

## *Additional Resources:*

Visit Poverty Initiative's website <http://www.povertyinitiative.org/> and Poverty Initiative's "New and Unsettling Force" blog <http://unionindialogue.org/povertyinitiative/>

Romero Wiki: The Poverty Initiative's Romero Work Study Group has begun a collaborative Wiki Web Page with resources about Oscar Romero that could be helpful for leadership development and poverty scholarship. Please take a look and consider contributing.

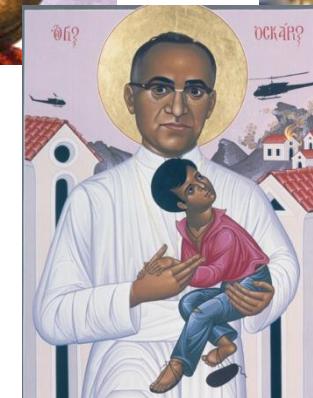
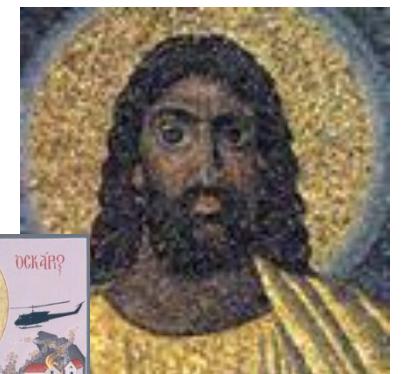
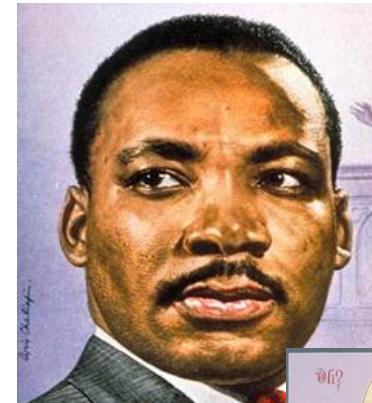
<http://studyromero.wikidot.com/home>

If you would be interested in working collaboratively to create a poverty scholarship about Oscar Romero that will be useful for leadership development in the movement to end poverty, led by the poor, you can become involved in Poverty Initiative's Romero Work Study Group. Email Jennifer Wilder [jw.jenniferwilder@gmail.com](mailto:jw.jenniferwilder@gmail.com) for information.

If you want a whole bookful of additional materials to help draw lessons for the work to end poverty from the Bible and from MLK's Poor People's Campaign, please contact [poverty@povertyinitiative.org](mailto:poverty@povertyinitiative.org) to obtain Poverty Initiative's book: [A New and Unsettling Force: Reigniting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Poor People's Campaign](#). The book features chapters on the history of the Poor People's Campaign of 1968, the role of religion and the Bible, and the importance of art and culture in the struggle to end poverty, along with interviews with leaders of organizations fighting for the same basic needs and demands for which the Poor People's Campaign fought.

# *Lessons from History:*

*The last days of  
Archbishop Oscar Romero,  
Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
and Jesus*



Part of "Good News from the Poor:  
Preaching and Bible Study towards Ending Poverty"  
SU 190 Course facilitated by Poverty Initiative, February 26, 2011

*"It's only at night when you can see the stars."*

At Poverty Initiative, we perceive poverty to be the defining issue of our time. The inequalities between rich and poor are greater than ever. In order to create a leadership prepared for dark times, we look to 3 leaders who maintained and increased their commitments throughout difficult times. We study Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jesus in order to catch up to them and stand on their shoulders to act in our own times, thereby giving rise to the "many Martins" needed in leadership today. Studying the factors that helped these leaders "stick and stay" helps us maintain our commitments to the movement to end poverty as we face worsening times and to see our struggles as inextricably connected. Romero, Martin, and Jesus move us to locate the role of church in the movement to end poverty, and to re-radicalize, rather than further de-contextualize the church today.

