

The Catholic Church of the
Immaculate Conception

2540 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, CA 92110 619 295-4141 FAX 619 295-4142
e-mail: parish@ic-sandiego.org Website: www.ic-sandiego.org

December 13, 2015

Rev. Richard L. Perozich, Pastor
parish@ic-sandiego.org 619-295-4141 x 11

Deacon Robert H. Fitzmorris
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Marsha Long, Music
pictures@marshalong.com

Parish Office Hours
Monday: Noon to 4:00 pm
Tuesday-Friday: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Mass Schedule

Daily Mass: Monday - Saturday at 8:00 am
First Friday Mass & Devotion: 8:00 am

Sunday Masses

Saturday Vigil: 5:15 P.M.
Sunday: 8:30 AM, 10:00AM, 11:30 AM, 5:15 P.M.

Holy Day Masses: 8 A.M., 7:00 P.M.

Penance: For daily Mass goes 7:30 AM For Parish on Saturday: 4:30 to 5:00 P.M., and by appointment

Baptisms & RCIA: *By appointment only.* Please email Deacon Fitzmorris at rfitzmor@diocese-sdiego.org.

Weddings: By appointment only. Arrangements must be made at least **one year** in advance. Please contact the office

Funerals: *For arrangements, please call the parish office.*



History of Immaculate Conception Parish

It was here in Old Town that Saint Junípero Serra celebrated his First Holy Mass in California on July 2, 1769 near the site of the present Immaculate Conception Church, and it was on the hill overlooking Old Town that he planted the cross which marked the site of the Mission and the Presidio.

In 1849, the first parish church was established in Old Town with the name of Immaculate Conception and was dedicated in 1858. It still stands and is known as the Old Adobe Chapel on Conde Street. The cornerstone to the present Immaculate Conception Church was laid in 1868 under the direction of Father Antonio Ubach. With the population swing toward the south it was not until July 6, 1919, that the church was dedicated by Archbishop John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles.

WE PRAY

MASS INTENTIONS

| | | | |
|----|----------|---|----|
| 14 | 8 AM | <i>St. John of the Cross</i> † Antonio Gonsalves | RP |
| 15 | 8 AM | <i>Advent Weekday</i> † Sylvia Valderama | RE |
| 16 | 8 AM | <i>Advent Weekday</i> † Edna Moore | RP |
| 17 | 8 AM | <i>Late Advent Weekday</i> † James A. DiEdoardo | RP |
| 18 | 8 AM | <i>Late Advent Weekday</i> Jim Madruga, SI | RP |
| 19 | 8 AM | <i>Late Advent Weekday</i> Chris DiEdoardo, SI | RP |
| 20 | 5:15 PM | Mark Cutri, SI | RP |
| | 8:30 AM | † Edna Moore | RE |
| | 10:00 AM | Roger Bernard Ibarra, SI | RP |
| | 11:30 AM | † William Kennedy | RP |
| | 5:15 PM | † George Driscoll | RP |

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

December: Intentions of the Holy Father

Universal: That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.

Evangelization: That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

PRAY: SEMINARIANS IN THEOLOGY

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1st | Manuel Del Rio, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo |
| 4th | David Exner, North American College, Rome |
| 4th | Brian Frice, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |
| 2nd | Oscar Lopez, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo |
| 3rd | Nathan McWeeney, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |
| 1st | Raymond Napuli, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |
| 1st | Michael O'Connor, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |
| 2nd | Eric Tamayo, North American College, Rome |
| 4th | Corey Tufford, North American College, Rome |
| 4th | Derek Twilliger, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |
| 3rd | Billy Zondler, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR |

PRAY FOR OUR PRIESTS

| | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 14 | Rev. Joseph Masar |
| 15 | Rev. Devadhasan Masillamony |
| 16 | Rev. Federico Masutti FSSP |
| 17 | Rev. Basil Mattingly, OSB |
| 18 | Rev. Anthony May |
| 19 | Rev. Stephen McCall |
| 20 | Rev. Michael McFadden, OSA |

