

## OSCAR ROMERO'S THEOLOGY OF TRANSFIGURATION

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*Releasing three of his four pastoral letters on August 6, the patronal feast day of El Salvador, Oscar Romero linked his Transfiguration homilies with his contributions to Catholic social teaching to reflect a theology of transfiguration rooted in three interrelated commitments: an eschatological understanding of Salvadoran history as part of salvation history; an ecclesiology firmly grounded in a view of the people of God as the Body of Christ in history; and a contemplative awareness of the ethical implications of Jesus' invitation to his disciples to accompany him from Tabor to Calvary.*

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*Vibran los cantos, explosivos de alegría.  
Voy a reunirme con mi Pueblo en Catedral.  
Miles de voces nos unimos este día,  
Para cantar en nuestra fiesta patronal . . .*

*The songs reverberate, explosive with joy.  
I am going to meet my People in the Cathedral.  
Thousands of voices unite this day,  
To sing on our patronal feast . . .*

*Pero los dioses del poder y del dinero  
Se oponen a que haya Transfiguración.  
Por eso ahora vos, Señor, sos el primero  
en levantar tu brazo contra la opresión.*

*But the gods of power and of money  
Oppose Transfiguration.  
So now you, Lord, are the first  
To raise your arm against oppression.<sup>1</sup>*

OSCAR ROMERO, ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR, in his last Sunday homily on March 23, 1980, contemplated these lines from Guillermo Cuéllar's "Gloria" as he recounted the events of the week. That Friday, Cuéllar had stopped by Romero's office to deliver the lyrics, fulfilling a promise made some months earlier. The archbishop had asked this very

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<sup>1</sup> Guillermo Cuéllar, "Gloria," from *Misa Popular Salvadoreña*, CD (San Salvador: CM Recording Arts, 2005). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

gifted young church musician to compose a piece in honor of El Salvador's patron, the Divine Savior, celebrated each year on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration.

Some have said that in this homily, Romero preached his own death sentence.<sup>2</sup> He reported that at least 78 murders had been perpetrated by government security forces during that week alone. The previous day, he noted, Amnesty International had declared that human rights were being violated in El Salvador to a degree unparalleled anywhere else in the world. Concluding his homily, Romero ordered Salvadoran soldiers to stop killing their brother and sister *campesinos*, directly challenging the authority of the national security regime.<sup>3</sup> The following day he was gunned down during the Offertory of the Mass. Romero had spoken God's word to "the gods of power and of money" in El Salvador, naming the idols that resisted the divine power manifested in the Transfiguration.

By his own account, Cuéllar had been reluctant to create a musical piece about the Transfiguration—he put it off more than a year. Romero's request had become a burden to him, but finally it proved to be a graced opportunity to give voice to the multivalent meaning that Romero found in the Feast of the Transfiguration.<sup>4</sup>

Cuéllar's narrative of this hymn's significance offers valuable insight into Romero's theology of transfiguration. First, Cuéllar's "Gloria," in both content and context, speaks to Romero's desire to contemplate the lived reality of El Salvador from the standpoint of the liturgical and theological meaning of the Transfiguration. As archbishop, he further emphasized this connection by choosing to release three of his four pastoral letters on the Feast of the Transfiguration. Allowing these contributions to Catholic social teaching to emerge from the rhythm of the Salvadoran community's liturgical life represented Romero's prayerful response to the exhortation of the Transfiguration theophany: "Listen to him!"

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez, "Archbishop Romero: A Bishop for the New Millennium," in *Archbishop Romero: Martyr and Prophet for the New Millennium*, ed. Robert Pelton (Scranton: University of Scranton, 2006); and Chávez, "La Herencia de Monseñor Romero: La Iglesia de la Pascua" (unpublished address delivered in Rome, March 3, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Homily of March 23, 1980, in *Monseñor Oscar A. Romero: Su pensamiento*, 2nd rev. ed., 8 vols. in 7 (San Salvador: Criterio, 2000) 8:384. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Romero's homilies will be taken from this collection and cited by the date of the homily, volume, and page number(s). All works cited without author designation are by Romero.

<sup>4</sup> My article is an expanded theological treatment of an abbreviated version published as "Gloria Dei, Vivens Pauper: Romero's Theology of Transfiguration," *The Sign of Peace* 4.2 (Spring 2005) 6–9.

Second, "Gloria" illustrates Romero's general homiletic approach of viewing events of the week through a shepherd's eyes. Having received Cuéllar's lyrics on Friday, he eagerly incorporated them into his Sunday homily, together with his pastoral interpretation of their significance. His Transfiguration homilies and related pastoral letters bear witness to his commitment to plumbing the depths of the feast's theological meaning as he exercised his episcopal role as preacher and teacher.

Accompanying his people on the cusp of a Salvadoran civil war that would last for twelve years and claim more than 75,000 lives, Romero preached on the Synoptic Gospel narratives of the Transfiguration every Second Sunday of Lent and sixth day of August.<sup>5</sup> Through a dynamic practice of contemplation and action that emerges clearly in his homiletic method, Romero articulated a theology of transfiguration that shed light on Salvadoran reality:

The theology of transfiguration is saying that the road of redemption passes through the cross and through Calvary, but that the goal of Christians is beyond history. Not to alienate oneself from history but rather to give more meaning to history, a definitive meaning. From the day of Christ's resurrection there remained burning in the same history of time a torch of eternity.<sup>6</sup>

This distilled version of Romero's theology of transfiguration, I suggest, grew from three interrelated theological commitments: first, an eschatological understanding of Salvadoran history as part of salvation history, a narrative culminating not at Calvary but rather in resurrection glory; second, an ecclesiology firmly grounded in a view of the people of God as the Body of Christ in history; and finally, a contemplative awareness of the ethical implications of Jesus' invitation to his disciples to accompany him from Tabor to Calvary that guided Romero's consistent pastoral practice of linking the liturgical celebration of the Transfiguration with his contributions to Catholic social teaching in the form of pastoral letters.

These three dimensions of Romero's theology of transfiguration appear interwoven throughout his homilies and pastoral letters. By way of arriving at a holistic account of their significance, I first attend to Romero's own narrative, tracing his "evolution in pastoral fortitude" and his emergent

<sup>5</sup> In Roman Catholic liturgical practice, the Transfiguration narrative has been read on the Second Sunday of Lent since 1474. Most Western Christians, though, have emphasized the connection between the Transfiguration and the Epiphany by following the Lutherans in moving the Transfiguration narrative out of Lent to the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, the last Sunday in Ordinary Time following the Epiphany. For a concise treatment of the liturgical history of the Transfiguration narrative, see Kenneth Stevenson, *Rooted in Detachment: Living the Transfiguration* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 2007) 12–16.

<sup>6</sup> Homily of March 2, 1980, 8:293.

understanding of the Feast of the Transfiguration in relation to his people's faith journey in the midst of intensifying persecution. His emphasis on what I will call the "liturgical asceticism" of responding to the baptismal call to *metanoia* illumines his perspective on the ethical implications of the Transfiguration message, as well as its eschatology.

Second, I consider the convergence between Romero's preaching and teaching methods and the substance of his pastoral message by exploring his correlation of liturgy with Catholic social teaching. His Transfiguration homilies and related pastoral letters reflect his ecclesiological commitments most clearly in his method of dialogical participation of all the faithful in the formulation of Catholic social teaching as a tool of evangelization, as well as in his insistence on the epistemological significance of the preferential option for the poor.

Finally, I reflect on Romero's emerging theology of transfiguration, as he came to a synthetic understanding of eschatology, ecclesiology, and ethics in relation to the Transfiguration message that he used to prepare his people for the liturgical asceticism of enduring persecution in the exercise of their baptismal commitments. In a process of continual *metanoia*, he accompanied his people on the journey from Tabor to Calvary, guided by the memory of the eschatological hope of resurrected life.

### ROMERO'S EVOLUTION IN PASTORAL FORTITUDE: AN EMERGING THEOLOGY OF TRANSFIGURATION, 1976–1980

Romero's theology of transfiguration emerged over the course of his three years as archbishop in conversation with his understanding of what *metanoia* meant in his own faith journey and that of his people; it came to fullest expression in the context of liturgy. One of his biographers, Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, insightfully notes, "Romero was simply liturgical: He attended to passages in the Missal and to feasts on the calendar. . . . In [his] preaching, certain central themes recur independently of the circumstances: sin, penitence, conversion, and forgiveness. The nucleus of the biblical message for Romero was the passage from evil to good."<sup>7</sup> His embrace of the Feast of the Transfiguration as a theological touchstone for his episcopal ministry is only one of many expressions of his thoroughly liturgical worldview. But, perhaps more than any other feast in the calendar, this feast provides a window onto Romero's perspective on the continual "passage from evil to good," to which Jesus' followers are called.

<sup>7</sup> Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *Primero Dios: Vida de Monseñor Romero*, trans. David Salas Mezquita (Italian original, 2005; Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2010) 292.

