the excursions to help buy books for the library.

From 1953 to 1962 he left to study theology in Innsbruck where he was ordained in 1961. In 1962 he began his doctoral studies in philosophy in Madrid.

In 1967, Father Ellacuría returned to San Salvador to teach philosophy at the UCA. In 1972, he was named head of the department. In 1974 he founded the Center for Theological Reflection. In 1976, he was named director of the *Central American Studies* magazine and in 1979 he was named Rector of the UCA. He gave courses, seminars and conferences in various parts of Spain, Central America, and the United States.

Father Ellacuría was a great philosopher, but perhaps even more of a theologian. He gave theology classes and in the early 1970s he organized theology courses for secular students. Professionals, students, and hundreds of members of the base communities attended these courses. He created the masters in theology program and the professorship in religious and moral sciences. In 1984, together with Father Jon Sobrino, he started the *Latin American Journal of Theology*.

In his political analysis, Father Ellacuría followed his own line. He spoke with clarity about his thoughts and beliefs and was always able to back up his arguments with facts. At the same time, he listened carefully in any argument and if he felt that the other person was right, he was not afraid to say so. Father Ellacuría led a very austere lifestyle. He owned very few things and was very scrupulous with his money. He also loved sports. He loved to play soccer and never missed a game.

At the UCA, he felt that the university's most important mission was not to produce professionals, rather to shape the critical conscience of society. His goal was to put the university structure at the service of liberating the Salvadoran people. He therefore opposed the idea that the UCA would be a first world structure. He argued that the buildings of the UCA should be functional, modest, and adequate for the third world reality but not as beautiful and comfortable as they had been envisioned.

Father Ellacuría helped the UCA to assume the direction of the magazine *ECA*. This magazine has been a primary and constant source of the university's critical thought and is considered to be Father Ellacuría's most important professorship.

For Father Ellacuría, the UCA was his life and his passion. He helped the UCA to gain international recognition. He was never satisfied with the university's achievements and always struggled for more. When the undergraduate program was well established, he began to promote the masters and doctoral programs. He felt that this would raise the overall academic level of higher education in El Salvador.

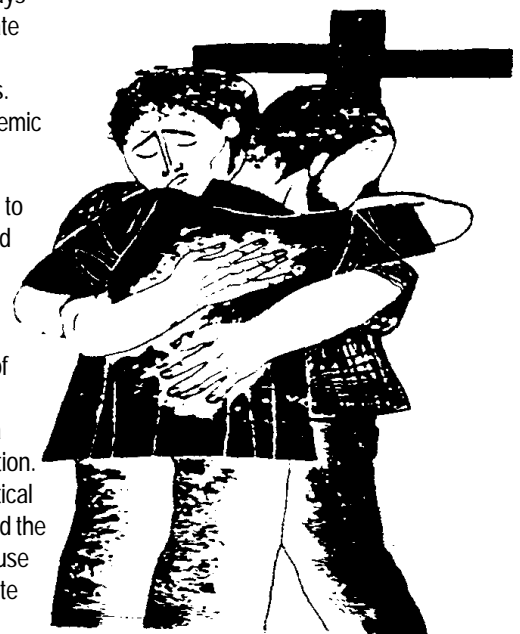
As early as 1976 Father Ellacuría began to take on a public persona in which he offered an on-going critical analysis. In 1980, after the assassination of Monseñor Romero, Father Ellacuría left the country for several months when his name appeared on a list of those to be killed. Upon his return and the subsequent Offensive of 1981, he took on a new understanding of the Salvadoran situation. He did not feel that the government, the political parties, the Armed Forces or the FMLN held the best interests of the popular majorities because they all had partisan interests and the ultimate

goal of taking power. From that time on he saw clearly that the armed conflict was not going to resolve the problem of structural injustice and he began to audaciously propose that the only solution was dialogue and negotiation. During this time, to say these words was to be labeled a traitor.

