Remembering the Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador

Leader: We gather to mourn the deaths and celebrate the lives of who were murdered on November 16, 1989. The Jesuit priests were killed because they had raised their voices to protest the unjust government and had worked for social justice and human rights during the civil war in El Salvador.

The Jesuits, the cook, and her daughter were in a residence on the campus of the Jesuit University of Central America when a death squad, under orders from the Salvadorean military High Command, entered the building and shot them with military-style weapons. They are remembered as martyrs who spoke truth to those in power despite threats of violence.

Reader One: From Psalm 143: 1, 3, 6
 Lord, hear my prayer; in your faithfulness listen to my pleading; Answer me in your righteousness.
 My enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground. I stretch out my hands toward you, my soul to you like a parched land.

Reader Two: From Psalm 143: 8, 10
 In the morning let me hear of your mercy, for in you I trust. Show me the path I should walk, for I entrust my life to you.
 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your kind spirit guide me on ground that is level.

Leader: Let us remember each of these martyrs who followed the path of justice, guided by the Holy Spirit, to do the will of God in a dark time. With words from the Beatitudes, we pray for their souls and give thanks for their witness.

Reader Three: We remember the university rector and the philosopher, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Four: We remember the head of the Sociology Department and the University’s Human Rights Institute, Fr. Segundo Montes.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
PRAYER SERVICE

Reader Five: We remember the social psychologist, head of the Psychology Department and the Polling Institute, Fr. Ignacio Martin-Baró.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Six: We remember the theology professor, Fr. Juan Ramón Moreno.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Seven: We remember the theology professor, Fr. Armando López.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Eight: We remember the founder of the Fe y Alegría network of schools for the poor, Fr. Joaquín López y López.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Nine: We remember the cook at the University and witness to the murders, Julia Elba Ramos.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reader Ten: We remember the sixteen-year-old daughter of Julia, Celina Ramos.

All: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Leader: We also remember the thousands of others who died in El Salvador during the reign of terror in the 1970s and 1980s, including Archbishop Oscar Romero, Ita Ford, Maura Clark, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan. We pray for all those who died in those dark days, for all those who were tortured, and for all the families who still mourn their loved ones. May their courage and deep faith be a model for us as we struggle to respond to God’s call to participate in His great work of justice and peace.

All: God, Creator of life and human dignity, we celebrate the witness of your martyrs for faith, for peace, and for justice. Have mercy on the souls of these departed ones and grant them peace.

May the memory of the Jesuits and the members of the Ramos family who died in El Salvador in 1989 help us move to a deeper understanding of the demands of justice and guide us to speak your truth to those in power. Give us the courage to raise our voices for those who suffer oppression and violence. Grant us your joy as we work to bring your kingdom to this world. Amen.