A special person

Oscar Romero was born on 15 August 1917 in El Salvador, Central America.

When he left school he became a carpenter, but soon decided he wanted to become a priest.
A few families were very rich and owned lots of land. Most people were poor and earned very little.

People became very angry at this unfairness.

But the rich were very powerful. If anybody complained they were put in prison or even killed.
In 1977 Oscar Romero became the Archbishop of San Salvador, the capital.

He was a quiet, shy man and nobody thought he would speak out about how poor people were being treated.

They thought he would be too afraid.
A friend’s influence

Romero’s friend Fr. Rutilio Grande worked with poor communities. He spoke out about how unfair things were and demanded better living conditions for poor people.

For this he was shot dead.

His death upset and angered Romero, who insisted his death be investigated. This never happened.
A voice for the voiceless

From that point Oscar Romero stopped being a quiet man and spoke out. He told the truth about what was happening to poor people in his country.

Every week in his sermons on the radio, he spoke out against the violence.

“Many would like the poor to keep on saying it is God’s will for them to live that way. But it is not God’s will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God.”
Even though he was afraid that he would be killed, his strong faith in God helped him carry on.

“if they kill me I will rise again in the Salvadorian people”
On 24 March 1980, Oscar Romero was celebrating mass. A car drew up and a shot was fired through the open church door.

Oscar Romero was killed.
Through his life and through his death Oscar Romero remains a powerful example and inspiration for all who believe in working for justice.
“Así tenía que morir: ¡Sacerdote!, porque así vivió Mons. Óscar A. Romero”. El martirio es una vocación que Dios concede únicamente a "sus hijos predilectos en los que Él se complace", porque habitualmente saben vivir diciendo: "Aquí estoy, Señor, para hacer tu voluntad". Y así la vida del Siervo de Dios se transformó en una misa que se funde, a la hora del ofertorio, con el Sacrificio de Cristo. Mons. Rafael Urrutia
“That is how he was to die: As a Priest! Because that is how Mons. Óscar A. Romero lived. Martyrdom is a vocation that is bestowed by God “upon his sons/daughters in whom he is pleased” … because they have consistently known how to live by saying, “Here I am, Lord, to do your will.” And that is how the life of a Servant of God was transformed in a Mass that merged, in the hour of the offertory, with the Sacrifice of Christ.”

----- Mons. Rafael Urrutia
On the anniversary of the assassination of Oscar Romero, we pause to reflect upon his legacy as it is today

• “A church that suffers no persecution but enjoys the privileges and support of the things of the earth---beware! is not the true church of Jesus Christ!” – March 1979

• Our church is called to repentance for the role it, and we as the people of God, have played in creating this world—by what we and our church have done to create this condition of injustice, and by what we have not done to confront and overcome this sin of the world.
"To try to preach without referring to the history one preaches in is not to preach the gospel. Many would like a preaching so spiritualistic that it leaves sinners unbothered and does not term idolaters those who kneel before money and power. A preaching that says nothing of the sinful environment in which the gospel is reflected upon is not the gospel."—(Feb. 18, 1979).

Does the preaching of my church, my community, reflect this commitment to challenge the sinful environment of our world, even to the point of causing discomfort, including my own discomfort?
• “THE CHURCH IS OBLIGED by its evangelical mission to demand structural changes that favor the reign of God and a more just and comradely way of life. Unjust social structures are the roots of all violence and disturbances. How hard and conflicting are the results of evangelical duty! Those who benefit from obsolete structures react selfishly to any kind of change”—(Nov. 1979).
• Is my church clearly on the side of the poor, even to the point of naming sin in our world and its causes, even to the point of risking the discomfort of the wealthy and complacent? Do I, does my church, instead prefer a preaching that lulls, that makes me feel comfortable, rather than one that challenges and causes discomfort about the state of sin in our world and our responsibility for it? Am I, is my congregation or community, willing to listen when this sin is pointed out, and so be converted?
"THE CHURCH CAN BE CHURCH only as long as it goes on being the Body of Christ. Its mission will be authentic only so long as it is the mission of Jesus in the new situations, the new circumstances of history. The criterion that will guide the church will be neither the approval of, nor the fear of, men and women, no matter how powerful or threatening they may be. It is the church's duty in history to lend its voice to Christ so that he may speak, its feet so that he may walk today's world, its hands to build the reign of God . . . "—(Aug. 6, 1977).
• Does the church fulfill this mission, this duty? Do I call my church to this mission? Am I involved in it? Does my church, do I as a member of my church, really believe enough in the incarnate God in Christ to live the brave and risky mission to which the church is called in our world?