In 1985, Father Ellacuría started an open forum at the UCA to discuss the country's serious problems. He invited politicians, unionists, popular leaders, and religious. But often times the most popular speaker was Ellacuría himself. When he spoke, he filled the auditorium and his words were broadcast on the radio and television.

In the last years of his life Father Ellacuría was very tired and his health began to suffer. When others asked that he rest, he said that the people could not take a rest from the war or from the economic crisis. The least he felt he could do was to continue working for their liberation and peace.

In the last months of his life, Father Ellacuría said that though there were many storms on the surface, the process that lay below was one that was moving towards just and lasting peace. His death forms a part of the surface storm. But his life, of which he gave fully every day, forms a part of the process that lies below the surface and marches irreversibly forward toward the future. †



Civil Society and the Globalization of Solidarity

by Dean Brackley, S.J.

Some people say this has been the most violent of centuries. As it ends, we find it hard to say where we are headed—whether economically, politically, socially, culturally or intellectually. There is both bad news and good news.

One of my housemates repeats the refrain these days, “We are finishing up this century in very bad shape.” The U.N.’s 1999 *Human Development Report* informs us that the income of the fifth of humanity living in the richest countries is 74 times greater than the income of the poorest fifth. The prices of primary commodities of the poor countries have fallen to their lowest point in a century and a half. Almost half the countries of the world have incomes lower than a decade ago. Inequality is increasing everywhere, including in the U.S. and Europe. “The assets of the top three billionaires are more than the combined GNP of all least developed countries and their 600 million people.”¹ Globally, more than twice as many women than men are poor and the division of rich and poor is perhaps the single greatest cause of environmental destruction. In this situation, U.N. documents speak of the widespread growth of crime and violence, drug and weapons traffic, sex trade in women and girls, and, in general, social disintegration.² I witnessed that disintegration in spades in the South Bronx during the 80s: the crumbling of communities, families and egos.



Since then, we have all witnessed the globalization of the South Bronx and that threefold crumbling.

Fortunately, not all the news is bad. There are signs of hope. Where? Politicians? You are tempted to laugh. It is open season on governments and politicians, from Caracas to Moscow. We have grown cynical because it seems that only millionaires can aspire to Congress and because governments can no longer fine-tune the economy, to say nothing of controlling capital. Then there is the power of the media and the Monica Lewinsky factor. So, if we vote, we vote for the sweeter lemon. Do we have higher hopes for the left? If it’s radical social change we want (and I think we do), there are no more Winter Palaces for guerrillas to storm. Even if there were, the counterrevolution would take them back with the help of the CIA, as they did in Nicaragua. In fact, if the left did take power democratically, as could occur in El Salvador, they would not know quite what to do with it. In any case, capital and its allies would block any government program of radical change.

So, all over the world governments and political parties—left, right and center— have lost credibility. We don’t believe they can eliminate poverty, save the environment, stop the violence, or advance the cause of human rights.

Well, if they can’t, then who can? Who is advancing the cause of humanity? As I ask people these questions, they say Amnesty International, the U. N., Greenpeace, women’s groups, community groups. They mention non-governmental organizations, *NGOs*. It was a coalition of more than 1,300 *NGOs* that pushed through the global Land Mine Treaty and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. These groups of ordinary citizens carried off one of the most successful humanitarian campaigns in history. Signs of the times. This was international civil society in action.

In Central America, as elsewhere, people expect little from macro-politics these days. Instead, the ferment—and the locus of hope—is in the civil society, *la sociedad civil*. Like other poor regions around the world, Central America, and El Salva-

¹UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 2-3, quotes from p. 3.

²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

dor in particular, is witnessing the steady growth of *la sociedad civil*. It is comprised of groups of neighbors, women, indigenous and black people, environmental groups, union activity, small and medium-size businesses, cooperatives, communal banks, consumers and gays who are pushing for change from the bottom up and across the base of society. Within what have been traditional authoritarian societies, many of the new groups stress democratic participation, transparency and accountability in their own internal organization.

