



Honoring Saint Óscar Romero March 23, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

In 2021, our bi-monthly resources will typically appear in your inbox on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via videoconferencing. If you are new to videoconferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page. [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that this twice-monthly resource will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our [regular programs](#). Today's resource speaks to the theme of nonviolence, which is highlighted in our "Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace" program. The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever! We offer tips and tools for facilitating all our current programs virtually.

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Pull up [John 12:20-33](#), using whichever translation you prefer, and invite two volunteers to help read the opening litany in a few minutes. When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today, in the midst of this Lenten season, we will take time to observe the 41st anniversary of the assassination of Saint Oscar Romero, as we honor his life and discern how his witness calls us to act, speak, and live.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then say:

We will now read John 12:20-33, the Scripture passage from which Saint Óscar Romero preached his final homily.

Read [John 12:20-33](#). *Recommended: pull up the Scripture online, and [share your screen](#) so that everyone can read along.*

Then say:

We will now read "A Litany for Prayerful Prophets," which encapsulates Romero's teachings and even incorporates some of his own words. This prayer is found in ecumenical prayer service liturgy made available through the [Romero Trust](#).

[Share your screen](#), so that everyone can read the prayer.

A Litany for Prayerful Prophets

Reader 1: Lord of Light, Lord of Hope, your prophets cried, "Shout out, do not hold back! Raise your voice like a trumpet." Yet we have seen your people suffer and remained silent too long.

Reader 2: Help us to speak out and act.

Reader 1: When human dignity is not honoured:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.



Reader 1: When the poor are oppressed:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When injustice reigns:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When rights are not respected:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When the law is unjust:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When violence is normalized:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When human life is cheapened:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When other voices are silenced:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act.

Reader 1: When we are most afraid to speak out:

Reader 2: May we speak out and act nonetheless.

Reader 1: Lord, give us the courage to be your microphone:

Reader 2: That our words may ring as clearly as yours.

Reader 1: Still the oppressor's sword

Reader 2: And soften the hearts of the mighty.



Reader 1: We shudder at the thought of speaking and acting.

Reader 2: Those who trust in you will not be put to shame.

Reader 1: To remain silent grows more unthinkable every day.

Reader 2: Now is a time to hear your Word.

Reader 1: Soon it will be a time to speak, to act.

Reader 2: May we then speak out and do justice.

Reread John 12:23-26. Close with "Amen."

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: Where have you witnessed God's Spirit during this Lenten season? What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?



Announcements (5 minutes-ish)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a larger topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into this subject matter, they should consider the eight-session program [Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice," in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) for more information on times and topics.
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.

Reflection (30 minutes or so)

[Share your screen](#), and pull up the 9 minute video with Rev. José Luis Villaseñor:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TpXniD2osY>

After the watching the video, choose the discussion questions which are the most interesting and relevant to your group:

- What resonates with you from this video?
- At the end of the video, Rev. Villaseñor refers to the hope that Óscar Romero inspired in Salvadorans and in the world. Given the reality of the suffering, violence, and death that continues to fill our world today, what does the word "hope" mean to you?
- Reflect on the following excerpts from Romero's sermons and writings: how do these quotes speak to you and your work for justice?
 - "God's best microphone is Christ, and Christ's best microphone is the Church, and the Church is all of you. Let each one of you, in your own job, in your own

vocation—nun, married person, bishop, priest, high school or university student, day laborer, wage earner, market woman—one in your own place ... live the faith intensely and feel that in your surroundings you are a true microphone of God our Lord.” – [Homily on July 8, 1979](#)

- “A church that does not provoke any crisis, preach a gospel that does not unsettle, proclaim a word of God. that does not get under anyone's skin or a word of God that does not touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed: what kind of gospel is that?” – [Homily on April 16, 1978](#)
- “When we speak of the church of the poor, we are not using Marxist dialectic, as though there were another church of the rich. What we are saying is that Christ, inspired by the Spirit of God, declared, ‘The Lord has sent me to preach good news to the poor’ – [these are] the words of the Bible – so that to hear him one must become poor.” – [Homily on December 3, 1978](#)
- “The church, with its message, with its word, will meet a thousand obstacles, just as the river encounters boulders, rocks, chasms. No matter; the river carries a promise: ‘I will be with you to the end of the ages’ and ‘The gates of hell shall not prevail’ against the will of the Lord.” – [Homily on December 8, 1977](#)
- “There are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried.” (Note: I, Kristin, cannot find an origin for this quote. Though it’s possible that Romero never spoke these exact words, this statement nonetheless reflects his teaching).

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Ask for five volunteers to help read the closing prayer in a few minutes. Then close by playing the song that Rev. Villaseñor mentioned: “Vos sos el Destazado en la Cruz” by Guillermo Cuéllar (3:11): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p1aQti9sbA>

Note: Share your screen with THIS DOCUMENT displayed, so that everyone can read the lyrics as the song plays.

Vos sos el destazado en la cruz
Que has vencido la maldad del mundo
Denunciando al injusto opresor
Levantando del polvo a los pobres

You are the slaughtered one on the cross
Who has defeated the evil of the world
Denouncing the unjust oppressor
Lifting the poor from the dust

Te pedimos que nos oigas
Que escuches el clamor de tu pueblo

We ask that you hear us
That you listen to the cry of your people

Vos sos el destazado en la cruz
Masacrado por los poderosos
Hoy derramas tu sangre también
En la sangre de nuestros caídos

You are the slaughtered one on the cross
Massacred by the powerful
Today you also spill your blood
Through the blood of our fallen ones

Te pedimos que nos oigas
Que escuches el clamor de tu pueblo

We ask that you hear us
That you listen to the cry of your people

Vos sos el destazado en la cruz
Que construyes la paz con justicia
Ayúdanos a no desmayar
Y a luchar por que venga tu reino

You are the slaughtered one on the cross
Who builds peace with justice
Help us not to lose heart
And to fight that your kingdom may come

Que tu paz llegue a nosotros
Cuando hagamos brotar la justicia

May your peace arrive with us
When we bring forth justice

When the song is over, read the following reflection aloud:

Dark centuries ago,
it is told,
a bishop died by order of a king,
spattering the chalice with his blood
to defend the freedom of the church
from the secular might.
Well enough, surely. But
since when has it been told
that a bishop fell at the altar
not for the freedom of the church,
but simply because
he took sides with the poor —
because he was the mouth of their thirst for justice



crying to heaven?
When has such a thing been told?
Perhaps not since the beginning,
when Someone died
the death of a subversive
and a slave.

By José María Valverde, printed in Jon Sobrino's Witnesses to the Kingdom: the Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples. Orbis Books, 2003 (p 44).

Pause for silence.

Then say:

Our closing prayer was written by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw in 1979 as a prayer for the departed priests. When Romero died a year later, people began to associate the prayer with his life and work.

Reader 1: It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.

Reader 2: Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives
includes everything.

Reader 3: That is what we are about.
We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.



We lay foundations
that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

Reader 4: We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realising that.
This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

Reader 5: We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country.
Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might
participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more
just and peaceful world. Amen.