### The Feast of the Transfiguration as a Theological Resource

In his contemplative attraction to the Transfiguration, Romero found himself in good company. Since the first centuries of the church, this theophany has received significant theological and pastoral attention, as seen in the work of Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, and Maximus the Confessor, among others. As a liturgical feast, it has been celebrated since at least the fifth century in the East and from about the eighth century in the West. The date chosen for commemoration of the Transfiguration, August 6, precedes the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross by 40 days, reflecting traditional belief about the length of time between Jesus' transfiguration and crucifixion.<sup>8</sup>

Romero was not the first to relate the Transfiguration to political considerations: After receiving news on August 6 of the victory of the Christian armies over the Turks at Belgrade in 1456, Pope Calixtus III designated the Transfiguration as a feast of the universal church.<sup>9</sup> In the Salvadoran sociopolitical imagination, this feast day also marks the founding of the city of San Salvador by Pedro de Alvarado in 1525. In 1942, Pius XII would, as Romero put it, "baptize" El Salvador with the Feast of the Transfiguration, and so Salvadorans refer to August 6 as the Feast of the Divine Savior, their national patron.<sup>10</sup>

Acutely attuned to these milestones in ecclesial and political history, Romero consistently located their significance within the theological and liturgical context of the Feast of the Transfiguration in his homilies and pastoral letters, calling to mind Josef Jungmann's description of a feast day as "a piece of time which touches eternity. On a feast-day, time stands still for a moment, restlessness and the stir of business fall back, people 'take their time.'"<sup>11</sup> On the Feast of the Transfiguration, Romero took time to remember with his people the place of Salvadoran history within God's time, salvation history. Against this eschatological horizon, he used this annual national celebration to stir the sacramental imagination of Salvadorans, inviting them to contemplate how the liturgical feast pointed beyond itself as a sign:

Each year this Body of Christ in history, this church of the archdiocese, understands better that the August 6 feast day is something more than just a titular feast. It is rather the celebration of a covenant that binds all Salvadorans to each other, all

<sup>8</sup> See Stevenson, *Rooted in Detachment* 13.

<sup>9</sup> See Pius Parsch, *The Church's Year of Grace*, 5 vols., trans. William G. Heidt (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1959) 4:292; and G. H. Guyot and J. L. Cypriano, "Transfiguration," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: Thomson Gale, 2002) 14:153–55, at 155.

<sup>10</sup> Homilies of August 6, 1977, 1–2:155, February 19, 1978, 4:18, and August 6, 1979, 7:140.

<sup>11</sup> Josef A. Jungmann, *Pastoral Liturgy* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962) 388.

Salvadorans baptized with the baptism of the world's Divine Savior, even to the extent of an identification in thinking and in destiny. All of us who have been baptized form the church, and the church makes Christ present in the history of our country.<sup>12</sup>

Having been appointed archbishop of San Salvador only five months before penning this 1977 pastoral letter marking the Feast of the Transfiguration, Romero had already undergone a baptism by fire, reflected clearly in the emerging theology of transfiguration evident in his homilies and pastoral letters. His emphasis on the church as the Body of Christ in history in his 1977 pastoral expresses a determined resolve to maintain the link between Jesus' cross and the promise of resurrection glory in the immediate historical context of the relentless crucifixion of Salvadorans during the first months of his term as archbishop. His feast-day homily just one year earlier shied away from a correlation of the journey from Tabor to Calvary with Salvadoran political reality, an indication of a shift in Romero's perspective as preacher and teacher that he would come to call an "evolution in pastoral fortitude" forged by the persecution of the church and, in particular, of the poorest Salvadorans.

While serving as bishop of Santiago de María, Romero was accorded the great honor of preaching at the pontifical mass on the Feast of the Transfiguration in 1976 before all the Salvadoran bishops, the highest-ranking government officials, and the diplomatic corps. His homily that day conveyed an irenic vision of social harmony:

How beautiful would be this August 6 if . . . we bore in our souls the resolve to understand one another better, each in the place where the hand of Providence has put us; if the members of the government and the shepherds of the church, if capital and labor, if those of the city and those of the countryside, the initiatives of the government and those of private enterprise—all of us—were really to let the Divine Savior of the World, patron of our nation, inspire and mediate all our conflicts and be the artisan of all the national transformations that we urgently need for the integral liberation that only he can build.<sup>13</sup>

Romero's sanguine portrayal of social transformation failed to account for the deadly disparity of power operative among the various sectors of

<sup>12</sup> "The Church, the Body of Christ in History," second pastoral letter, August 6, 1977, in *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, intro. Ignacio Martin-Baró and Jon Sobrino, trans. Michael J. Walsh (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985) 63–84, at 83. All references to Romero's pastorals will be taken from this source.

<sup>13</sup> As quoted in James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989) 60–61, from *El Apóstol* (August 15, 1976) (*El Apóstol* was a weekly periodical of the Diocese of Santiago de María that Romero himself began in September 1975 and edited). See also Jon Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero*, 5th ed. (San Salvador: UCA, 2001) 13–14.

Salvadoran society at the time. Though acutely attuned to the dangers of transgressing the boundary between pastoral ministry and political involvement, Romero seemed unaware at that point of the extent to which his own acceptance of the status quo was itself fraught with political implications.<sup>14</sup>

In his first days as archbishop, a series of events would spur him to adopt an "attitude of pastoral fortitude" seasoned by keen political sensibility. At the time, an oligarchy known as "the fourteen families" owned more than 60 percent of the arable land in El Salvador.<sup>15</sup> In Aguilares, where Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., served as pastor of some 25,000 people, a prominent landowner, Eduardo Orellana, was murdered in December 1976 in a dispute with the *Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños* (FECCAS), a *campesino* union. In retribution, Grande and two *campesinos* were shot to death on March 12, 1977.<sup>16</sup> Though FECCAS had long operated independently of the Catholic Church, the oligarchy's propaganda following Orellana's murder implicated the rural labor movement and the clergy that supported it, accusing them of Communist subversion.<sup>17</sup>

Grande, like the bishops of El Salvador and in accordance with Catholic social teaching, advocated the creation of workers' unions but insisted on clear distinctions between the role of unions and other voluntary associations and the appropriate place of the church in society. As Morozzo della Rocca observes, "Not only [Archbishop] Chávez and the Jesuits but all the Salvadoran bishops as a whole had defended the existence of unions because they were an accepted reality throughout the civilized world, and Catholic social doctrine had accepted their right to existence already in the 19th century with *Rerum novarum*."<sup>18</sup>

Writing to Cardinal Baggio, the prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, in June 1978 and to the newly elected pope, John Paul II, in November of that year, Romero described the prevailing circumstances under which he became archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. The government assented to direct attacks on church workers to appease members of El Salvador's oligarchy, who "were not disposed to let the church speak its integral message to awaken the critical conscience of the people."<sup>19</sup> Each act of

<sup>14</sup> See Thomas Bokenkotter, *Church and Revolution: Catholics in the Struggle for Democracy and Social Justice* (New York: Image, 1998) 503.

<sup>15</sup> Marie Dennis, Renny Golden, and Scott Wright, *Oscar Romero* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000) 9.

<sup>16</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 166, 170.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 166.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 167, citing the stated support of the Salvadoran Bishops' Conference of *campesino* unionization in CEDES, *Acta* 81 (July 14, 1971). See also Rodolfo Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza: Vida de Rutilio Grande*, 3rd ed. (San Salvador: UCA, 2002) 175.

<sup>19</sup> Romero, memorandum to Baggio, June 24, 1978, cited in Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 192–93.

violence against pastoral ministers was accompanied by defamatory publicity intended to turn public opinion against the church.<sup>20</sup>

So grave was the situation that Romero's predecessor, Archbishop Chávez, accelerated the date of Romero's planned succession to February 22. In the weeks leading up to Grande's murder, priests and lay ecclesial leaders were detained and tortured, and in some cases expelled from the country or forced into exile. The first homily Romero preached officially as archbishop of San Salvador was on the occasion of Grande's funeral Mass. His murder brought Romero into "direct confrontation with President Molina, with the government, and therefore, with the oligarchy. It opened crevices in his relation with the [papal] nuncio, [Emanuele] Gerada, the same one who, a few weeks earlier, had pushed for his nomination as archbishop."<sup>21</sup> By demanding governmental accountability for the persecution of the church's ministers, Romero incurred vehement criticism by some Salvadoran bishops and members of his Curia, who pressured him to seek conciliation with the government and the oligarchy that propped it up.