PRAY THE SCRIPTURES

Monday: Nm 24:2-17; Ps 25:4-9; Mt 21:23-27
 Tuesday: Zep 3:1-13; Ps 34:2-23; Mt 21:28-32
 Wednesday: Is 45:6-25; Ps 85:9-14; Lk 7:18-23
 Thursday: Gn 49:2-10; Ps 72:1-17; Mt 1:1-17
 Friday: Jer 23:5-8; Ps 72:1-19; Mt 1:18-25
 Saturday: Jgs 13:2-25; Ps 71:3-17; Lk 1:5-25

PRAY FOR HEALING

Jesus we ask you to bring your peace and healing touch to those who are ill afraid or worried. Amen

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Esther Fitch | Linda Lee |
| Lydia Castillo Herrera | Amparo Valenzuela |
| Margaret Kelly | Robby Witt |
| Patricia Kennedy | Phyllis Altomare |
| Dorothy Kleint | Alicia Ambrose |
| Deena Marchiano | Shirley Pearson |
| Dena Mendoza | Inez Cerda Bull |
| Jean Miller | Rose McBrien |
| Patricia O'Grady | Cosmo Busalacchi |
| Mary Jane Tiernan | Maria Casanova |
| Marguerite Vorst | Steve Stone |
| Marie Whitman | Maria Esperanza Kramer |
| Martha Zamudio | Joan Busalacchi |
| Carlos Amaya | Georgiana Ottenheimer |
| Fred Levine | Mark Brandon. |
| Mike Rodriguez | Jeanne Pontius |
| Lisa Becerra | Esther Salazar |
| Maguire Fitzpatrick | Joane Anderson |
| Tony Jenkins | Janet Meyers |
| Peter Nalwalker | Yolanda Garcia |
| Bob Witt | Maria Diaz |
| Frank Garay | Susan Rykowski |
| Frances Garcia | Elias Barajas |
| Socorro Pacheco | Shirley Ilog |



PRAY FOR OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY

Jesus protect all who serve our country.

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sgt. Ahmed John Alexander | Robert Clinton Long, MC2 |
| Natalie Augustine | Sgt. Adriana Matizel |
| Major Jerry Bloomquist | Wendell Miculob |
| Col. Mike Bodkin | LTJG Joe F. Morales, USN; |
| Danny Carpenter, USMC | LCPL Matthew A. Pena |
| LTJG Joseph Colangelo, USN | Sgt. Richard Pierce |
| Cpl. Samuel James Comer | Sgt. William Paul Powers and |
| Daniel Dinglebeck, USN PFC | Cinco |
| David Eley, USMC | CPL Wilson Santiago |
| Micah Emery | Alfred Tello |
| Sgt. Christopher Escalona | Ricky Thibeault |
| Capt. Pedro Esquivel | Tony Tulloss |
| 1Lt. Cortez Fabia | PFC Travis Vliet; & 3rd |
| Juan Carlos Galazza | Marine Aircraft Wing. |
| SSGT. Vincent Charles Lucario | SCPO Desiree S. Hayes, USN |

† PRAY FOR OUR DECEASED †

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen.

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| William Kennedy | Gustavo Sosa |
| Joan Schmitt | Floyd Watson |
| Robert McMahan | Iola Torre |
| David Diaz | Emilie Graham |
| Patrick Piggot | Angela Cordova |
| Rodney Serrano | Ramiro Moreno |
| Concepción Garza | Alexander Toczko |
| Richard Solís Moreno | Jeannette Toczko |
| Alvin Weaver | José Teofilo Solorio |
| William Bethel | Ray & Betty Jackson |
| Lillian Sinclair | Denise Cooney |
| Olga Hritz | Joanne Mangiameli |
| Imelda Hoeckelmann | Edna Moore |
| Angelina Olivarez | Paul Ramirez |
| Alice Perry | Isabella Asaro |
| Joseph Moreno | Maude Laracy |
| Louie Serrano | Helen Peña |

WE HAVE ALL BEEN MADE TEMPLES OF GOD THROUGH BAPTISM

FROM THE PASTOR

—*Saint Caesarius of Arles,
bishop*

My fellow Christians, today is the birthday of this church, an occasion for celebration and rejoicing. We, however, ought to be the true and living temple of God. Nevertheless, Christians rightly commemorate this feast of the Church, their mother, for they know that through her they were reborn in the spirit. At our first birth, we were vessels of God's wrath; reborn, we became vessels of his mercy. Our first birth brought death to us, but our second restored us to life.