## Poverty Initiative's "4 C's" Model of Leadership Development:

- 1. Clarity:** Developing an analysis and approach that asks why people are poor, who benefits from poverty, and how can we begin to respond to the root causes of poverty
- 2. Commitment:** "Commitment, not Compensation"; Developing an engagement necessary to endure the hardship and inevitable setbacks of a protracted struggle. The ability to "Stick and Stay" the course and committing oneself to stand up for something bigger than just oneself.
- 3. Competence:** You can dream the impossible. But no matter how hard you try, you cannot do the impossible. Leaders must develop advanced, sophisticated strategies that matches the sophistication of the strategists, ideologists, and theologians of the present "principalities and powers."
- 4. Connectedness:** Being united with the struggles of the poor and dispossessed. Being connected to the struggle on the ground in both our local communities as well as recognizing the connection that our local struggles have to the global struggle of the poor.

## JPMorgan's War on Nature

By Andy Kroll, Mar 30, 2010, Mother Jones, <http://motherjones.com/politics>

Unlike virtually all of its competitors, JPMorgan Chase steeled itself early for the collapse of the subprime market and emerged from the rubble of the global financial meltdown with both its balance sheet and reputation intact. But the storied firm stands alone among its Wall Street rivals in another area, too. JPMorgan backstops one of the most destructive mining practices in the world: mountaintop removal coal mining. And it continues to do so even as other major banks have cut ties to this practice.

Mountaintop removal (MTR) mining, focused in Appalachian states like West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, involves deforesting huge swaths of land and blasting the summits off of mountains to expose the black veins of coal underneath. The waste and rubble from the demolition is then dumped into nearby rivers and streams, burying local water sources in toxic byproducts, choking off tributaries that feed into larger rivers, and wiping out plants and wildlife studies. Despite the mining industry's claims, there are no successful ways to mitigate the effects of MTR. The effects on the nearby environment are long lasting and often irreversible.

Nonetheless, over the past 17 years, JPMorgan Chase has helped to underwrite nearly 20 bond or loan deals, worth a combined \$8.5 trillion, for some of the biggest players in the MTR mining business, according to data from Bloomberg. Other large banks have either halted financing companies engaging in the practice outright or signaled their intent to do so. In December 2008, for instance, Bank of America publicly announced plans to "phase out financing of companies whose predominant method of extracting coal is through mountain top removal." Wells Fargo has cut ties with coal giant Massey Energy. But JPMorgan continues to back the practice.

By underwriting MTR, JPMorgan ties itself to some of the nation's biggest polluters. Take Massey Energy, which leads the nation in MTR mining. In 2008, the company extracted more than 21 million tons of coal using mountaintop removal mining, according to opensourcecoal.org, an online database for coal production statistics. That same year, JPMorgan acted as lead manager on a \$690 million bond offering by Massey, according to financial records.

Over the past decade, Massey has mined nearly 190 million tons of coal in Appalachia using mountaintop removal, according to opensourcecoal.org—and it has essentially disregarded the law and surrounding landscape to do so. Between 2000 and 2006, Massey violated the Clean Water Act more than 4,500 times by dumping sediment and leftover mining waste into rivers in Kentucky and West Virginia, the EPA said in 2008.

## "The Man Who Said 'No' to Coal Companies"

by Kari Lydersen, Jan 28, 2011

from Keeper of The Mountain Federation website <http://mountainkeeper.blogspot.com/>

Larry Gibson's father was a veteran of West Virginia coal mines. "He could mine 50 pounds of coal laying on his side in a 28-inch tunnel, with a belt line. He worked there for 13 years before being laid off." Gibson himself never worked as a miner, but in the past decade it's become a full-time job for him to fight off the coal companies who want to buy his forested mountaintop land, which they tell him is valued at \$650 million.

When Massey Energy originally tried to convince him to sell his land, Gibson said, they offered him \$140,000. At that time, he said, a Massey vice president told him that if he held out he would become "an island" in an "ocean" of mountaintop removal strip mining.

"And he was right," said Gibson. The money has been hard for people to resist in a region with high unemployment and poverty. The only other work available is in Wal-Mart, fast food joints, telemarketing and mostly low-paid healthcare jobs, Gibson explained. And in the mines. But West Virginia mining jobs, once predominantly union and well-paying, have become much fewer, much lower-paying and much more likely to be non-union.