After a member of the oligarchy, Foreign Minister Mauricio Borgonovo Pohl, was kidnapped on April 19, President Molina warned the Salvadoran bishops that his abduction had been caused by the "'disorder' created in the country due to the agitation of the rural unions, FECCAS and UTC [*Unión de Trabajadores del Campo*], 'fomented by the Jesuits,' that is to say, by the church."<sup>22</sup> One day after Borgonovo's body was recovered, Fr. Alfonso Navarro and a youth were murdered in San Salvador on May 11. Within four months of Romero's installation as archbishop, "the presbyterate of San Salvador had lost almost 15% of its members."<sup>23</sup> In his letter to John Paul II, Romero wrote that this loss was "what the Latin American bishops at Medellín rightly characterized as a 'situation of injustice or institutionalized violence.'"<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cardenal, *Historia de una esperanza* 552.

<sup>21</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 175.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 178; see also Jesús Delgado, *Oscar A. Romero: Biografía*, 7th ed. (San Salvador: UCA, 2004) 88, quoting President Molina's remarks in a meeting with Romero and the Salvadoran bishops on April 19, 1977, as reported in *Orientación* 4.014, 7 (the San Salvador diocesan newspaper).

<sup>23</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 197, citing Secretariado Social Interdiocesano, *Estudio sobre la persecución de la iglesia en El Salvador* (San Salvador, 1977) and Secretaría de Comunicación Social del Arzobispado de San Salvador, "Persecución de la Iglesia," *Boletín de información internacional* (July 1, 1979).

<sup>24</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 191, quoting Romero, letter to John Paul II, November 7, 1978, Historical Archives of the Archdiocese of San Salvador. Romero is referring to the Latin American Bishops' Second General Conference held in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and he is citing one of their texts, "Paz" no. 16. All references in this article to the documents of Medellín can be found in Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, *La Iglesia en la*



In response, Romero preached and spoke out publicly from a perspective quite distinct from that of his 1976 Transfiguration message. On the Fifth Sunday of Easter 1977, he began his homily by reporting that the diocesan printing press had been bombed, an event that only seemed to strengthen his pastoral resolve: "When a person speaks, the whole organism finds expression through the mouth. And in the same way, the mystical body of the church is an organism in which every last Christian participates, the persecuted, silenced, tortured Christian. But there is a voice in the name of the whole organism that suffers, that clamors and speaks the truth, strength, and encouragement. I feel, brothers and sisters, that I am that voice." He then recalled a line attributed to Pius XI: "The Church does not engage in politics, but when politics touches its altar, the Church defends its altar."<sup>25</sup> The church, he would later recount to John Paul II, "by remaining faithful to its mission of evangelization to promote the conscience of society and to denounce its injustices and abuse of authority, was made the central object of persecution. . . . I believed in conscience that God asked of me and gave me a special pastoral fortitude that contrasted with my 'conservative' temperament and inclinations. I believed I had an obligation to place myself decidedly in defense of my Church, and within the Church, on the side of my people, so oppressed and abused."<sup>26</sup>

### Ongoing Process of *Metanoia* as Liturgical Asceticism

The murder of Rutilio Grande, Romero's dear friend who had served as the master of ceremonies at his episcopal ordination, had proven significant in Romero's deepening awareness of the relationship between faith and the sociopolitical signs of the times. "The road from Aguilares," Ignacio Martín-Baró indicated "was to be his road to Damascus."<sup>27</sup> Romero himself, though, demurred at the intimation that his actions as archbishop following Grande's assassination signaled a religious conversion of the Pauline variety. Responding to one interviewer's question at the 1979 meeting of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico, he replied, "If you wish, you could call it a conversion, but I think it would be more precise to define it as a development in the process of knowledge. I have always wanted to follow the gospel, although I did not suspect where it was

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*actual transformación de America Latina a la luz del concilio*, vol. 2, *Conclusiones* (San Salvador: Criterio, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Homily of May 8, 1977, 1–2:28.

<sup>26</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primero Dios* 191, quoting Romero, letter to John Paul II, November 7, 1978.

<sup>27</sup> Ignacio Martín-Baró, "Oscar Romero: Voice of the Downtrodden," in *Voice of the Voiceless* 1–21, at 6.

going to lead me.”<sup>28</sup> On several occasions, he spoke of his gradual evolution in an attitude of “pastoral fortitude.”

When Romero referred to conversion, he emphasized the continual *metanoia* to which all Christians are called, and he understood his development in pastoral fortitude as part of this lifelong process of turning toward God. “Conversion is difficult and painful,” he mused in his second pastoral letter, “because the changes required are not only in ways of thinking but also in ways of living.”<sup>29</sup> Romero’s attitudinal shift became evident in his actions. After the murders of Grande and his two companions, he declined the customary invitations to official government events pending adequate investigation of these crimes.<sup>30</sup> For the duration of his tenure as archbishop, he would refuse such ceremonial appearances, opting instead to separate “diplomatic and liturgical functions so as not to appear to be blessing the government.”<sup>31</sup>

Put another way, Romero “fasted” from public settings in which liturgy might be manipulated to support the lethal ambitions of the national security regime. In so doing, he exercised an asceticism expressed and informed by the *leitourgia* of his worshipping community. As Alexander Schmemmann notes, the original meaning of this Greek term conveyed an understanding of ministry as the work of the ecclesial community at the service of the world.

It meant an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals—a whole greater than the sum of its parts. It meant also a function or “ministry” of a man or of a group on behalf of and in the interest of the whole community. . . . Thus, the Church itself is a *leitourgia*, a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to Him and His kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

Through liturgy, the worshipping community becomes more than the sum of its parts; it becomes the Body of Christ. Through ministry, members of the ecclesial community become *synergoi*, cooperators in Jesus Christ’s mission to give himself for the life of the world.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primero Dios* 190, quoting De Grazia Gaspari in *Il Manifesto* (March 26, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> “The Church, the Body of Christ in History” 63–84, at 64.

<sup>30</sup> Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* 23.

<sup>31</sup> Brockman, *Romero* 129, paraphrasing Romero’s memorandum to Cardinal Baggio, June 24, 1978.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1973) 25.

<sup>33</sup> I have developed this argument further in “Liturgy and Ethics: The Liturgical Asceticism of Energy Conservation,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 127–49.

This kind of *askesis* practiced in and through *leitourgia* might be called "liturgical asceticism," David Fagerberg suggests. "If liturgy means sharing the life of Christ (being washed in his resurrection, eating his body), and if *askesis* means discipline (in the sense of forming), then liturgical asceticism is the discipline required to become an icon of Christ and make his image visible in our faces."<sup>34</sup> Liturgical asceticism involves an ongoing, incarnated process of *metanoia*, at once both personal and communal, in and through *leitourgia*. From the wellspring of baptism, liturgical asceticism flows outward to embrace all aspects of the quotidian life of the people of God: To Romero, the liturgical ascetic, Cuéllar's excited delivery of the "Gloria" lyrics on a bustling Friday morning meant an expression of baptismal commitment in service of the church in the world, an occasion for joy and communal celebration at Sunday's Eucharist. Through the practice of the liturgical celebration of the Transfiguration, he invited contemplation of the transfigured Jesus as part of the *askesis* of becoming the Body of Christ in Salvadoran history.

During Romero's tenure as archbishop, the Salvadoran church did not lack for opportunities to exercise liturgical asceticism in prophetic fashion. Soon after Grande's assassination, members of *Opus Dei* ignored Romero's decision to hold only one mass on Sunday, March 20, 1977, for the whole Archdiocese of San Salvador in celebration of the lives of Grande and his companions. Instead, they held their own separate liturgies. In response, some of Grande's biographers report, Romero distanced himself from that organization, noting that the faithful of *Opus Dei* "were not exactly the poor, who under these circumstances were suffering ferocious persecution."<sup>35</sup> As he affirmed shortly before his own assassination, "in this situation of conflict and antagonism, in which just a few persons control economic and political power, the church has placed itself at the side of the poor and has undertaken their defense. The church cannot do otherwise."<sup>36</sup> Failure to

<sup>34</sup> David Fagerberg, "A Century on Liturgical Asceticism," *Diakonia* 31.1 (1998) 41.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Zacarías Díez and Juan Macho, "*En Santiago de María me topé con la miseria*": *Dos años de la vida de Mons. Romero (1975–1976) ¿Años del cambio?* (San Salvador: Criterio, 1995) 55–56. As a priest and later as a bishop, he was significantly influenced by the spirituality of *Opus Dei*, making at least two retreats under their auspices. See Brockman, *Romero* 46, 261 n. 54; and Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* 13.

<sup>36</sup> "The Political Dimension of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor," Louvain Address, February 2, 1980, in *Voice of the Voiceless* 177–87, at 181. See also Romero, "The Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" (Fourth Pastoral Letter, August 6, 1979) 114–61, at 129. Romero made a similar argument to John Paul II during a visit to Rome in May 1979, but, he recounted, "The Holy Father insisted that I should get along with the government, so that there would be no conflict" (quoted in Douglas Marcouiller, "Archbishop with an Attitude: Oscar

challenge the status quo, Romero had come to realize, meant giving tacit support to the repressive structures of the national security regime. This truth served as a fulcrum in his ongoing formation of conscience. It would also become Romero's own path to Golgotha, as Grande was the first of many church workers whom he would bury before his own assassination.