Indeed, before our baptism we were sanctuaries of the devil; but after our baptism we merited the privilege of being temples of Christ. And if we think more carefully about the meaning of our salvation, we shall realize that we are indeed living and true temples of God. God does not dwell only in structures fashioned by human hands, in homes of wood and stone, but rather he dwells principally in the soul made according to his own image and fashioned by his own hand. Therefore, the apostle Paul says: The temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.

When Christ came, he banished the devil from our hearts, in order to build in them a temple for himself. Let us therefore do what we can with his help, so that our evil deeds will not deface that temple. For whoever does evil, does injury to Christ. As I said earlier, before Christ redeemed us, we were the house of the devil, but afterward, we merited the privilege of being the house of God. God himself in his loving mercy saw fit to make of us his own home.

My fellow Christians, do we wish to celebrate joyfully the birth of this temple? Then let us not destroy the living temples of God in ourselves by works of evil. I shall speak clearly, so that all can understand. Whenever we come to church, we must prepare our hearts to be as beautiful as we expect this church to be. Do you wish to find this basilica immaculately clean? Then do not soil your soul with the filth of sins. Do you wish this basilica to be full of light? God too wishes that your soul be not in darkness, but that the light of good works shine in us, so that he who dwells in the heavens will be glorified. Just as you enter this church building, so God wishes to enter into your soul, for he promised: I shall live in them, and I shall walk the corridors of their hearts.

LET US RETURN TO GOD WHO HAS CALLED US

—*From a homily written in the second century*

With regard to self-control, I believe I have given you good advice. No one who follows it will have reason for regret but will save his own soul and mine as well, since I have been his counselor. Indeed there is no small reward for converting an erring soul and saving it from perishing. Moreover, whether it is our duty to speak or to listen, we have it in our power to make some recompense to the God who created us, by speaking or listening with faith and love.


We must remain firm in our faith, therefore, and live upright and holy lives, for we shall then feel at ease and confident when we present our petitions to God, who says: *While you are still speaking I will say: "See, I am here!"* In these words the Lord makes a wonderful promise, and shows us that he is more ready to give than we are to ask. We all have a share in this extraordinary goodness, so the great blessings we receive should never make us envy one another. In fact, the degree of pleasure these words bring to those who live by them is equaled only by the condemnation they will bring on those who disregard them.

So you see, my brothers, that we have been given every inducement to amend our lives. We have been called by God, and now it is up to us to return to him while we still have time and one who is ready to receive us. For if we renounce sinful pleasures and practice self control by refusing to yield to our evil desires, we shall share in the mercy of Jesus.

You must know, however, that the day of judgment, like a flaming furnace, is already approaching. Sun, moon and stars will be consumed, and the whole earth will become like lead melting in the fire. All that each man has done, whether openly or in secret, will then be brought to light. Therefore, a very good way of atoning for our sins is by being generous to the poor. Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving surpasses both, for love covers a multitude of sins. Nevertheless, prayer delivers the soul from death if it proceeds from a good conscience. Happy the man who is found rich in these virtues; by relieving the poor, he himself will be relieved of his sins.

To make sure that none of us is lost, we must repent from the bottom of our hearts. Since we have been commanded to go out and rescue idolaters and to instruct them, is it not even more important to save souls who already know God? If we are all to be saved, we shall have to help one another and support the weak in their struggle to live a good life. When one of us does wrong, it is for the others to warn him and persuade him of his error.

AROUND THE PARISH




2016 Baptism Schedule
January 05 Class*
January 10 Baptism
 Schedule is available on the parish website (ic-sandiego.org).
 *Note change to Tuesday

13 DEC ... FAMILY CATECHESIS
 Parents and children as well as all interested adults are welcome to attend Family Catechesis in the bride's room of the parish hall every other week. The program continues on Sunday, December 13 at 9:45 right after the 8:30 AM Mass. All children must be accompanied by their parents at each session.