These groups hold great promise. And yet, they remain weak. In El Salvador, the micro-initiatives run up against macro-obstacles. When I worked out in rural *Jayaque*, people from several communities stopped the destruction of a local river by physically blocking work with their own bodies. This is very dangerous business in El Salvador and places like it. If you directly challenge the companies that are polluting the *Acelhuate* River that runs through the capital, you could be found floating face down in the *Acelhuate* the next morning. The human rights office at the UCA is working hard to end impunity of prominent public figures involved in organized crime, possibly including murder. The director of the human rights office is no fool: He makes good friends with human rights groups in Washington and San José, Costa Rica. Environmental activists make friends with Greenpeace. Cooperatives link up locally and internationally. So, too, with women, indigenous peoples and unions. They look for allies. Local communities forge strong ties with sister communities and sister parishes in the United States. Without these ties, local groups have no chance against those who control the market and the means of violence.

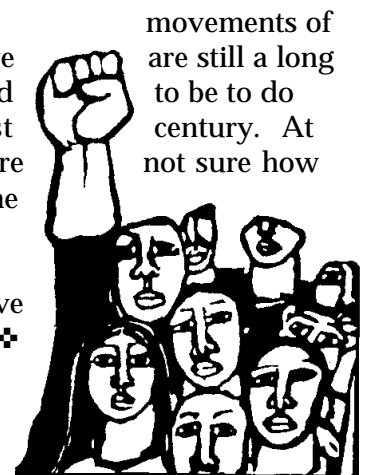
And this seems to be the pattern as we move into the next century. Much more than the number 2000, which is a round figure only by human convention, the signs of the times suggest that we are at the end of an era. We are witnessing, on the one hand, the crisis of many of our major institutions and widespread social disintegration. On the other hand, we find the growth of non-governmental groups and movements which are fighting this disintegration and sowing seeds for a new social order whose shape we still cannot foresee. While fire rages among the tall pines, new shoots are springing up on the forest floor. But, again, the

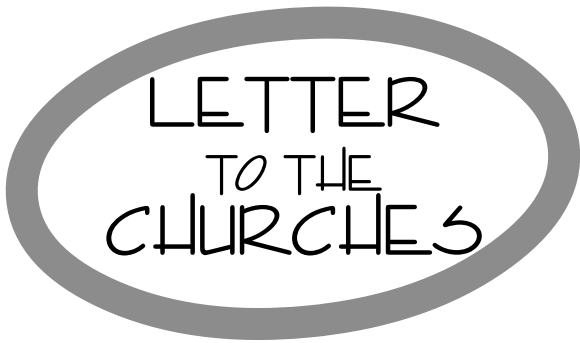
local micro-initiatives in poor and violent countries face macro-obstacles and need local and international allies to survive.

This situation suggests to me that the signs of the times call for making this new century the Century of International Solidarity. The powerful of the world are extending their power and control through globalized markets and finance, transport and communications and the global arms trade. The response can only be to globalize solidarity, that is, to globalize the practice of love. Without falling into the bourgeois spirit, we need to enlist the new technology—internet, e-mail and discount air fares—and make them channels of love and service instead of their opposites. But, above all, we need to be a new kind of human being, capable of identifying with the cause of the poor majorities of the planet.

Parenthetically, the signs of the times also suggest to me a general agenda for the next phase of liberation theology, which I expect to thrive well into the next century and for as long as poor people continue to express their faith. It suggests the need to reflect theologically on that least-noticed “second meaning-level” of liberation which Gustavo Gutiérrez described in his book *Theology of Liberation* (1971). It is the level of new human relations, micro-politics (or horizontal politics if you prefer), the level of cultural revolution and democratic values, all of which, let us be clear, require *new human beings*.