With an attitude of pastoral fortitude honed through intense communal suffering, Romero's perspective shifted notably from the parenetic vision of social harmony reflected in his 1976 homily on the Feast of the Transfiguration. As he wrote to Cardinal Baggio:

Regarding what has happened in my priestly life, I have tried to explain it as an evolution of the same desire I have always had to be faithful to what God asks of me; and if before I gave the impression of being more "prudent" and "spiritual," it was because I sincerely believed that in that way I was responding to the gospel, for the circumstances of my ministry did not require such a pastoral fortitude that, I believe in conscience, they did demand of me when I became archbishop. Apart from that, the [Second Vatican] Council incites all Christians to a change in mentality more in accord with the demands of the actual world.<sup>37</sup>

The stark reality of structural sin, exacting its bloodiest toll from the poorest Salvadorans, became for Romero an object of more intense and focused contemplation. "Little by little," Martín-Baró remembered, "Romero began to change. His voice, more accustomed to proclaiming peace, was now also raised in denunciation of the sinful injustice that brought death. His words, which had hitherto reflected generalities or abstractions, took on the harsh realism of daily life."<sup>38</sup> As a priest for 22 years in San Miguel before becoming bishop, he recalled:

I think I did not live through difficulties as intense as those I am encountering now. . . . Nevertheless, when I visited the cantons, I felt real pleasure to be with the poor and to help them. While I was a priest there, various modest acts were done on their behalf. But upon arriving in San Salvador, the same fidelity with which I have wished to live my priesthood made me realize that my care for the poor, my fidelity to Christian principles and adherence to the Holy See had to take a different course.<sup>39</sup>

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Romero's *Sentir con la Iglesia*," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 35.3 [May 2003] 47).

<sup>37</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 193, citing Romero, memorandum to Baggio, June 24, 1978.

<sup>38</sup> Martín-Baró, in *Voice of the Voiceless* 1–21, at 6.

<sup>39</sup> Morozzo della Rocca, *Primerio Dios* 189, quoting "Con los que sufren. Mons. Oscar Romero," *Amigo del Hogar* (a monthly sponsored by Misioneros del Sagrado Corazón in the Dominican Republic), Santo Domingo, n.d., an interview with Romero sometime during March 19–23, 1979, when Romero traveled to Santo Domingo.

Gradually, Romero came to emphasize the preferential option for the poor as an epistemological guide for ecclesial action.<sup>40</sup> As preacher and teacher, he invited the church to view Salvadoran reality from the periphery of society, where the poorest were not simply marginalized but massacred. In the data of his people's experience, he came to find a normative measure of sin in the death of Salvadorans: "It is not a matter of sheer routine that I insist once again on the existence in our country of structures of sin. They are sin because they produce the fruits of sin: the death of Salvadorans—the swift death brought by repression or the long, drawn out, but no less real, death from structural oppression."<sup>41</sup>

As Romero entered more fully into the suffering of the poor majority, his theology of transfiguration clearly reflected his adoption of a "different course." The liturgical asceticism of contemplating the transfigured Jesus led him to train his attention on the conflictual sociopolitical reality of El Salvador.

### CONVERGENCE OF MESSAGE AND METHOD: LITURGY AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Romero's preaching and teaching manifested a close correspondence between his chosen methods and the message he wished to convey. In both exercises of his ministry, he practiced contemplative listening and encouraged dialogical participation of the Salvadoran faithful. His approach to the Feast of the Transfiguration yields the most direct evidence of these practices since he issued a pastoral letter on August 6 each year as archbishop and tied its content directly into his homily.

#### Contemplation as Loving Attentiveness: "Listen to Him!"

As David Fagerberg has noted, the word *episkiazei* (overshadow), deriving from *epi* (upon) and *skene* (tent), appears in all three Synoptic Gospels to describe the cloud enveloping Jesus, Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration. Luke's narrative of the Annunciation also uses it to describe Mary being filled with God's Spirit (1:35).<sup>42</sup> In Acts 5:15, this word characterizes the desire of those seeking healing to find relief in Peter's shadow, just as God's glory overshadowed the Israelites' tent of meeting (Exod 40:34). "Would it be wrong," Fagerberg asks, "to connect the cloud which overshadowed Mary, and sent the glory of God into the world, with

<sup>40</sup> Gregory Baum has described the perspectival and activist dimensions of the option for the poor in "Option for the Powerless," *Ecumenist* 26 (November–December 1987) 5–11.

<sup>41</sup> Romero, "Political Dimension of the Faith" 177–87, at 183.

<sup>42</sup> David Fagerberg, "Living Christ's Life by Sacrament and Holy Spirit," *Diakonia* 33.1 (2000) 31.

the cloud which overshadows the disciples and knocks them down, unable to bear the glory of Christ? . . . The Holy Spirit's overshadowing indicates the presence of God's mighty power—on the tent of meeting in Exodus, upon Mary in the Annunciation, and now upon Jesus in his Transfiguration."<sup>43</sup>

This overshadowing, I suggest, proves emblematic of the contemplative dimension of Romero's theology of transfiguration. It invites surrender to the enveloping unknown and, as in Luke's account of the Annunciation, it impels those who experience it toward a humble disposition of listening. "Listen to him!" Contemplating the transfigured Jesus, Romero came to understand this divine mandate as the central message of the Transfiguration. Likening the patronal feast day to a "Salvadoran Easter," Romero reveled in the "luminous and liturgical presence of the Divine Savior."<sup>44</sup> In his first pastoral letter, responding in humility to the Spirit's invitation to listen, Romero urged Salvadorans to cultivate that same disposition: "It is, above all, a time for prayer and contemplation so as to interpret, according to the heart of God, the signs of our times."<sup>45</sup> With Olivier Clément, Romero recognized that cooperation with the Word of God in action unfolds "not so much by exertion of willpower as by loving attentiveness."<sup>46</sup>

### Homiletic Method as Liturgical Asceticism

Romero's dominical homilies bore the mark of a contemplative at work, taking in the facts of reality and attempting to read them by Scripture's light.<sup>47</sup> The sisters with whom he shared community at the Divine Providence Hospital recall his disciplined liturgical preparation. On Saturday nights, Romero would gather the data of discernment for that week—newspaper reports of current political and economic events, urgent messages from parishes and base communities regarding the details of persecution suffered, and evidence of human rights violations collected by his archdiocesan Legal Aid Bureau, together with theological and scriptural resources. He brought it all to prayer, often long into the night, and then shared the fruits of his contemplation in his homily the next morning.<sup>48</sup> His

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 42–43.

<sup>44</sup> "Church, the Body of Christ in History" 63–84, at 63.

<sup>45</sup> "The Easter Church," (First Pastoral Letter, Easter Sunday, April 10, 1977), in *Voice of the Voiceless* 52–62, at 59. In one of his Transfiguration homilies, Romero called attention to John Paul II's understanding of humility as a virtue of Lent (March 11, 1979, 6:203).

<sup>46</sup> Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, trans. Theodore Berkeley and Jeremy Hummerstone (London: New City, 1993) 130.

<sup>47</sup> Homily of February 19, 1978, 4:19; see "The Church amid the National Crisis," (Fourth Pastoral Letter) 114–61, at 150.

<sup>48</sup> Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* 58.

voice amplified the dignified aspirations of the poorest and steadfastly proclaimed the witness of those brutally and permanently silenced by political repression, whose blood "cried out to heaven."<sup>49</sup> His words reached the ears of those gathered in the eucharistic assembly as well as of those within earshot of the thousands of radios throughout El Salvador tuned in to the weekly broadcast of his Sunday homilies on the archdiocesan YSAX station.

Through the liturgical asceticism of preaching, Romero maintained the ethical and theological link between the human and divine word by listening to the scriptural witness of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and then speaking the whole truth, however uncomfortable and risky. The truth of God's Word, the Incarnation, provided the ultimate criterion for measuring the authentic expression of Salvadoran history as part of salvation history. Romero's homiletic practice, Jon Sobrino writes, had a "profoundly humanizing effect throughout the country. . . . By simply speaking the truth Romero gave its value back to the silenced, manipulated, distorted word. He made the word what it ought to be: the expression of reality."<sup>50</sup>

In direct, clear language, Romero named the lethal chasm between rhetoric and reality in El Salvador. The government could cynically call for national dialogue while sanctioning a record number of politically motivated murders, but not without Romero exposing the lie to the gospel's light. The first nine months of 1979 witnessed 580 assassinations, four times more than the previous year, and almost three times as many disappearances. "The government has emptied the jails of political prisoners," he observed in one homily, "but lamentably, they have filled the cemeteries with the dead."<sup>51</sup> Appealing to the truth of the Word, the Incarnation, he took full measure of the distorted human word by beginning where Jesus did, with the reality embodied in the lives of the poor majority of Salvadorans.

