

JPIC 80 - OCTOBER 2018

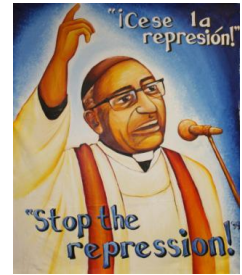
Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit..[Rule of Saint Albert]  
Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spirtu Santo Nian .. [Regula Sto Alberto]

## Icons of Justice

a reflection by Peter Thomas JPIC Team

### Oscar Romero

I was enthralled when I first saw the Australian film director, John Duigans' movie, "Romero". Produced by Father Elwood 'Bud' Kaiser CSP from Paulist Productions in the United States the scene of his assassination at the altar was intensely dramatic. As the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero spoke out against poverty, social injustice, random killings by the army and torture. In 1980 Romero was assassinated while presiding at the Eucharist in the chapel of the hospital of Divine Providence. A marksman's bullet killed him as he elevated the chalice after the consecration. Romero en fleshed the option for the poor by taking on corrupt land-owners who exploited farmers. He was scathing in his criticism of some fellow bishops who were undemanding in their dealings with a corrupt, unjust regime. As Romero fought for the basic needs of his people so too the 2018-2019 Australian Catholic Bishop's statement 'A Place to Call Home' emphasizes that housing is a basic human right. The bishops state that housing or basic shelter is 'an essential entitlement for all people to meet their basic needs, flourish in community and have their inherent human dignity affirmed and upheld by others.' Romero's stand brought-down persecution on the church as dozens of lay-catechists and six priests were killed prior to his own execution. On October 14, 2018 when Pope Francis canonises Oscar Romero he becomes a saint of the universal church, an exemplary for those fighting unjust systems.



### A.T. Thomas



In 2003 when visiting the Jesuit run mission in Hazaribag, India, I spoke with the Indian/Australian community about Fr A.T. Thomas, a priest and martyr and victim of Maoism. Everywhere I travelled in the Indian state of Jharkhand we were menaced by the Maoists. 'A.T.' as he was affectionately called, fought for the poor until his death on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1997 in a part of the country which is caught between insurgents and landowners. 'A.T.' helped the poorest of the poor, the Dalits, previously known as Untouchables. When he realized the plight of a group of Bhuyian, a Dalit sub-caste working in slave-like conditions he assisted them to buy their own land and build proper homes, thus escaping from enslavement. The rich and powerful land-owners hated 'A. Ts' compassion and sense of justice retaliating by brutally beheading him. Fr A.T. Thomas' death has enriched the lives of many not the least the Dalits who now can live in dignity and receive an adequate standard of education.

### Jean Donovan

A good friend of mine, Larry Rich, a filmmaker and Maryknoll lay-missioner introduced me to "Roses in December" his 1982 documentary which we subsequently managed to convince the ABC to broadcast. Jean Donovan was the subject of the documentary which then led to the production of "Choices of the Heart", a 1983 television movie starring Melissa Gilbert playing the part of Jean.



Jean Donovan was a lay missionary attached to the Maryknoll mission in El Salvador and a follower of Archbishop Oscar Romero. She was murdered in 1980 by the corrupt military, eight months after the assassination of Romero; Jean was 27 and engaged to be married. She arrived in El Salvador in 1979, a time when repression was intensifying and the church had become a major target. She witnessed killings by death squads and in fact often used her physical presence to accompany people in danger, or to get supplies into areas not accessible to others. On December 2, 1980, Jean accompanied Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel to the airport in San Salvador, to pick up two Maryknoll Sisters, Ita Ford and Maura Clarke flying in from Nicaragua. As the four women left the airport, they were taken by soldiers, abused, killed and buried in shallow graves. Jean Donovan is a modern day martyr, giving her life for the poor. Thirty-eight years later, her memory continues to inspire.

### **The Monks of Tibhirine**



In 2010 the French drama movie “Of Gods and Men” won accolades from film festivals around the world. In French and Arabic it told the story of the Monks of Tibhirine from the monastery of Our Lady of the Atlas. Six years later I stood less than twenty kilometers from the Algerian border in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and pondered the deaths of the Monks of Tibhirine, in these same mountains across the border in Algeria. Seven Cistercian monks, originally from France lived in harmony with their Muslim neighbours assisting them in many practical ways including basic medical care provided by one of the monks who happened to be a qualified doctor.

Despite the growing menace of terrorism in their midst, they realized that their place was with their people. Their decision was to stay, come what may! On the night of the 27 March, 1996 they were kidnapped at the height of the Algerian Civil War, held for two months, and found dead in May 1996. The seven monks have been included with twelve other Algerian martyrs, to be beatified in December 2018. The celebration will be in Oran, Algeria.