15 DEC ... ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE
 Penance service followed by reconciliation will be held in the church on Tuesday, December 15, 7:00 p.m.

The **Prayer Chain Ministry** has been established in our parish. Our intention is to mobilize our parish community to pray for someone who has suddenly become ill, is going in for surgery, has a personal emergency or special needs they would like kept in prayer. Please contact Ruthe Jenkins if you are in need of prayers or if you are interested in being part of this powerful ministry on either the contact team or as part of the prayer chain. Email: rutheis@cox.net or phone 619-981-1424.



THANK YOU!
 Special thanks to Deacon Bob Fitzmorris, the Trinitarian Sisters, & the I.C. Choir, under the direction of Marsha Long, for sharing their musical talents at the Christmas Concert.
 Thank you to one of our parishioners for underwriting the cost of the dinner. Thank you to Sue Sullivan and the volunteers who worked to make the annual event enjoyable for all:
 Linda Acuna
 Betty Dennis
 Bill Dennis
 Bayardo de Murguia
 Frankie Diaz
 Teri Milbauer
 Carole Pietras
 Marilyn Rasmussen
 Marie Wagner
 Catered by McDougal's Catering

Freedom is not simply the capacity to choose between alternatives; it is a sign of the ontological dignity of the human person who is created in love and called to live in communion with the truth. *Dr. Nicholas Healy on Dignitatis Humanae*



CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE
 The holidays are quickly approaching and Immaculate Conception is organizing a TOY DRIVE. At this time of gift giving, let us remember those less fortunate.
 We are asking families at Immaculate Conception to donate new, unwrapped toys for children ages 0-17. Gift cards in increments of \$25.00 are also welcomed. Your donations can be dropped off in Serra Hall after Sunday morning Masses, no later than 12:00 noon. The last day to donate is December 13.
 Toys will be delivered to Catholic Charities on December 13.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY

13 Dec ... Parish Breakfast
 Join us in the hall, after the 8:30 & 10 a.m. Masses, for a delicious breakfast, includes coffee & orange juice.
 Only \$5 per person.

DONATION CHECKS...
 Please remember:
 1) Use black or blue ink only when writing checks. Use of red or other ink colors, requires special handling by the bank.
 2) All checks should be made payable to Immaculate Conception Church. Please avoid writing checks to Parish Outreach, Quarters & Cans. etc. as all accounts for parish organizations are in the name of the parish.
 3) For special diocesan collections (Peter's Pence, Mission Sunday, etc.), please write checks payable to Immaculate Conception or to Diocese of San Diego. Checks payable to Immaculate Conception are totaled and one parish check is sent to the Diocese.

2015 Donations
 Letters substantiating tax-deductible donations to Immaculate Conception Church will be mailed out the week of January 25.
 Letters will be mailed out to individuals or families whose donations totaled \$250 or more for the year 2015.
 Should you have any questions after receiving your letter, please contact Connie at the parish office, 619-295-4141, ext. 10.

AROUND THE PARISH

Gifts of Treasure

With gratitude for the gifts we have received parishioners and visitors made a joyful return to the Lord.

December 6, 2015

Total Collection: \$6,039.12
Envelopes: \$4,415.00 Plate: \$1,624.12
Total contributing households: 104

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 5:15 Sat | \$ 657.00 |
| 8:30 Sun | \$1214.52 |
| 10:00 Sun | \$1383.73 |
| 11:30 Sun | \$ 688.37 |
| 5:15 Sun | \$1538.00 |
| Mailed | \$ 557.50 |

EXPENSES

Nov 30-Dec 4, 2015

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Cable | \$90.71 |
| Copier Lease | \$265.28 |
| Health Insurance | \$1499.79 |
| Music | \$600.00 |
| MinistrySupplies | \$253.27 |
| Office Supplies | \$69.85 |
| Pest Control | \$100.00 |
| Waste Disposal | \$386.25 |
| Water Utility | \$1013.44 |

Total: \$ 4,278.59

RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS

Special envelopes may be used for your donations which may be dropped in the regular collection.

WELCOME TO IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!