### **The Liturgical Asceticism of Contemplation as Purification of Idolatry**

Romero encouraged his people to practice the liturgical asceticism of contemplative listening in response to the invitation of the Transfiguration,

<sup>49</sup> Romero, "Political Dimension of the Faith" 177–87, at 179, quoting from "Justicia" no. 1, in *Conclusiones*. See also Bishop Manuel Larraín Errázuriz's pastoral, *Desarrollo: Exito o fracaso en America Latina* (Santiago: Editorial Universidad Católica, 1965) no. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Jon Sobrino, "A Theologian's View of Oscar Romero," in *Voice of the Voiceless* 22–51, at 25–26.

<sup>51</sup> Homily of October 14, 1979, 7:348–49.

becoming fully present to the truth of their experience.<sup>52</sup> As Jesus led Peter, James, and John down Mount Tabor and into the paschal mystery, Romero, in typical fashion, concluded his homily on the Second Sunday of Lent in 1979 with a detailed review of the facts of Salvadoran reality. That week, a boy named Carlos Fuentes was kidnapped from San Miguel. Jaime Baires, a lawyer, was tortured and killed by agents of the National Guard. Romero was asked to mediate a labor dispute that had already left one person dead, his body dumped at the cathedral. But, at that moment, the people of Aguilares were embarking on a pilgrimage to remember Rutilio Grande on the second anniversary of his murder, a sign, Romero said, “of a church that honors its martyrs.”<sup>53</sup> And in San Antonio Silva land redistribution was under way. “Now 356 *campesina* families have [the equivalent of] 37,561 city blocks that before belonged to only 7 people.” Romero called attention to this fact as an occasion for real celebration as well as for honest acknowledgement of the sinful structures of property ownership that still held El Salvador captive in an idolatrous grip.<sup>54</sup>

As part of solidarity in and with the world, Romero urged Salvadorans to contemplate the darkness of sinful iniquity that disrupts the unity of human history and salvation history.<sup>55</sup> “It is the night of our history, it is the road of our time, these are difficult hours that our country is living, an obscure night when the sun of the Transfiguration becomes light and hope for a Christian people and illuminates our road. Let us remain faithful!”<sup>56</sup> Romero’s homiletic meditation on the Feast of the Transfiguration in 1978 calls to mind John of the Cross’s image of the dark night. In the Carmelite tradition, Constance FitzGerald has noted, dark contemplation often involves being purified of idols so that one might be freed to perceive the true image of God in the present moment. “Our gods have to die before we reach for the God who is beyond all our human images and projections and who waits over the brink of the known in the darkness.”<sup>57</sup>

In his final pastoral letter, contemplating the reality of rampant structural violence in conversation with the Puebla text, Romero identified three forms of idolatry gripping El Salvador: the absolutization of wealth and private property, of national security, and of popular

<sup>52</sup> Homily of March 11, 1979, 6:203.   <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 192.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

<sup>55</sup> “Church, the Body of Christ in History” 63–84, at 67–68.

<sup>56</sup> Homily of August 6, 1978, 5:106–7.

<sup>57</sup> “The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation,” in *Light Burdens, Heavy Blessings: Challenges of Church and Culture in the Post-Vatican II Era; Essays in Honor of Margaret R. Brennan, IHM*, ed. Mary Heather MacKinnon, Moni McIntyre, and Mary Ellen Sheehan (Quincy: Franciscan, 2000) 203–22, at 218.



organizations. The first two he denounced as fundamentally evil due to the prioritization of material goods above human life and the rationalization of state-sponsored murder to protect the wealthiest members of society.<sup>58</sup>

Romero regarded the third form of idolatry, the absolutization of popular organizations, as ethically more ambiguous. It springs from the rightly ordered intention to form associations directed toward the common good, but in practice, motivations such as selfish ambition for political power can subvert the original intention and make the organization itself into an idol that takes precedence over the needs of the people.<sup>59</sup>

In his third pastoral letter and accompanying Transfiguration homily the year before, Romero had affirmed the church's role in public discourse about the common good.<sup>60</sup> But he exhorted the ecclesial community to foster formation of personal and social conscience and local community organizing efforts without identifying the church with any particular popular organization. No single voluntary association could completely embody the demands of the Christian faith, he insisted.<sup>61</sup>

According to the preferential option for the poor, each Salvadoran Christian must discern the kind of participation to which he or she is called. Those involved in politics must judge carefully the kind of justice toward which to direct their energies. In cases in which the ends sought by a political organization did not coincide with the demands of justice informed by faith, Romero steadfastly maintained that Christians must choose the latter and "show that the fight for justice is for the justice of the Reign of God, *not any other justice.*"<sup>62</sup>

In all three forms of idolatry, Romero discerned a fundamental anthropological mistake: Those caught up in such false worship "have forgotten that the most important are not those idols but rather the human being. The church wants to claim human dignity, even for the poorest little one, even for a tortured one . . . a prisoner . . . a murder victim."<sup>63</sup>

Much like René Girard, Romero viewed the carnage from the perspective of the victims of violence, and while he did not explicitly invoke Girard's understanding of "mimetic violence," he recognized the phenomenon of violent actions inciting responses in kind. The rivalrous

<sup>58</sup> See Romero, "Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" 114–61, at 133–35, 143.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 135–36.

<sup>60</sup> See "The Church and Popular Political Organizations" (Third Pastoral Letter, August 6, 1978) 85–113. This pastoral was coauthored by Arturo Rivera y Damas, bishop of Santiago de María.

<sup>61</sup> Homily of August 6, 1978, 5:107–8. <sup>62</sup> Ibid. 108, emphasis original.

<sup>63</sup> Homily of August 6, 1979, 7:145–46.

desire to wield dominative power, a temptation for those at both political extremes in El Salvador exacerbated by U.S. foreign policy, represented yet another sort of idolatry gripping Salvadoran society. Reflecting the content of the accompanying pastoral letter, Romero led his people in a consideration of the multivalent violence enveloping the country in his homily of August 6, 1978. He insisted that a Christian response to violence must take root in the true peace of Christ, and it involves a different kind of violence, what he called “the violence of redemption.” All those surrounding Jesus at the Transfiguration—Moses, Elijah, Peter, as well as James and John, “the sons of thunder”—had on occasion exhibited violent tendencies, Romero noticed. Yet, Peter, James, and John, though fearful, remained docile in Jesus’ transfigured presence. Listening to the beloved Son, they surrendered to the power of Jesus’ love to transform the violence of the cross.<sup>64</sup>

### Romero’s Ethical Epistemology of the Preferential Option for the Poor

In celebrating the liturgy of the Feast of the Transfiguration, Romero called the Salvadoran church to the liturgical asceticism of continual *metanoia*, which entailed a deepening preferential option for the poor as a necessary ethical response to the Spirit’s urging, “Listen to Him!” In so doing, he drew upon a rich ecclesial history of interpreting this feast as an ascetical symbol that functions prophetically to convey eschatological hope. John Chrysostom, for example, found in the Matthean account of the Transfiguration a glimpse of the coming glory of the *parousia*.<sup>65</sup> But that uncreated light starkly revealed a harsh historical reality requiring concrete ethical response. Thus, he decried the practice of interest-taking, even if all the proceeds were to benefit the poor. Chrysostom, Frederick Norris notes, “read from deep within a worshipping Christian community that finds events such as the Transfiguration not merely enlightening but lightning-like, frightening yet comforting, lighting the trail toward the poor and firing the soul for life eternal.”<sup>66</sup> The brilliant, uncreated light of glory’s promise radiating from the transfigured Jesus reveals to those who

<sup>64</sup> Homily of August 6, 1978, 5:109–10. Romero’s understanding of the power of Jesus’ nonviolent love to transform violence calls to mind Girard’s mimetic theory. See, for example, “Mimesis and Violence,” in *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1996) 9–19, at 18.