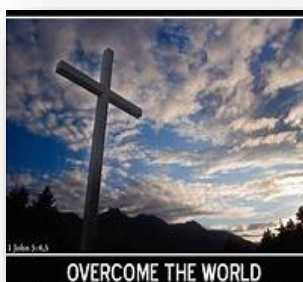
### **Raymond Hunthausen**

Raymond Hunthausen was the Archbishop of Seattle from 1975 – 1991. A strident advocate of lay participation at every level of church activity Hunthausen is perhaps best known for his action in 1982 when he withheld half his income tax to protest the stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the Trident missile program which had a base nearby in Puget Sound. In a speech, he said, “Trident is the Auschwitz of Puget Sound.” His critics did all they could to remove him from office including involving the Vatican by accusing him of teaching deviations from church doctrine. Much to the frustration of his conservative critics he was exonerated by the Vatican continuing his mission of peace and seeking ways to convince people of the injustice of nuclear weapons.



### **And to finish...**

This parable from a sermon given by Oscar Romero sums up nicely the Christian response to injustice.... “I offer you this by way of example. A building is on fire, standing and watching it burn, standing and Then someone tells you that your building. Your attitude changes your mother and sister are burning rescue them even at the cost of it means to be really committed. If outside, as if we are looking at a fire, no matter how concerned we may our own mother and sister were



building is on fire and you’re wondering if everyone is safe. mother and sister are in the completely. You’re frantic; and you’d do anything to getting charred. That’s what we look at poverty from the that’s not to opt for the poor, be. We should get inside as if burning.

***Indeed, it’s Christ who is there, hungry and suffering.”***

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

### OCTOBER

- 1<sup>st</sup> - UN Day for Older Persons
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - UN Day of Non Violence
- 10<sup>th</sup> - World Mental Health Day
- 11<sup>th</sup> - International Day of the Girl Child
- 11<sup>th</sup> - 1962 Opening of Vatican II Council
- 14<sup>th</sup> - Beginning of Anti-Poverty Week
- 17<sup>th</sup> - **International Day for Eradication of Poverty**
- 24<sup>th</sup> - United Nations Day – 1945 Establishment of the United Nations



### Australian Catholic Bishops Social Justice Statement 2018-2019

We are reminded that safe and secure housing is a human right, asserted both by the Church's social teaching and by the Declaration of Human Rights. It is the inherent dignity of each brother and sister in need of a place to call home that urges us on to confront the growing challenge of homelessness and housing insecurity in Australia.

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/social-justice-statements#SJS2018>

### *Prayerful reflection for those who are homeless*

Lord our God,  
You who so mysteriously call upon us  
to share in the sufferings of Christ,  
fill our hearts with compassion  
for those who lack the warmth of a home.

We commend to you in prayer this day  
all men, women and children  
who suffer because they have no shelter;  
those who sleep in our streets and public spaces,  
who have nowhere safe to lay their heads,  
and who wander from place to place as a way of life.

We pray for broken families who cannot pay the rent,  
for those who are the lost and abandoned,  
for those on the streets whose minds  
have been touched by illness  
or whose bodies are sorely affected by disabilities.

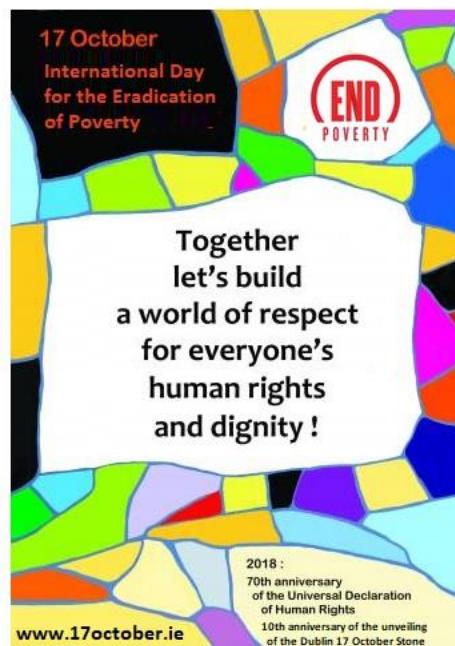
We ask that your merciful Grace be poured out  
upon those with addictions,  
those who have given up  
in the face of enormous tribulations,  
and those driven into a homeless life  
by crushing poverty.

God of Compassion, your love for us is revealed  
in your beloved son Jesus,  
who was born into homelessness,  
lived with nowhere to lay his head,  
and died for us in agony on the cross.

Inspire us to act in justice,  
by all means at our disposal, to right the wrongs  
of peoples who are suffering  
the deprivations of homelessness,  
and to see in them the dignity of a brother and sister  
redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Let us have the commitment,  
as people of the Gospel, to be ever mindful  
of our obligations we have  
to the poor and marginalised,  
to work in your name, O God,  
to turn sorrow into joy  
and to bring all those who live in darkness  
into your own wonderful light.

Amen.



This year marks the 30th anniversary of Call to Action which inspired the observance of **October 17 as the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty** — and the recognition by the United Nations of the day as **the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**