Whether or not micro-initiatives of the poor South are to be crushed by macro-obstacles depends, decisively, on whether there will be a critical mass of people in the rich North who will unite with them and assume their cause as their own, and, indeed, as the cause of all of us. Although some important strides have been made in developing the needed international solidarity, we way from where we need to battle for life in the 21st century. At this point in history, we are to organize a truly humane society. But one thing is certain: there will be no new society unless we have these new human beings.✚





from El Salvador

We are persecuted but never abandoned;
struck down, but never left to die.
(2 Corinthians 4:7-8)

□ INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE PASTORAL CENTER, CENTRAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, SAN SALVADOR □
EDITED ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Letter to the Churches is a bimonthly publication of the Archbishop Oscar Romero Pastoral Center, Central American University (UCA), San Salvador. These are letters of flesh and spirit, written from one Salvadoran community to another and from the Salvadoran Church to the Universal Church. The following are excerpts from this publication.

Flooding in Central America

Once again Central America is in the news. A little less than a year ago, the region became the center of debate for the international community concerned about the consequences of Tropical Storm "Mitch." For the first time in many years, there was a sense of urgency to elaborate an integrated development plan that not only resolved economic and material needs, but also offered qualitative improvements for needy sectors. At that time there was support from world powers and the international press and pressure from social groups in the most-affected countries.

Now, just eleven months later, we once again find ourselves in the news. However, this time things are different. In the first place, the causes of the tragedy are not as spectacular as they were a

year ago. They are merely the effects of a rainy season that was delayed as a result of *El Niño*. We should therefore not be surprised that international support has not been manifested with the same degree of intensity as it was last year. Additionally, the response of regional governments has been more organized and less publicized, in an attempt to cushion the national coffers with international aid.

However, upon careful examination of the current crisis, we find the same evils that were found during the time of "Mitch." It would appear that the rains brought on by the hurricane never stopped falling in Central America. A blind force took thousands of lives along with the hopes of thousand of people. The ruins, that replaced beautiful scenery and crops of vital economic importance, did not disappear with the prolonged rainy season of 1998. At this time (published October 15, 1999), the combined data of the region offers us the following statistics for 1999: 69 deaths, which could increase in the coming days; 39,994 evacuations caused by flooding; increased illnesses including cholera, dengue, malaria and other respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses; and the possibility that more precipitation will come from the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and the north of Honduras.✚



Catholic Church Helps Flood Victims

Archbishop of San Salvador, Monsignor Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, announced on Sunday, October 3 that the Catholic Church will help flood victims who have lost their homes or who are in danger. "There are funds available and some parishes are doing their own part, collecting money, goods, medicines, clothing . . ."

Monsignor Sáenz said that the Church would give as much as 25,000 colones (\$2,900) in material aid to families that can present a title of the land where their home is located. They will give an additional 9,000 colones (\$1,000) to those that have been affected but cannot provide any documentation of their property.

"We want to give residents of the high risk zones a safer alternative, with the goal of avoiding the disgraces that affect some of our communities year after year." The aid that the Church will offer forms part of a 2.5 million colon (\$300,000) sum sent by international organizations for "Mitch" victims but arrived late. Sáenz added that 150 containers of food will arrive in El Salvador in January.

In reference to the Salvadoran government's refusal to accept help from countries such as Cuba, due to lack of diplomatic relations, Monsignor Sáenz affirmed that "the work is titanic and requires the efforts of many. Therefore, the government should be open to receive any type of aid." He once again insisted in opening spaces to receive whatever help Cuba might offer: "The needs of the Salvadoran people should take precedent as this is their right. In the case of housing, there is much to be done due to the social injustice that affects thousands of Salvadorans." ❖

Interviews with residents of the Bajo Lempa

In 1982, the UNDP and the government of El Salvador established that the Bajo Lempa zone is the most vulnerable flood zone in the country. According to functionaries of the Ministry of Agriculture, when there are extraordinary meteorological phenomenon, approximately 23,700 hectares of land are flooded in the Bajo Lempa, of which the majority has great agricultural potential. This results in great economic and human loss for the residents of the zone.

