



**PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATES WITH GRATITUDE
THE MEMORY OF BISHOP MARTYR OSCAR ROMERO FROM EL SALVADOR**

Pax Christi International rejoices with the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero and celebrates in solidarity with the people of El Salvador and the peoples of the world who recognize in Msgr. Romero a witness of a peace which is the fruit of justice. Msgr. Romero's legacy is the persistent search for truth, justice and reconciliation; his journey was marked by a unique coherence between his values and faith and his practice.

While Msgr. Romero was leading the Archdiocese of San Salvador, the political repression of the popular demands for justice and human rights reached brutal levels of violence. In facing that reality, he became a true prophet. His word and his pastoral practice – based in the Gospel – denounced the structural injustice at the roots of the repression and proclaimed the centrality of justice and the unconditional respect for human rights as the only way to leave behind the spiral of violence in which El Salvador was immersed. He tirelessly defended those whose rights were persistently violated and built bridges among those who looked for a just transformation of the conflict. But his voice was not heard by those who clung to their own power and interests, and they ordered his assassination while he was celebrating the Eucharist.

The beginning of Pax Christi's commitment to peace in Latin America and the Caribbean is closely linked to Msgr. Romero who asked the leadership of our movement early in 1980 to show special solidarity with the people of the region. After his assassination – and especially inspired by his evangelical coherence – Pax Christi International sent a mission to four countries of Central America as a sign of its solidarity with Christian communities and with civil society organizations working for justice and human rights in those countries. The mission also made an inquiry into the human rights situation and the position of the churches in Central America. Its findings were published in 1981 and 1982 in four reports dealing with the situation in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua and with the position of the Salvadoran refugees in Honduras.

Prompted by the significance of Msgr. Romero's life and witness, the United Nations General Assembly in 2010 proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. In its decision, the Assembly honored Msgr. Romero's commitment in "denouncing violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable populations and defending the principles of protecting lives, promoting human dignity and opposition to all forms of violence."

Pax Christi International considers Msgr. Oscar Romero a prophet of justice and peace. He is an inspiration for our peace movement and we hope that his beatification will renew the courage of peace workers and human rights defenders – especially from younger generations – who endure threats, harassment, attacks, and death for their commitment in favor of those who are oppressed and whose voices are frequently ignored.

Brussels, 23 May 2015