<sup>65</sup> John Chrysostom, Homily 56, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 10, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost (1851; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978) 345–51. See also Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Apologetic Use of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16–21,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980) 504–19, at 511 n. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Frederick W. Norris, “The Transfiguration of Christ: The Transformation of the Church,” in *Reading in Christian Communities: Essays on Interpretation in the*

would follow him all that must be cleansed and purified within and around them in order to become fully alive, capable of mediating the light of Jesus' love as his disciples.<sup>67</sup>

For Romero, liturgical contemplation of the terrible luminosity of the Transfiguration exposed every persecution to the light of God's love and revealed a path of solidarity with the poor majority of Salvadorans. Coming under the severe and often uncharitable scrutiny of some of his fellow Salvadoran bishops and curial officials, he became convinced that the bitter ideological divisions within the Salvadoran episcopate stemmed from insufficient commitment to the poor. "The road out of the crisis according to the Church is to convert and to meet Christ there where he says he is: 'All that you do to one of these little ones, you do to me.' The conversion of the poor will also be the solution to our intraecclesial divisions."<sup>68</sup> Reflecting upon a broader societal context rife with ideological conflict, Romero provocatively asserted that "the best way to defeat Marxism is to take seriously the preferential option for the poor."<sup>69</sup>

Drawing upon *Lumen gentium* and the texts of Medellín, Romero located the preferential option for the poor at the heart of the Church's mission as a sacramental sign in the world: "The Church is in the world so as to signify and bring into being the liberating love of God, manifested in Christ. It therefore understands Christ's preference for the poor, because the poor are, as Medellín explains, those who 'place before the Latin American Church a challenge and a mission that it cannot sidestep and to which it must respond with a speed and boldness adequate to the urgency of the times.'"<sup>70</sup>

In 1979, data from the Legal Aid Bureau indicated that the vortex of violence gripping El Salvador was becoming tighter and further institutionalized. As he celebrated the Feast of the Transfiguration with his worshipping community that year, Romero took the opportunity in his homily to sum up his final pastoral letter, speaking the truth about

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*Early Church*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 14, ed. Charles A. Bobertz and David Brakke (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2002) 188–99, at 196.

<sup>67</sup> See John A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 9 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1986) 141.

<sup>68</sup> Homily of August 6, 1979, 7:145; see also "Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" 126.

<sup>69</sup> "Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" 114–61, at 146; see also Homily of August 6, 1979, 7:147, in which Romero attributes this remark to an ecclesial community member's response to a questionnaire.

<sup>70</sup> "The Church, the Body of Christ in History" 63–84, at 66. Romero cites *Lumen gentium* no. 1 and quotes from "*Pobreza de la Iglesia*" no. 7, in *Conclusiones*.

Salvadoran reality: In the first half of the year, “the number of those murdered by various sections of the security forces, the armed forces, and the paramilitary organizations rose to 406. The number of those arrested for political reasons was 307. . . . Not a single victim comes from the landowning class, whereas those from among the *campesino* population abound.”<sup>71</sup>

Pressed by Curia officials to explain a homiletic practice laden with political implications that they perceived as undercutting their aspiration of ecclesial conciliation with the ruling elite, Romero wrote:

If indeed I do refer to particular events of the week, it is to “incarnate” in our life the Lord’s word, explaining to my listeners that thus they should get used to enlightening their own lives and problems with God’s light. I always insist that the main thing in my homilies is not the circumstantial framework but the word that has been read and the theological teaching of the comments on it and, above all, the preparation to celebrate that particular Eucharist.<sup>72</sup>

As Jesus led the way from Mt. Tabor to Jerusalem and then to Calvary, so too for Romero, the poor revealed the way of the cross as the way to God. In the incarnation, God’s glory and the human being fully alive become one: *Gloria enim Dei, vivens homo*. Modifying Irenaeus’s well-known phrase, Romero proclaimed, “*Gloria Dei, vivens pauper* [the glory of God is the poor person alive].”<sup>73</sup> The path leading from Tabor to the cross and on to resurrected life provided the ethical horizon for Romero to imagine with his people a dignified life for all, especially for the poorest, as the path of salvation.

In his last Transfiguration homily on the Second Sunday of Lent, 1980, Romero used his understanding of eschatology, ecclesiology, and ethics emerging from the Transfiguration narrative to invite his people into the practice of liturgical asceticism, the sort of focused contemplation of Jesus on his way from Tabor to Calvary and resurrected life that Romero himself was undertaking as part of his continual *metanoia*. He led his people to face the truth of their persecution, the suffering imposed on them and justified by their oppressors as a political necessity. As members of the Body of Christ in history, they could choose the path of their own integral liberation

<sup>71</sup> “Church’s Mission amid the National Crisis” 114–61, at 120.

<sup>72</sup> Brockman, *Romero* 129, quoting Romero, memorandum to Cardinal Baggio, June 24, 1978.

<sup>73</sup> Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* 25. The phrase in brackets is Sobrino’s interpolation. Romero made this remark to Leonardo Boff at the Puebla meeting and later included it in “Political Dimension of the Faith” 177–87, at 187. The original text from Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 4.20.7, reads, “*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei* [The glory of God is the human person alive, and the life of the human person is the vision of God].” Geoffrey Wainwright uses this same passage to make a case for viewing “eucharist as ethics”; see his “Eucharist and/as Ethics,” *Worship* 62 (1988) 123–38, at 127 n. 11.

by practicing the liturgical asceticism of returning love for hate, strengthened by the eschatological hope of salvation history. In Luke's account of the Transfiguration, Romero reminded his people, Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah of the cross and death, but also of resurrection in glory. The luminous hope of Jesus' transfigured body shines forth precisely in the crucified Body of Christ in history, in the Salvadoran people's own bloodied testament to the truth of God's glory in the poor person fully alive. The glory and power of God in Jesus Christ is found precisely in the midst of the Salvadoran national process, he insisted, and "the scandal of the cross and of pain will not make us flee from Christ, reject suffering, but rather embrace it."<sup>74</sup>

### **Ecclesiology Revealed in Ethics: Romero's Method in the Formulation of Catholic Social Teaching**

Romero's desire to foster the full moral agency of all in Salvadoran society, especially the most marginalized, found expression in his radically inclusive approach to preaching and teaching. He linked his homiletic practice to his exercise of magisterial authority through his firm belief in "the charism of dialogue and consultation."<sup>75</sup> As archbishop, he carefully cultivated an ear for the *sensus fidelium*. Before any major decision, particularly one that involved prophetic denunciation, he sought input from a wide variety of sources, ranging from canon lawyers to the beggar by the seminary's door.<sup>76</sup> In the process of drafting his presentation for the 1979 meeting of the Latin American bishops in Puebla, Mexico, and in preparing his fourth pastoral letter, Romero took the unusual step of eliciting the views of parishes and local communities on critical issues by administering a questionnaire and carefully weighing the responses.<sup>77</sup> Instead of preaching a homily on El Salvador's patronal feast day that year, he presented an outline of what would be his last pastoral letter, "The Church's Mission amid the National Crisis," which engaged the teaching of the recently released Puebla document.<sup>78</sup> Romero gratefully acknowledged the people's direct participation in the drafting process, humbly sharing authorship of the letter with them in

<sup>74</sup> Homily of March 2, 1980, 8:289.

<sup>75</sup> "Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" 114–61, at 117.

<sup>76</sup> Mons. Ricardo Urioste, interview, December 7, 2002, in Marcouiller, "Archbishop with an Attitude" 11.

<sup>77</sup> Sobrino, *Monseñor Romero* 42, 58. See also Brockman, *Romero* 187; and Romero's own references to the survey process in "Church's Mission amid the National Crisis" 114–61, at 117, and Homily of August 6, 1979, 7:142.

<sup>78</sup> *Monseñor Oscar A. Romero: Su Diario*, entry of August 6, 1979 (San Salvador: Criterio, 2000) 237.

accordance with his interpretation of *Lumen gentium*: “‘All the people of God,’ says the Council, ‘guided by the Magisterium of the church enjoys the prophetic charism of Christ.’ You and I have written the fourth pastoral letter enriched by these treasures of the universal church, and above all, by Puebla.”<sup>79</sup>

Methodologically, Romero’s approach represented a decisive departure from the prevailing procedure in generating texts on Catholic social teaching. He adopted a dialogical and participative process supple enough to bear authentic witness to the theology of charism articulated in *Lumen gentium*. It is one thing to posit that all members of the faithful enjoy specific charisms by virtue of their baptism; it is quite another to transform ecclesial structures, such as the method of generating magisterial texts, to reflect that belief.

Oswald von Nell-Breuning, remembering his own ambivalent experience of drafting *Quadragesimo anno* under conditions of stifling secrecy, remarked that the time-honored tradition of assigning “ghost writers” to draft magisterial documents without any concern for the values of transparency and dialogue still shaped ecclesial life for the worse even after Vatican II.<sup>80</sup> As archbishop of San Salvador, Romero boldly created anew the process of formulating Catholic social teaching by exercising his great humility and integrity: he used his teaching authority not to wield dominative power but rather to forge new paths for the dialogical participation of all the members of the people of God to inform the church’s work of evangelization according to their particular gifts.<sup>81</sup>

Romero invited the direct involvement of all members of the Salvadoran faithful in the drafting process, leading them to assume the gift and task of evangelization so central to the church’s mission and integral to Puebla’s message:

The evangelizing activity of our Latin American Church must have as its overall goal the ongoing evangelical renewal and transformation of our culture. In other words, the gospel must penetrate the values and criteria that inspire our culture, convert the human beings who live by these values, and, insofar as it is necessary,

<sup>79</sup> Homily of August 6, 1979, 7:142, quoting *Lumen gentium* no. 12.