To register at the parish, please fill out the form below and drop it in the basket or call the office at 295-4141.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY/ ZIP _____

PHONE _____



CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

- 24 DEC 5:15 PM Vigil Mass for families and children
- 25 DEC 12:00 AM MIDNIGHT MASS
- 25 DEC 8:30 AM CHRISTMAS MASS
- 25 DEC 10:00 AM CHRISTMAS MASS
- 25 DEC 11:30 AM CHRISTMAS MASS
- NO 5:15 PM MASS ON CHRISTMAS DAY
- 26 DEC 10:00 AM TRADITIONAL MASS IN LATIN
- Weekend following Christmas = regular Mass schedule
- 01 JAN 8:00 AM SOLEMNITY MOTHER OF GOD
- obligation to attend is lifted*

**SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL:
DIGNITATIS HUMANAE**

MAN'S DIGNITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

... 2. It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility—that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.

3. Further light is shed on the subject if one considers that the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective and universal—whereby God orders, directs and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever more fully the truth that is unchanging. Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

PARISH & COMMUNITY

Parish Calendar

December

| | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 13 | Retirement Fund for Religious Collection | |
| | Parish Breakfast | 9:30 AM |
| | Family Catechesis | 9:45 AM |
| 15 | Penance Service | 7:00 PM |
| 16 | Choir Practice | 5:30 PM |
| 17 | Harp Meditation | 2:00 PM |
| 19 | Quilting Group | 9:30 AM |
| 23 | Choir Practice | 5:30 PM |
| 25 | Christmas Parish Office and Serra Gifts Closed | |
| 26 | Christmas Holiday Parish Office and Serra Gifts Closed | |
| 27 | Quarters and Cans Sunday | |
| 30 | Choir Practice | 5:30 PM |

January

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 01 | Solemnity of Mary--Mass | 8:00 AM |
| | Parish Office and Serra Gifts Closed | |
| 02 | Quilting Group | 9:30 AM |
| 04 | I.C. Seniors Luncheon | 11:00 A.M. |

ADVENT - CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

DECEMBER

| | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 15 | Penance Service | 7:00 p.m. |
| 24 | Christmas Vigil Mass | 5:15 p.m. |
| 25 | Christmas Masses 12:00 Midnight, 8:30 ,10:00, & 11:30 a.m. No 5:15 Mass | |
| 26 | Latin Mass | 10:00 a.m. |

JANUARY

| | | |
|----|-------------------|---------|
| 01 | Solemnity of Mary | 8:00 am |
|----|-------------------|---------|

FROM MISERICORDIAE VULTUS - Pope Francis

**BULL OF INDICTION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY
JUBILEE OF MERCY**

FRANCIS
*BISHOP OF ROME SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF
GOD TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER, GRACE
MERCY, AND PEACE*

11. Let us not forget the great teaching offered by Saint John Paul II in his second Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, which at the time came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise. There are two passages in particular to which I would like to draw attention. First, Saint John Paul II highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today’s cultural milieu: “The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of ‘mercy’ seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it (cf. Gen 1:28). This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy ... And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God.”

03-05 MAR...RESTORING MARRIAGE...

Catholic Answers’ National Apologetics Conference at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina on Harbor Island from March 3-5, 2016.

The conference, “Restoring Marriage Today,” will feature The Most Reverend James Wall of Gallup, New Mexico, as the key note speaker.

To register, e-mail conference@catholic.com or call 619-387-7200.

WE ARE CATHOLIC. WELCOME HOME.

Visit www.catholicscomehome.org.

Support Group for Separated/Divorced

There is a support group for anyone suffering from the pain and loss associated with a separation or divorce. We meet Sundays at 10:15 AM at St. James Catholic Church – Ministry Center in Solana Beach. For more information, contact Jan Nadler, PhD at 760-814-8604 or Frank Grant, 760-533-1520 or email fwgrant@gmail.com.

**POPE FRANCIS:
EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST BE PREPARED
FOR MARTYRDOM**

—By *Elise Harris*
Vatican City, Oct 30, 2015 / 11:36 am

On Friday Pope Francis reflected on the life and death of Blessed Oscar Romero, who was recognized as a martyr earlier this year, stressing that each Christian ought to be ready to give their life for the faith.

