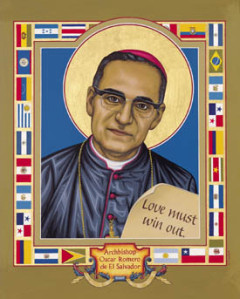
**March 24th is the anniversary of Oscar Romero’s assassination in El Salvador. Read the words of Romero as you reflect on our global reality today**

*[](http://paxchristiusa1.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/romero-icon.jpg)“The great need today is for Christians who are active and critical, who don’t accept situations without analyzing them inwardly and deeply. We no longer want masses of people like those who have been trifled with for so long. We want persons like fruitful fig trees, who can say yes to justice and no to injustice and can make use of the precious gift of life, regardless of the circumstances*.*“*

Since 9/11, the U.S.-led “war on terror” has done serious damage to the basic principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. The increasing militarization and domination of the planet, the proliferation of military bases across the globe, the proliferation of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, the reliance on high-tech military weapons and unmanned drones, the creation of an all-volunteer standing army and reliance on military contractors to fight out wars, and a permanent war economy based on corporate power indicate that we have far surpassed the fear expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he said: “A nation that spends more and more on weapons of war than on programs of social uplift is fast approaching spiritual death.”

In light of this reality, listen and reflect on these words of Archbishop Romero:

*“I would like to appeal in a special way to the army’s enlisted men, and in particular to the ranks of the National Guard and the police…*

*Brothers: you are of part of our own people. You kill your own campesino brothers and sisters. Before an order to kill that a man may give, God’s law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. No one has to fulfill an immoral law. It is time to take back your consciences and to obey your consciences rather than the orders of sin.*

*The Church, defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such abominations. We want the government to understand seriously that reforms are worth nothing if they are stained with so much blood. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!”*

Remember, too, and take to heart these words of Oscar Romero:

*“Nothing is so important to the church as human life, as the human person, above all, the person of the poor and the oppressed. Besides being human beings, they are also divine beings, since Jesus said that whatever is done to them he takes as done to him. That bloodshed, those deaths, are beyond all politics. They touch the very heart of God.”*

Violence today comes in many forms, and the connections between just peacemaking, and economic and interracial justice are woven deep. Poverty is the result of economic systems and structures that may be characterized as “institutionalized violence,” and it intersects with the violence of institutional racism in ways that disproportionately affect people of color. Gender violence further oppresses and excludes poor women, and most especially poor women of color.

Equally disturbing is the mass incarceration of people of color. The number of African Americans in prison, on probation or parole in some states exceeds the number of African Americans in slavery in 1850, while the number of Latino immigrants held in immigration detention centers and eventually deported has increased from 10,000 in 1996 to more than 400,000 a year under the Bush and Obama administrations.

**LITANY OF REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION**

During this Lenten Season we ask God’s forgiveness for our complicity in the violence now unleashed in our world and we repent of the violence in our hearts.

**Leader:** For all victims of the sin of racism and handgun violence in our country each year, we pray for mercy, justice, and forgiveness…

**All:**Forgive us, O God.

**Leader:** For the families of all who have died in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria since 9/11, victims of the sin of militarism and war, we pray for mercy, justice, and forgiveness…

**All:** Forgive us, O God.

**Leader:** For families torn apart by unjust immigration policies that raid homes and work places and detain tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants each day, deporting 400,000 each year, we pray for mercy, justice, and forgiveness…

**All:** Forgive us, O God.

**Leader:** For the ways in which our choices have not been made with full awareness of the worth and dignity of every human person and the sacredness of all human life, we pray for mercy, justice, and forgiveness…

**All:** Forgive us, O God.

**Leader:** For the ways in which our choices have not been made with full awareness of the worth and dignity of every human person and the sacredness of all human life, we pray for mercy, justice, and forgiveness…

**All:** Forgive us, O God.

*(*[*Romero icon*](http://www.bridgebuilding.com/narr/norom.html) *pictured is by Nancy Oliphant.)*