<sup>80</sup> I have developed this point further in “Called and Gifted: Charism and Catholic Social Teaching,” *Horizons* 34 (2007) 222–37. See also Oswald von Nell-Breuning, “The Drafting of *Quadragesimo anno*,” in *Official Catholic Social Teaching*, Readings in Moral Theology 5, ed. Richard McCormick and Charles Curran (New York: Paulist, 1986) 68.

<sup>81</sup> I noted this point in “Archbishop Oscar Romero and Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Archbishop Romero and Catholic Social Teaching*, compiled by Robert Pelton, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Ind.: Kellogg Institute for International Studies, Spring 2009) 1–7. On the close connection between humility and integrity, see Thomas Merton, “Integrity,” in *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1961; New York: New Directions, 1972) 98–103.

change the structures in which they live and express themselves so that they may be more fully human.<sup>82</sup>

Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, helped shape the Puebla text's account of evangelization and is cited in Romero's homilies. Among other points, it highlighted the qualities of the "Christian liberator," that is, one who evangelizes from the wellspring of "the inspiration of faith, the motivation of fraternal love, [and] a social teaching which the true Christian cannot ignore and which he must make the foundation of his wisdom and of his experience in order to translate it concretely into forms of action, participation and commitment."<sup>83</sup> Romero himself exhibited these qualities as preacher, pastor, and teacher.<sup>84</sup> By grounding the generation of Catholic social teaching in the charisms of all the members of the people of God, he invited the Salvadoran faithful to become Christian liberators of evangelization as well.

Choosing to release most of his pastoral letters on the Feast of the Transfiguration and, in the case of the last one, devoting the greater portion of his homily that day to a mystagogical reflection with his people on the significance of the text they had written together, Romero bore witness to the sacramental dimension of the church's evangelizing mission: the Body of Christ embodies the grace of the sacramental life by letting the ethical word of magisterial teaching well up from the spring of the Incarnate Word.

### ESCHATOLOGY, ECCLESIOLOGY, AND ETHICS: FROM TABOR TO CALVARY AND RESURRECTED LIFE

The culmination of Romero's contemplation of the transfigured Jesus yielded a coherent message conveyed in both his Transfiguration homilies and pastoral letters and reflected a synthetic understanding of eschatology, ecclesiology, and ethics in relation to the meaning of the Transfiguration for the Salvadoran people. Consistently, he used these theological categories to interpret the significance of the Transfiguration to prepare his

<sup>82</sup> Conference of the Latin American Bishops, "Evangelization in Latin America's Present and Future (Puebla Final Document)" no. 395, in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979) 178. In formulating this understanding of evangelization, the Latin American bishops relied heavily on *Evangelii nuntiandi* nos. 18–20.

<sup>83</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi* no. 38.

<sup>84</sup> As Armando Marquez Ochoa notes, Romero regarded Rutilio Grande as one who embodied these three qualities of the Christian liberator. See Marquez Ochoa, *No basta la justicia, es necesario el amor* (San Salvador: CEBES, 2007) 9–11; and Romero, Homily of the Funeral Mass for Padre Rutilio Grande, March 14, 1977, 1–2:1–5, and Homily of November 1, 1977, 1–2:302–4.

people for the liturgical asceticism of facing persecution as they exercised their Christian baptismal commitments.

### Eschatological Understanding of Salvadoran History as Part of Salvation History

The church, Romero preached on August 6, 1977, has come to see that the history of God's people and the history of salvation are not two different, parallel histories, but one narrative that culminates in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church, the Body of Christ in history, is telling Salvadorans that

we have to save ourselves with our own history, but a history that is thoroughly penetrated by the light of salvation, of Christian hope. And all the history of El Salvador, and its politics and economy and all that constitutes the lived reality of Salvadorans has to be illuminated by faith. There does not have to be a divorce. It has to be the history of the country, penetrated by God's design, in order to live it with faith and hope, as a history that takes us to salvation in Christ.<sup>85</sup>

Preaching on the Second Sunday of Lent in 1979 on the Markan Transfiguration narrative, Romero emphasized that salvation history grounds the faith of a pilgrim people, beginning with Abraham. Following a strand of interpretation dating back at least to Origen, Romero noted that Moses and Elijah represent the twin peaks of law and prophecy, and their presence at Jesus' transfiguration calls to mind their own experiences of theophany as a source of staying power.<sup>86</sup> Reflecting on the Matthean narrative of the Transfiguration during Lent in 1978, he preached:

Jesus appears between the Old Testament figures of Moses and Elijah, the transfigured Christ, and God calls him his Son, his beloved. This is the promised one. No other human has been given to humanity through whom they can be saved outside of Jesus' name. Jesus appears there as an anticipated Easter, as one resurrected who will have nothing more to do with death and the miseries of the earth.<sup>87</sup>

In these two Lenten Transfiguration homilies, Romero viewed the transfigured Jesus through the lens of a high Christology. In Christ, a new people

<sup>85</sup> Homily of 6 August 1977, 1–2:154.

<sup>86</sup> Homily of March 11, 1979, 6:197–98. On the history of this strand of scriptural interpretation, see Stephen Barton, "The Transfiguration of Christ according to Mark and Matthew: Christology and Anthropology," in *Auferstehung = Resurrection: The Fourth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium—Resurrection, Transfiguration, and Exaltation in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism, and Early Christianity*, Tübingen, September, 1999, ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 231–46, at 236–37.

<sup>87</sup> Homily of February 19, 1978, 4:25–26. According to the christological categories outlined by Peter Schineller ("Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views," *Theological Studies* 37 [1976] 545–46), Romero here understands Jesus to be both necessary and constitutive of salvation.



of God emerges in salvation history, guided by Peter, James, and John, the future leaders of the church. As the people of God in Salvadoran history, the contemporary church is also called to undertake a desert pilgrimage like Abraham, Moses, and Elijah before them.<sup>88</sup> “Lent, renewal of the People of God, is a call to each of you and to myself, who are members of the People of God so that we not only live our Christianity, but we radiate it, to save others, to be unity for others who go about scattered, to be repentance for others who travel the paths of sin, to be attraction for those who have gotten lost.”<sup>89</sup> Romero contemplates the witness of Abraham, Moses, and Elijah to the faith that sustains the people of God in history:

Dear brothers and sisters, that is the People of God. A people that believes, as the Bible says of Abraham: “He believed against all hope.” That’s what we need now in El Salvador: to believe against all hope! even when all the lights appear to be shut off, all the roads closed. If the faith of Abraham is expressed in his people, as a believing people, it comes down to us, imitate me! If the courage of Moses even when he suffered the persecution from his own people made him faithful to God’s plan for his life even unto death, if the fidelity of Elijah helped him, even when he pessimistically thought of suicide, to get up and continue working, what stops us, Salvadoran brothers and sisters, the People of God of 1979? Our desert, our Lent, our blood—all this can be converted into liberation, light, consolation and hope.<sup>90</sup>

### **Ecclesiology: The People of God as the Body of Christ in History**

Romero led his worshipping community to remember their own place in salvation history so that they might become ever more fully the Body of Christ in Salvadoran history. In his pastoral letter and homily on the Feast of the Transfiguration in 1978, he emphasized that the essence of the church’s mission is to mediate the transformation of God’s people.<sup>91</sup> Against the horizon of salvation history, the present historical moment of Salvadoran history appears to be a dark night, but the church serves as “the light of God, the light taken from the illuminated face of Christ in order to illuminate the lives of humans, the life of peoples, the complications and problems that humans create in their history[;] the Church feels the obligation to speak, to illuminate like a lamp in the night, to illuminate the darkness.”<sup>92</sup>

Romero’s contemplative dwelling on the face of Christ recalls a longstanding practice associated with iconography of the Transfiguration in the Christian East. In Maximus the Confessor’s reflections on the

<sup>88</sup> Homily of March 11, 1979, 6:198–200. In Romero’s usage, the phrase “people of God” does not include all Salvadorans but only those who have been united in God’s Spirit through baptism (196–97, 200).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 202.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 198.

<sup>91</sup> “Church and Popular Political Organizations” 85–113, at 110.

<sup>92</sup> Homily of August 6, 1978, 5:107.

