

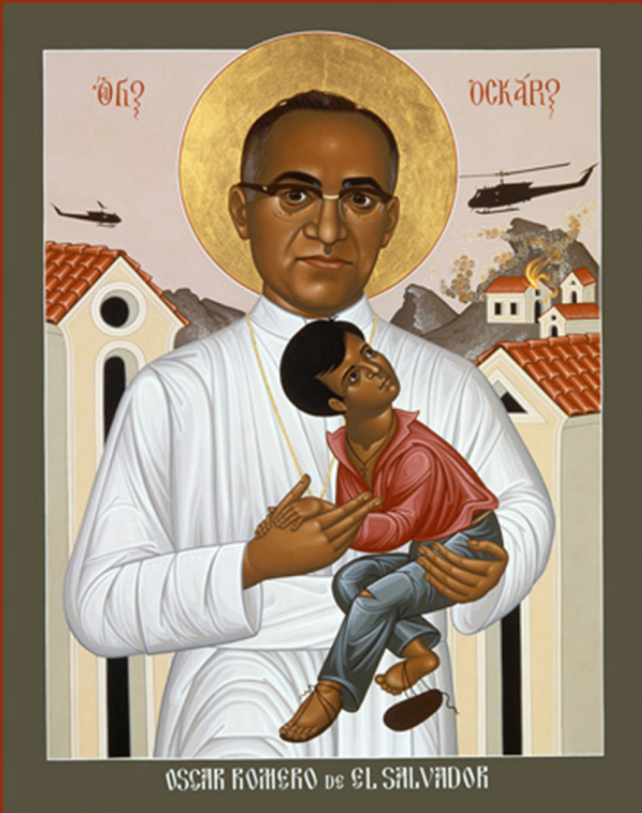
31. Courage

On this day in 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was celebrating Mass in a small chapel when an assassin stood at its open door and shot him through the heart. Why? What had he done, this unassuming man who was, by nature, quiet – even timid?

He had been converted afresh by the El Salvadorian poor. He'd encountered their reality of oppression, squalor, and government brutality and a life of Christ-like courage had become his. He was the voice of the poor and would not be silenced. Despite numerous threats, he'd become an unstoppably courageous prophet crying out for justice and peace. In this icon by Br Robert Lentz OFM, we see him holding a child, symbol of the vulnerable poor whom he served. Helicopters drop bombs behind them. Buildings burn.

The root of the word 'courage' is 'cor' – Latin for heart. Originally, it meant being brave enough to open one's heart, making oneself vulnerable by voicing deeply felt matters core to one's very being. It's a meaning which fits the now canonised Saint Oscar very well. And how apt that the bullet which took the life of this courageous man should have found his heart.

What is on our hearts? What impassioned plea or protest rises up from the core of our beings? Dare we give it voice?



Today...

...grace us with courage, O God,
to give voice to the voiceless.

Amen