More than 26,000 people live in the communities of the Bajo Lempa, which crosses the departments of San Vicente, La Paz and Usulután. The following are reflections from some of the residents regarding the problem of the floods and possible solutions that they offer.

Santos Cortéz, age 68, campesino from the community of La Canoa. This time my whole house was flooded, everything was flooded. The walls were completely wet and the roof tiles broke. I have been repairing the house with a couple of old tin cans to protect myself. Last year it was worse, this year there was less rain. The water came in the house, but that was all. What I would ask for is help reconstructing my little house. I don't have enough money to buy even 100 roof tiles. I would also like help recovering what I lost from my crops because I lost everything.

Dalila Chicas de González, age 40, campesina from the community of El Coco. We were evacuated to *Calvario* Church in Zacatecoluca and have been there for eight days. In the refuge you don't feel quite right because you miss being at your house. I was concerned about what we had left behind, because what wasn't lost to the water will be lost to people who take things. Also, in the refuge you don't sleep very well. Sometimes they bring us food that is bad or isn't cooked very well. But this is preferable to being afraid that we might drown. In my house the walls fell down, some animals drowned, and the crops rotted. I would ask the government that they help us to see if we can recover our homes and our crops. They should build bridges and retaining walls, but they don't want to. The retaining wall that they did build is falling down after one heavy rain. Maybe they didn't build it as carefully as they could have. We want them to build the walls, but they should do it well, thinking about our lives and not just doing it to get the job over with. I don't want to leave this area because in the countryside one can survive on the crops, even if there isn't much. In another place it would be more difficult.

Maximiliano Asencio, age 17, campesino from the community of San Nicolás. The same thing happens in *San Nicolás* every year. The flooding is a constant danger that we live with. For this reason we ask the government to build retaining walls and to improve the roads. This is what we, the young people of the *Bajo Lempa*, ask for, though nothing seems clear.

Sebastián Vásquez, age 58, campesino from the community of Las Anonas. Well, if you talk about leaving, we didn't leave. But we have been wading around in the water because it didn't fill up the house as much as Mitch did. This is what happened in *Las Anonas*, but in the communities of Santa Marta, San Bartolo, Rancho and Taura, well they did get a lot of water. Over there they had to evacuate people. Right now we are suffering an unbearable mosquito plague, you can't even sleep. I don't know why the Ministry of Health hasn't come here. I was able to save my crops because the water didn't get all the way to the top of the corn, but the sorghum and the sesame seed were lost because they had recently been planted. What worries me now is that we hear that they are going to move us to another place. We don't like this idea. What we do want is for them to build retaining walls and improve the roads, but we don't want to leave.

José Américo Pineda, age 14, campesino from the community of San José de la Montaña. A lot of people were evacuated from my community. My family didn't want to leave because they wanted to stay behind to take care of our things. The adobe houses are the ones that fall down, the others can resist a storm like this. Hopefully the government will comply with what it has promised and not think about moving us from here because we were born here and this is where we want to live.

Marta Silvia Peña, age 60, habitant of San Marcelino, Costa del Sol. In *San Marcelino* we were flooded and we haven't been able to work. We make our living from the ocean, but in these conditions you can't do anything. I would ask that they help us because we have been left with nothing.

Dom Helder Câmara Dies at Age 90

Dom Helder Câmara, symbol of the struggle of the poor and of resistance against the Brazilian military dictatorship, died on August 27, 1999. His death, caused by respiratory failure, occurred in his humble home in Recife, where he served as Archbishop. The morning after his death, people on their way to work stopped at newsstands that carried the news of his death. The military officers called him the “red bishop,” but for Brazil the death of Dom Helder has been cause for national mourning.

