

Fr. O'Connor's Homily October 14, 2018
Saint Oscar Romero

I don't remember the first time I heard of Oscar Romero. It was sometime in the 70s, a time of chaos in Central America, as well as Vietnam and so many other places. The Berlin Wall still stood as a symbol of Communist power.

In El Salvador, a ruthless oligarchy dominated the country. It was during this that Sister Ita Ford and Sr, Maura Clark, Maryknoll Sisters, were brutally murdered by the Salvadoran military. At that time, Oscar Romero was a bright, humble, conservative priest. He didn't believe in "Rocking the boat" nor challenging the government that riled El Salvador despite the fact that they were waging a cruel, murderous war against their own people.

When the time came for the Vatican to appoint a new archbishop for San Salvador, the Vatican representative in San Salvador, in consultation with the government, chose Oscar Romero because he was safe.

But shortly after his appointment, the Salvadoran military assassinated Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande, his close friend. At the same time he began to mingle with his flock and the people of his diocese composed mostly of poor farmers, and to hear their stories. His whole outlook, was changed, his heart was deeply moved.

It became his custom to preach in the Cathedral of San Salvador every Sunday and his homilies were broadcast by radio throughout the country. He spoke of justice and the rights of the people. The government became increasingly upset with him.

On the Sunday after a horrible massacre he instructed the members of the military during a homily, not to kill their own people, to lay down their guns. A very few days later, on March 24, 1980, he was murdered by a government assassin while offering Mass in a sisters' convent.

Before Francis became pope, because he was a priest and bishop in Latin America, he understood and recognized that Archbishop Oscar Romero was a martyr for our faith, that he had left everything and followed Jesus to death. This day in Rome, Oscar Arnulfo Romero has been declared Saint Oscar Romero by Pope Francis and the Church.

Here's the question for us. Are we called to leave everything and follow Jesus?

This is as tough a question for the man in today's Gospel as it was for Oscar Romero. It's a tough question and a difficult invitation for us, a dangerous calling. Jesus invites us and he feeds us with His truth, the Gospel. He feeds us with His own Body and Blood.