

# Oscar Romero



Read the sentences. Label each paragraph according to which of the following it is an example of, and underline/ highlight any important sentences that show this:

- Justice
- Education/ Evangelisation,
- Compassion,
- Concern for Suffering.

The first paragraph is done for you.

A. When he was a parish priest, Oscar Romero saw that the poor peasants didn't go to church for mass, because they felt unworthy to pray in the same place as their "betters" - their rich neighbours. So Oscar **convinced local radio stations to broadcast his sermons,** so that the peasants could also learn about the Gospel.

Education/  
evangelisation

B. Oscar was horrified at how hard the lives of many of the poor people were: their children died, because they couldn't afford penicillin, they were paid less than half the minimum wage for their work, and they were beaten when they asked to be paid overdue wages. Oscar began using money and resources from his parish, and his own savings, to help them.

C. Oscar knew that handing out money wouldn't really solve any problems in the long term, but he wanted to make the rich people reflect on their riches. He wrote a pastoral letter, to be read out in all the churches that "God has meant that the riches of the earth should be shared out among all people equally, according to justice and love of neighbour." He quoted the bible to show that this kind of injustice was unacceptable.

D. So many peasants were being beaten and murdered, that no-one except their own families was taking much notice. The army also started targeting priests, nuns and teachers, accusing them of being secret communists. Romero spoke out against these murders in his sermons, saying that the government shouldn't think that people who work in the service of others are communists. After this, Romero started receiving death threats as well.

- E. Romero asked the government twice to investigate the murders. The government did nothing. Romero started to accept that the government was working in the interests of a few rich families, and wasn't protecting its own people.
- F. Romero ordered that there would be no masses on the following Sunday, and only one service at the Cathedral, where everybody was invited. He did this as a public gesture, to show how unacceptable it was to ignore the murders of innocent people, who were working for good.
- G. Romero refused to appear in public with members of the government or with the rich families.
- H. Oscar also wrote to the president of the USA, to ask him to stop sending military aid to the Salvadorean government. President Reagan actually increased aid to the government, because they were afraid of the communists.
- I. All the other bishops except one, turned their backs on Romero. Death threats against him increased. However, Romero continued to broadcast his Sunday sermons, and speak the church's message: to end oppression, injustice and to care for the poor.
- J. Romero began to speak directly to the ordinary soldiers responsible for the killings and murders.
- K. Romero was assassinated as he celebrated the funeral. Many people attended Romero's own funeral at the cathedral. At the funeral, the army set off bombs and fired on the crowd. 40 people were left dead.
- L. After Romero's death, San Salvador was plunged into a full scale civil war that lasted 12 years. Estimates are that between 100-300,000 people died.

