

lay faithful, therefore, perhaps more so than priests and religious, is to foster the development of a culture, of legislation, etc., consistent with the dignity of the human person.

Certainly, within this great panorama of enlivening temporal realities with a Christian spirit, we also find the challenge to confront poverty and injustice in the world. Without detracting from the great effort that so many priests and religious are making in this area, it is also a demand incumbent on lay men and women, spurred by their concern for human dignity and acting with the professional spirit that is proper to them.

This past half year has seen the important step in Opus Dei of naming an auxiliary vicar to help you in governing the Work. Four months after that decision, what is your assessment of how this is going?

The role of an auxiliary vicar was already foreseen by St. Josemaría, and this past December, after asking God for light, it seemed to me that the moment had come to put it into operation. As far as “how this is going,” I give thanks to God for being able to rely on the help that is now provided by having an auxiliary vicar. The Work is carrying out stable activity in 69 countries and continues to expand, and although I am feeling well for my age, the auxiliary vicar means a new impulse to follow closely all of this apostolic work.

But I am very much in need of prayers, as are all of us who have this kind of pastoral responsibility. I ask your readers to accompany with their filial prayer my brother and friend, their cardinal archbishop, and to also pray for me.

Statement for the Beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero

On February 3, the Holy Father Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate a decree of martyrdom for the Servant of God Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez. Archbishop Romero (El Salvador: 1917-1980) was assassinated out of hatred for the faith on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Holy Mass.

On learning of the news, Bishop Javier Echevarría said: “The martyrs present a challenge to all men and women, both believers and non-believers, but they are a shining light especially for those who have placed their hope in God. I am sure that Archbishop Oscar Romero is going to be a deeply beloved saint.”

“I met Archbishop Romero in Rome,” the Prelate of Opus Dei said, “during one of his visits to Saint Josemaría, in 1974. He was a pious person, detached from his own interests and dedicated to his

people. His struggle for sanctity was palpable. Archbishop Romero was one of the first bishops who, following the death of Saint Josemaría in 1975, wrote to Blessed Paul VI asking that his cause of canonization be opened. I am certain that now, from Heaven, he continues interceding with his good friend Saint Josemaría for this portion of the people of God.”

Saint Josemaría and Archbishop Romero had known one another since 1955. The Archbishop of San Salvador had great esteem for the spirit of Opus Dei and had frequent contact with the apostolic work of the faithful of the Prelature in El Salvador. In 1974 he came to Rome and had several conversations with Saint Josemaría. As Fr. Antonio Rodríguez Pedrazuela recounts in his book *A Sea Without Shores*, the founder of Opus Dei was concerned that the Archbishop have the opportunity to rest during his stay in Rome, because he realized the tense situation he faced back in El Salvador.

The affection was mutual, and when the founder of Opus Dei died, Archbishop Romero, in his postulatory letter for Saint Josemaría’s cause of canonization, expressed his gratitude “for having received from him encouragement and strength to be faithful to the unchangeable doctrine of Christ and to serve the Holy Roman Church with apostolic zeal.”

In the same letter he wrote: “Msgr. Escrivá’s life was marked by

a continuous dialogue with God and a deep humility. One could see that he was a man of God and that he dealt with people with great refinement, affection and good humor.” A letter addressed to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo a few months after the founder’s death shows that his affection and esteem for Saint Josemaría had only grown stronger.

He also had a deep friendship with Archbishop Fernando Sáenz, who was Vicar of Opus Dei in El Salvador, and later his successor as archbishop of San Salvador. The day he was assassinated, March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero spent the morning with Fernando Sáenz at a get-together for priests organized by priests of Opus Dei. Afterwards Fernando Sáenz accompanied the Archbishop to the church where he was to celebrate Mass. In an article written some years later about Blessed Oscar Romero’s final day on earth, Archbishop Sáenz recalls: “They killed him during the offering of the bread and wine. It was, as it were, a marvelous external sign of his having offered his life for his people, for the poor, for justice, for peace.”