Dom Helder was buried in the cathedral along side Monsignor José Lamartine, who was one of his assistants. Thousands of people formed a line in front of the cathedral to say goodbye to one of the Brazilian Catholic Church’s most significant figures. A candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, the military boycotted his funeral for fear that he would obtain more international prestige. The death squads had made many attempts on his life and his house was scarred with bullet marks.

During the twenty years of the military dictatorship, from 1964 to 1985, he was a tenacious defender of human rights and he helped to delineate liberation theology. He viewed liberation theology to be based on the gospel and to offer Christian justification for social change. Dom Helder summed up those years with his well-known words: “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” He also made famous another phrase: “I will never carry a weapon and I will never kill anyone. But I am ready to give my life for the poor.” They are words that remind us of difficult times in which pastors of the Church lost their lives if they made decisions favoring the poor.

Dom Helder was born in Fortaleza on February 7, 1909. He was one of the 12 children born to João Câmara, a journalist and theater critic, and Adelaide Pessoa, a teacher. He entered the seminary at age 14 and was ordained a priest in 1931. That same year he organized “Christian Worker Youth” which was tied to an organization that eventually became a political party.

Soon the conservative Church of that time asked him to abandon all work of a political nature and he was sent to Rio de Janeiro to organize religious teaching in the schools. After being named auxiliary bishop of Rio, he organized a new movement to urbanize, humanize, and “Christian-ize” the poor shanty towns.

His influence in the Brazilian Church was strongly felt in 1952 when he helped to start the powerful and influential Episcopal Bishops Conference of Brazil, of which he was the first president, and the General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM).

Later, he was involved in the preparation of the Vatican II Council. The Council, convened by Pope John XXIII, developed between 1962 and 1965 and introduced a profound number of reforms in the structure and pastorate of the Church. From this period of time comes another of his famous lines. Asked by journalists what he considered the greatest problem of the Latin American Church, he surprised them with these words: “The greatest problem of the Church is not a lack of priests, rather the hunger faced by the people.” He also liked to say: “Eternal liberation begins here. It is here and now where we build our eternity.” As an ultimate defender of the simple and poor people, he always treated them

with great affection and great appreciation. This was something not often found in those times of pastoral “infantization.” He said, “when you are close to the poor, you realize that although they don’t know how to read or write, they know how to think.” His words, his ideas and his behavior, helped to form what would become Medellín.

In 1964, the year of the military coup, he became bishop of Olinda and Recife. It was at this point that he gained international recognition for his activities in favor of political prisoners, his denunciation of torture (which the military denied), and his total defense of the poor.

His influence began to decline when John Paul II was named Pope in 1978. It is understood that this brought about a doctrinal involution within the Vatican and there was suspicion that attacks against liberation theology as a Marxist idea would soon follow.

When he turned 76, Dom Helder was quickly asked to leave the diocese. José Cardozo Sobrinho was named his successor. Sobrinho was known as a traditionalist and a conservative and he reverted many of Dom Helder’s reforms. The Vatican never named him cardinal, even at an old age. For that reason, he is considered to be a symbol of the new Latin American Church.

From that time on, Dom Helder retired to live, write and meditate in a simple house in Recife. He wrote more than 40 books, some of which were read clandestinely due to a fear of the military, who considered the books to be subversive. With more free time, he went to major universities all around the world carrying his message of peace and social justice.✠

Communiqué from the Christian Base Communities of Northern Morazán

Many people come to Morazán asking: Do the base communities still exist here? A young person responded: "We have more life than ever. The presence and flowering of our base communities are as much if not more evident than they were in the last decade."

That is what we would like to say. We are what is left over, or what has come out of great tribulation in order to give testimony to hope.

We take advantage of this Eucharist, which we are sharing together at the tomb of our pastor and martyr Monseñor Romero, to say that, despite our unfulfilled illusions and the disappointments we have experienced again and again, we are here and we continue.