Mountaintop Removal Mining in West Virginia

Gibson said coal companies like Massey are adept at public relations campaigns wherein they make it appear environmental groups and local mining opponents are destroying jobs, when in reality decent mining jobs are being shaved away by the use of high-tech machinery, temporary contract workers and general corner-cutting by companies on staffing levels and safety. "It's all propaganda," Gibson said. "It wasn't citizens or environmentalists who did away with jobs, it's mechanization that's killing jobs. These aren't career jobs any more, they're contract jobs, and the company is the only one who can break the contract."

He said people are told that if they quit before their contract is up, they'll actually owe the company money. "And people in Appalachia don't have money for lawyers to challenge that kind of thing," said Junior Walk, a young Appalachian activist.

The battle over coal is so bitter in Appalachia that Gibson wears a bulletproof vest, keeps two guns handy and has a special door so heavy – to prevent kick-ins—that he has to slide it open on wheels. He feels he's threatened both by actual coal company representatives and locals who work or hope to work for the coal companies. He hopes with rising awareness of the air pollution from coal-fired power and the impacts of mountaintop removal mining, his neighbors will begin to see that dangerous coal field jobs aren't worth sacrificing their surroundings and health.

Of 34,500 underground mining jobs, just over 10,200 were unionized; while of the 18,300 surface mining jobs, just 1,500 were unionized. Non-union mines have notably worse safety records. Of 265 coal mine deaths since 2002, only 30 were in union mines. Among recent disasters: an explosion at Massey Energy's non-union Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia in April 2010 that killed 29 miners.

# Clarity:

**VIDEO: 2-Minute History of El Salvador: watch from 2:50 to 5:35 of the trailer for "Return to El Salvador", directed by Jaime Moffett <http://www.youtube.com/user/jamiemoffett>**

**VIDEO: Introduction to the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vtMx-ijQOY>**

**CLARITY:** First of all, what is a leader? A leader is someone who is able to make a correct assessment of a problem, put forth the solution to that problem, then to organize the implementation of the solution, and lastly to keep a continual check on the implementation. Your assessment of the situation confronting you determines the set of tactics you will apply in that situation. If your assessment sees comfortably a teddy bear lying next to you and the reality of the situation is that a hungry grizzly bear is coming at you. Then you are in trouble.

"The prescription for the cure rests with the accurate diagnosis of the disease." -- MLK, *Where Do We Go from Here?*. (1967)

"Know your enemy, know yourself and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated." – Sun Tzu

"Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents." -- MLK, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here?*

"Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think." --MLK, Jr., *The Strength to Love* (1963)

"Knowledge is Power" -- Francis Bacon

# Commitment:

## “Radical Resistance”

### Textual Reflection on the Last Days of Jesus, Martin Luther King, and Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero

(Adapted from *A New And Unsettling Force: Reigniting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign*, The Poverty Initiative, 2009)

#### Readings:

- Bible passage: Matt 21:12-14 or Mark 11:15-19
- King Passage: “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence” (1967)
- Romero Passage: “The Church in the Service of Liberation: Brothers, Stop the Repression” (March 23, 1980)

#### Discussion Questions:

##### 1. COMMITMENT:

Reflect on this leader’s commitment. What inspired and sustained this commitment? Why was his commitment important? What does the commitment of this leader teach us about the needs for our own commitments as leaders in times of crises today?

##### 2. ROLE OF THE CHURCH:

How does this leader define church and envision the role of the church? In turn, how does his commitment to this moral vision of the church break the silences of injustice? What are 1 or 2 concrete ways that the work of this leader inspires our work as the church today?

The National Roundtable on Metallic Mining of El Salvador (La Mesa) is a broad group of community organizations, human rights NGOs, church groups, and research centers that have been working courageously—several of their members have been murdered, and many have received death threats—to prevent gold extraction in El Salvador. Among other environmental impacts, this gold mining would pollute the already-scarce water basins with cyanide.

So far, the activists have been winning this David versus Goliath fight. Last year, La Mesa succeeded in persuading the Salvadoran government to halt gold extraction by denying permits to the Canadian-based Pacific Rim and the U.S.-based Commerce Group and Sebastian Gold Mines (Commerce Group). Two successive Salvadoran governments have denied permits for gold mining on environmental and human health grounds.