Transfiguration, for example, Andrew Louth finds “a model of theology as meditative, focused (in this case) on the image, or icon, of the Transfigured Christ.”<sup>93</sup> While maintaining continuity with traditional iconic regard of the transfigured Jesus, Romero’s theology of transfiguration pressed toward active fruits of contemplation, reflected in his sustained emphasis on the inextricable link between Tabor and Calvary. In his Transfiguration homilies, Romero consistently invites the ecclesial community to train its collective mind’s eye and heart’s desire on the transfigured Jesus, but he also urges it to extend its contemplative gaze from the eschatological horizon of the Transfiguration to the gritty suffering of daily life. Tabor, he preached, is and must be followed by Calvary. Only through defense of human rights and respect for the dignity of God’s people “will it be possible to give to this country the true face of beauty that it deserves, that it received from Christ, with its most beautiful name, the country of the Divine Savior.” The church in El Salvador, sanctified by grace through the liturgical asceticism of faithful perseverance amid persecution, could begin to embody a corresponding transformation in society as well.<sup>94</sup>

### **Ethics: The Journey from Tabor to Calvary and Resurrected Life**

By leading his disciples directly from Tabor through Jerusalem to Calvary, Jesus disclosed the church’s sacramental mission as the Body of Christ in history, a body demeaned and discarded before it is resurrected. “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit” (Jn 12:24). Moments before he was assassinated, Romero proclaimed these words of Jesus. To a sacramental imagination limbered and liberated by the memory of eschatological hope, the desecration of Jesus’ luminous face represents a summons to take up the cross in the concrete reality of the present historical moment. Responding to Jesus’ call, Romero led his people by example, drawing strength from the promised fulfillment of resurrection hope in salvation history to embrace the cross of the tortured Body of Christ in Salvadoran history. “And by preaching this promotion of humanity and awakening humans from their sick conformity and making them active, the church has to suffer.”<sup>95</sup>

Mindful of the long liturgical tradition linking the transfiguration and crucifixion, Romero’s homily of August 5, 1979, anticipates the patronal feast day of El Salvador as a communal practice of liturgical asceticism. He

<sup>93</sup> Andrew Louth, “The Transfiguration in the Theology of St. Maximus the Confessor,” *Theologia Orthodoxa* 42.1–2 (1997) 19–30, at 30. See, e.g., Maximus, “Difficulty 10,” 1125D, 1160 C, and 1168A, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 91, from the translation in Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 108–9, 128–29, 132.

<sup>94</sup> Homily of August 6, 1977, 1–2:159. <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 156.

begins by pondering the meaning of the popular celebration of the Feast of the Transfiguration. Thousands of Salvadorans would gather in procession to Plaza Salvador del Mundo later that day to honor the Divine Savior in a traditional ceremony known as *La Bajada*. Romero finds in this liturgical practice a reflection of the church's mission in El Salvador. The Gospel text is John 6:24–35; Romero dwells on one particular verse: "I am the bread of life that comes down from heaven for the life of the world." Playing with the words, he urges his people to think of the traditional procession in terms of the liturgical and evangelical meaning of Christ's presence in the world, *el pan que baja*, the bread that comes down from heaven. While ordinary bread can alleviate physical hunger only for a brief time, the Body of Christ provides abiding sustenance, bringing true liberation from the real hunger for peace and justice.<sup>96</sup>

Romero points to another kind of *bajada*, Jesus' descent from Mount Tabor for the journey to Jerusalem, the way of the cross. Reflecting on the first reading, Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15, Romero notices the ascetic discipline involved in partaking of "this bread that descends," *el pan que baja*. Moses struggled to free a people who had grown used to slavery and resisted the risks of liberation. "They don't want to suffer the difficult time of the desert. All liberation supposes sacrifice."<sup>97</sup> Romero draws his community's attention to the concrete meaning of the sacrifice being asked of them by lamenting at length the assassination of Fr. Alirio Napoleón Macías the day before, the first priest to be killed outside the Archdiocese of San Salvador. A pastor in the Diocese of San Vicente, he was shot in his church after having publicly reported the repression that his community was suffering, including seven murdered and four disappeared following detention.<sup>98</sup> In his homily, Romero calls the assassins to conversion but also makes clear reference to the church's excommunication of the physical and intellectual authors of the crime.<sup>99</sup> By so desecrating humans created in the *imago Dei*, they broke from the Body of Christ, effectively putting themselves outside the church.<sup>100</sup> In Romero's view, the church's persecution followed inextricably from its fidelity to Vatican II, Medellín, and Puebla.<sup>101</sup> Lightning-like, the piercing luminosity of the transfiguration reveals Jesus' *bajada* to Calvary as the rightful path of the people of God in a world sundered by sin.

Preaching on the transfiguration narrative of Matthew on the second Sunday of Lent, 1978, Romero concluded his homily by noting that the call of baptism is not to experience Jesus' death and resurrection as a summons

<sup>96</sup> Homily of August 5, 1979, 7:131.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

<sup>98</sup> Brockman, *Romero* 181.

<sup>99</sup> Homily of August 5, 1979, 7:128.

<sup>100</sup> For a cogent treatment of similar cases in Chile during the Pinochet regime, see William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>101</sup> Brockman, *Romero* 182.

to be transfigured ourselves but rather to give our love and our lives as he did, secure in the knowledge that we are daughters and sons of God.<sup>102</sup> The Matthean account in particular exhibits a thematic connection of divine filial relationship with righteousness as the basis for discipleship. As Stephen Barton argues, Matthew “does not separate . . . mysticism from everyday life. Jesus’ divine sonship is not displayed as a question of metaphysics. Rather, his sonship is something habitable and followable by those who remain ‘with him’ in obedient discipleship.”<sup>103</sup>

Consistently, Romero finds in the transfigured Jesus an invitation to his disciples to become sons and daughters with whom God is well pleased, and this means taking up the cross. In his last Transfiguration homily, he declared:

To the Church, nothing matters more than the human being. The human, the [daughter or] son of God; and so it hurts the Church to find the cadavers of humans, the torture of humans, the suffering of humans. For the Church, the goal of all projects must be this one of God: the [daughter or] son, the human being. Every human is the [daughter or] son of God and in each murdered human is a christ sacrificed that the Church also venerates.<sup>104</sup>

Romero invited the people of God to prepare for martyrdom, and his criterion for identifying martyrs was the surrender of one’s life in defense of the poor as a disciple of Jesus.<sup>105</sup> Suffering terror, persecution, and martyrdom is the mark of the Salvadoran church’s fidelity to its evangelizing mission of proclaiming the liberating good news of the kingdom to all while standing with the poor and enduring their fate.<sup>106</sup> “But the Church

<sup>102</sup> Homily of February 19, 1978, 4:28.

<sup>103</sup> Barton, “Transfiguration of Christ” 231–46, at 244. For a concise account of the understanding of the relationship between ascetical practice and mystical contemplation as it developed in the early Christian tradition, see Bernard McGinn, “Asceticism and Mysticism in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University, 1998) 58–74.

<sup>104</sup> Homily of March 2, 1980, 8:289. Romero did not capitalize “christ” in this case to convey that each murdered person was another “christ” but distinguished from Jesus Christ.

<sup>105</sup> See Miguel Cavada, “Monseñor Romero y los mártires,” *Revista latinoamericana teología* 16 (1999) 218. See also Homily of September 23, 1979, 7:284. Romero’s references to martyrdom resonate with Thomas Schubeck’s description: “The martyr, moved by love of God and neighbor, courageously endures death for bearing witness to the truth of faith that includes speaking the truth and doing justice. Strengthened by the love of Christ, the martyr is executed by those who have a hatred of the faith” (Schubeck, “Salvadoran Martyrs: A Love That Does Justice,” *Horizons* 28 [2001] 17).

<sup>106</sup> “The Church, the Body of Christ in History” 63–84, at 75. See also “The Political Dimension of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor,” Louvain Address, 177–87, at 182, and Homily of March 11, 1979, 6:192.

lifts its eyes to its divine spouse this morning to say: 'I give thanks, because through persecution, my hope in you and my self-offering to you awaken more commitment in my sons and daughters,' and all are ready even to give their lives to defend this faith that they must profess."<sup>107</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Guillermo Cuéllar had intended to play his "Gloria" hymn for Romero for the first time on Monday, March 24, 1980, but the archbishop died that day without ever hearing it performed. That El Salvador's national security regime chose to assassinate Romero during mass indicates his effectiveness in linking Catholic social teaching with liturgy. He had echoed Pius XI's determination to defend the church's altar, and "the gods of power and money" killed him there, not realizing that in doing so, they would only confirm the truth of his life's witness, particularly expressed in his preaching and teaching and distilled in his theology of transfiguration: Ethically, he used the preferential option for the poor as an epistemological guide; ecclesiological, he encouraged broad-based participation by all members of the people of God in the evangelizing mission of the church; eschatologically, he situated Salvadoran history against the horizon of salvation history.

Through his ongoing process of *metanoia*, "an evolution in pastoral fortitude," Romero used his Transfiguration homilies and related pastoral letters to invite the Salvadoran people to embrace their own baptismal call to conversion by practicing liturgical asceticism, becoming the Body of Christ in history. As active agents in the generation of Romero's contributions to Catholic social teaching, the Salvadoran faithful entered with him into contemplation of their national reality. As preacher and teacher, he encouraged the ecclesial community to respond to systemic deception and mass murder with the truth of God's word and love. His theology of transfiguration fundamentally expressed his pastoral desire for the people of God to make *la bajada* from Tabor to Calvary with the eschatological hope incarnated in Jesus, luminous and bloodied, transfigured, crucified, and resurrected.

<sup>107</sup> Homily of August 6, 1977, 1-2:158.