In the face of current system that tries to break us apart and demobilize us, we continue to resist in an organized way:

- ▶ Through Biblical circles that form in the different communities, we come closer to the liberating practice of Jesus.
- ▶ Through the catechism of the children, adolescents, and youth, we help these young people to discover what is good and noble and to reject so much garbage that exists in our society.
- ▶ With couples we are looking for ways to remake and consolidate the family, something that has become disjointed and castrated during the past war.
- ▶ We work with women, many of us physically and morally mutilated because we didn't lose one son, we lost three or four plus more relatives. We continue talking in different congregations of Christian mothers about our dignity as women and daughters of God and we continue looking to take on the role and the place that is ours as community leaders.
- ▶ Through cooperatives we battle to overcome mere subsistence and achieve a minimum of development for our families.
- ▶ Through all of this and more, immersed in the struggle for a dignified life for all, we walk together toward a society that is truly reconciled. This is our objective and as Christians we can never lose sight of it.



Our legality as a parish has only been established for one year. In the past, only Monseñor and Jesus and many of you were there to motivate us to continue on the path.

The Christian base communities are not well loved, inside or outside of the Church.

To those of you who understand this double marginalization, we tell you that we have endured a great tribulation at all levels: do not be disheartened, don't allow yourself to be broken apart. The system is ferocious, but together we can win!

Long live the base communities! Long live our martyrs! Long live Monseñor Romero!

Sunday, September 19, 1999

Yearly subscriptions to *Carta A Las Iglesias*, a bimonthly publication in Spanish, can be obtained for \$35 by writing to: Centro de Distribución UCA, Apartado Postal (01) 575, San Salvador, El Salvador, Centro America. Make checks payable to: Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas

Martha Doggett. *A Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1993. In-depth history of the UCA murder case.

Teresa Whitfield. *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits in El Salvador*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. The story of Ellacuría and El Salvador through the lens of the UCA murders.

Joseph E. Mulligan, S.J. *The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador: Celebrating the Anniversaries*. Fortkamp, 1994. Remembering the UCA martyrs in historical context. Graphic photos.

Ron Hansen: "Hearing the Cry of the Poor: Jesuit Priests, El Salvador, 1989," in a Bergman, ed., *Martyrs: Contemporary Writers on Modern Lives of Faith*. Orbis, 1998, pp. 33-55.

Dean Brackley. "Remembering the UCA Martyrs: Ten Years Later," *Conversations*, Fall 1999. Available through the Institute for Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, IJS@slu.edu

Selected Reading

List



The UCA Martyrs



SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS UPDATE

Legislative Update & Action

Conference Committee Rejects SOA Funding Cuts

On September 22, the House Foreign Operations Appropriations conference committee voted 8-7 to reject funding cuts to the SOA. This effectively nullifies the July House vote to cut SOA funding, and it means that the Senate conferees will not take up the issue of the SOA this year. This setback does not affect HR732 and S873, the House and Senate bills that call for the outright closing of the SOA. If your Representative and Senators have not yet co-sponsored, please ask them to do so. **Call Congress Now ~ 202-224-3121.** Ask your Representative to sign on to HR 732 to close the SOA. We need 180 cosponsors to call for a House vote on HR 732. Ask your Senator to sign on to S873 to close the SOA.

Protest Events

School of the Americas 10th Anniversary Commemoration

November 19-21, 1999 ★ Ft. Benning, Georgia

The commemoration coincides with the 10th anniversary of the UCA martyrs. Their assassins were trained at the SOA.

FAST 2000 to Close the SOA

In Washington DC ★ Kick Off Rally – Sunday, April 2, 2000 ★ Lobby Day - Monday, April 3, 2000

At 2,000 Locations Nationwide ★ Juice-Only Fast ~ April 6 - April 19, 2000

Organizing packet with country fact sheets will be available January 1.

For More Information

SOA Watch, P.O. Box 4566, Washington, D.C. 20017-0566, (202) 234-3440 soawatch@knight-hub.com, <http://www.soaw.org/#act>

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