Last week, however, these activists suffered a setback—not from their own government, but from an obscure tribunal in Washington, D.C. Two transnational mining companies have used rules in the “free trade” agreement between the United States and six countries in the region to sue the government of El Salvador.

After being denied the permits, the companies took their quest for gold to Washington DC. They are demanding hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation for the denial of mining permits. The first company to file suit, Pacific Rim, has just won the first stage of the proceedings by overcoming the Salvadoran government’s effort to get the case thrown out on jurisdictional grounds.

The tribunal’s decision to give the green light to this controversial case should send shudders down the spines of advocates for the environment, community rights, and democracy. The type of investment rules employed by Pacific Rim to mine for gold in international tribunals are contained in thousands of bilateral investment treaties around the world and more than a dozen existing and pending U.S. trade agreements. What’s happening to El Salvador could happen almost anywhere, despite the struggles of activists to defend their environmental rights.

As La Mesa’s Vidalina Morales has put it: “Pacific Rim has assailed our country, breaching environmental requirements, undermining laws, provoking environmental damage, economic losses, social conflict and corruption, and it should be judged for that. But the roles have been inverted, and it is the company that sues the country, and the perpetrator who sues the victim.”

As a result, El Salvador, one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, must spend millions of dollars defending against two expensive lawsuits in Washington, money that otherwise could have gone toward poverty alleviation. This terrible irony makes a change in those investment rules imperative.

# Connectedness:

## **Spotlight on Mining: From El Salvador to West Virginia to Wall Street**

### “Mining for Salvadoran Gold--in Washington”



by Manuel Pérez-Rocha, February 15, 2011

*From SALVANET, the Online Newsletter of CRISP AZ*

Over the past seven years, the country of El Salvador has been engulfed in a new battle: a fight against multi-national mining companies intent on muscling their way into El Salvador by way of the rights granted to them by the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement. Protected by DR-CAFTA, these mining companies, one of them a Milwaukee-based corporation, have taken the government of El Salvador to court for hundreds of millions of dollars because the Central American nation ruled that the companies have polluted their streams and endangered the lives of people living near these gold mines with polluted water. In the past couple years, protestors against the mining interests have been killed as well, marking a new level of violence for El Salvador: a violence associated with corporate avarice.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to travel to Cabañas, El Salvador, to meet with some of the bravest and most successful environmental activists in the world. Ordinary villagers in this remote area of the country have joined with religious groups, research centers, and others to take on the powerful international mining companies that are seeking to plunder their country's gold.

## **Mark 11:15-19**

### *Jesus Clears the Temple*

<sup>15</sup> Then they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; <sup>16</sup> and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup> He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”

<sup>18</sup> And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

<sup>19</sup> And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

## **From Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence" (1967 at Riverside Church)**

"I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. ... Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

... Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor -- both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor

If someday they take the radio station away from us,  
 If they close down our newspaper,  
 If they don't let us speak,  
 If they kill all the priests and the bishop too,  
 And you are left, a people without priests,  
 Each one of you must be God's microphone,  
 Each one of you must be a messenger, a prophet.  
 The church will always exist as long as there is one baptized person.  
 And that one baptized person who is left in the world  
 Is responsible before the world for holding aloft  
 The banner of the Lord's truth and of his divine justice.

- Oscar Arnulfo Romero, July 8, 1979

I am glad, brothers and sisters,  
 That our church is persecuted  
 Precisely for its preferential option for the poor  
 And for trying to become incarnate in the interest of the poor  
 And for saying to all the people  
 To rulers, to the rich and powerful:  
 If you do not become poor,  
 If you do not concern yourselves for the poverty of our people  
 As though they were your own family,  
 You will not be able to save society.

- Oscar Arnulfo Romero, July 15, 1979

# Competence:

In El Salvador, the right-wing powers controlled the major medias of communication, and the poor majorities only had their home battery-power radios. Recognizing this, Romero broadcast weekly Sunday sermons via the archdiocese radio station YSAX. Romero's homilies related scriptural readings to the violence, poverty, and oppression that characterized the Salvadoran life and denounced such injustices.