“A martyr is not born. It's a grace that the Lord allows, and that in a way concerns every baptized person,” Pope Francis told a group pilgrims from El Salvador Oct. 30.

Bl. Oscar Romero was Archbishop of San Salvador (the Salvadoran capital) from 1977 until his March 24, 1980 martyrdom.

Quoting a phrase of Bl. Romero, the Pope said that “We must be willing to die for our faith, even if the Lord does not give us this honor.”

To give one's life doesn't only consist of being killed, he said, but rather “to give one's life, to have the spirit of a martyrdom, is to surrender it in duty, in silence, in prayer, in the fulfillment of duty; in this silence of everyday life; to give one's life little by little.”

The Salvadorans met with Pope Francis during their pilgrimage to Rome made in thanksgiving for the recent beatification of Archbishop Romero.

He was killed while saying Mass, and in February Pope Francis officially recognized his death as having been for hatred of the faith.

He was beatified in El Salvador May 23. The same day, Pope Francis declared that the martyr's feast will be celebrated March 24 each year – the day “in which he was born into heaven.”

In his speech to the Salvadoran pilgrims, Pope Francis noted that since the beginning of the Church, Christians have been convinced that the blood of the martyrs “is the seed of Christians.”

Even today the blood of many Christians continues, in a dramatic way, to be poured out in the world, he said, explaining that these people give their lives with the certainty that it will bear fruit and lead to an increase of holiness, justice, reconciliation, and love of God.

Francis noted that a martyr isn't someone stuck in the past, serving as just “a beautiful image adorned in our churches that we remember with a certain nostalgia.”

“No, the martyr is a brother, a sister, who continues to accompany us in the mystery of the communion of the saints and who, united to Christ, does not ignore our earthly pilgrimage, our sufferings, our anguish.”

The Pope drew attention to the many others who have lost their lives for the faith in the recent years of El Salvador's history, including Fr. Rutilio

Grande. A Jesuit priest and good friend of Bl. Romero, Fr. Grande was assassinated in 1977, just three years before the archbishop himself.

Both Bl. Romero and Fr. Grande, as well as many other Salvadorans who were killed in hatred of the faith, weren't afraid to die and have therefore “won and have been made intercessors for their people.”

In unscripted remarks, Pope Francis said that it mustn't be forgotten that Bl. Romero's martyrdom began long before his death, with witness, suffering, and persecution.

As a young priest who witnessed what was happening at the time, Francis said that even after the archbishop was assassinated “he was defamed, slandered, his memory despoiled, and his martyrdom continued also for his brethren in the priesthood and in the episcopate.”

During his time as Archbishop of San Salvador, Bl. Romero had been a vocal critic of the human rights abuses of the repressive Salvadoran government, and he spoke out on behalf of the poor and the victims of the government.

Because of this advocacy for the poor, many accused the archbishop of supporting Marxist interpretations of liberation theology. However, theologians who worked closely with the archbishop have found no proof of the accusations, but rather argue that his love of the poor was rooted in Church teaching and the Gospel.

The Pope stressed that the rumors aren't mere hearsay, but are things that he himself heard, adding that Bl. Oscar Romero is a man who continues to be a martyr even today.

“After having given his life, he continues to give it by allowing himself to be assailed by all this misunderstanding and slander,” he said, adding that “this gives me strength.”

“Only God knows the stories of those people who have given their lives, who have died, and continue to be stoned with the hardest stone that exists in the world: language.”

Pope Francis said that as the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy begins in a few weeks' time, Bl. Oscar Romero serves as a stimulus for Salvadorans to proclaim the Gospel with renewed vigor, advancing the causes of true justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Like Bl. Oscar Romero, Francis said he longs to see the day when “the terrible suffering of many of our brothers, due to hate, violence and injustice, would disappear.”

He closed quoting the late archbishop, and praying that the Lord send “a shower of mercy and goodness, with a flood of graces,” which converts the hearts of all Salvadorans.

“May the name of the Divine Savior bring conversion in a country where all feel redeemed and as brothers, without differences, because we are one in Christ our Lord.”