Aware of the implications of restricted press ownership, Archbishop Oscar Romero also utilized the broadcast as an oral newspaper: every documented case of killing, assault, disappearance, or torture – whether by the left or the right was broadcast. Additionally, the archdiocese office became the publishing house for information bulletins documenting human rights violations, and a source of information counter to the propaganda of the regular media.

Via the air waves, Romero's lengthy Sunday sermons (generally no less than one and a half hours), found a huge and receptive audience across E Salvador – as well as in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Archbishop Oscar Romero's Sunday audience was found to be reaching "73% of the [population in the] countryside and 47% [in] the urban areas" (cited in Pearce 1986: 170).

Such was the power of the YSAX broadcasts that its transmitter or antenna was bombed ten times between 1977 and 1980. E Salvador's foremost business organization, the ANEP, publicly accused the church of provoking unrest and ran a media campaign against the station. Even the Minister of the Interior threatened the directors of the station over its criticisms of the government (Montgomery 1982: 350f; Brockman 1989: 6-28).

(adapted from Dickson, J. (2005) 'Oscar Romero of El Salvador: informal adult education in a context of violence', the encyclopedia of informal education, [www.infed.org/thinkers/oscar\\_romero.htm](http://www.infed.org/thinkers/oscar_romero.htm). )

village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

... We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. In the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

## **From Archbishop Oscar Romero, "The Church in the Service of Liberation: Brothers, Stop the Repression" (March 23, 1980)**

...Today El Salvador is living its own exodus. Today we are passing toward our liberation through a desert strewn with bodies and where anguish and pain are devastating us. Many suffer the temptation of those who walked with Moses, wanting to turn back and did not work together. It is the same old story. God, however, wants to save the people by making a new history. History does not repeat itself even though it is said: "History repeats itself." Indeed, there are certain things that are not repeated, for example, the circumstances and the political and economic situation that we experience here in El Salvador. How varied is our history from one day to another. One is able to leave El Salvador and return the following week and it appears that our history has totally changed. We can no longer judge things the way we used to. But one thing is certain: we are firmly anchored in the heart and the faith of Jesus Christ, the God of history. This does not change. God is delighted to change history and "makes all things new."

...My sisters and brothers, this is the liberation that our Church has to live and preach. This is what we have learned from the Word of God, and therefore as we approach Holy Week, let us build a better Church, a better People of God. At this moment I speak to my dear priests, to the Christian communities, to all those who call themselves Church, to the People of God, to the remnant of believers, and I pray that as this core group of believers we might have the same strength that God gave to Israel --- strength to enlighten and reject all that is evil and strength to encourage all that is good.

...In the context of Lent, all of this is a preparation for our Easter. Easter is itself now a cry of victory. No one can extinguish the life that Christ has resurrected. Neither death nor all the banners of death and hatred that have been raised against him and against his Church can prevail....Today when history offers our people various proposals, we can say with assurance: the plan that best reflects God's plan will prevail. This is the Church's mission. So, in light of

God's Word that reveals God's plan for the happiness of peoples, we have the duty of also pointing out the realities, of seeing how God's plan is reflected among us or despised among us. Let no one be offended that in light of God's Word read in our Mass we illuminate social, political and economic realities. If we did not, this would not be our own Christianity. It is for this reason that Christ willed to become incarnate, so that the light that he brings from the Father might become life for people and for all nations.

...I know that many are scandalized at what I say and charge that it forsakes the preaching of the gospel to meddle in politics. I do not accept that accusation. No, I strive that we may live and interpret this conflict-ridden reality, preaching the gospel as it should be preached for our people. I ask the Lord during the week, while I gather the people's cries and the sorrow stemming from so much crime, the ignominy of so much violence, to give me the right words to console, to denounce, to call to repentance.

...I would like to appeal in a special way to the army's enlisted men, and in particular to the ranks of the Guardia Nacional and the police --- those in the barracks. Brothers: you are of part of our own people. You kill your own campesino brothers and sisters. Before an order to kill that a man may give, God's law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. No one has to fulfill an immoral law. It is time to take back your consciences and to obey your consciences rather than the orders of sin. The Church, defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such abominations. We want the government to understand seriously that reforms are worth nothing if they are stained with so much blood. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!