



SHARE El Salvador

La Fundación SHARE

Remembering the Churchwomen, Continuing their Legacy Today



*35th Anniversary
Commemoration Guide*

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A Letter from SHARE

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your interest in joining SHARE El Salvador as we commemorate the 35th anniversary of the martyrdom of the four U.S. Churchwomen in El Salvador. On December 2, 1980, Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clarke, Ita Ford and Jean Donovan were brutally murdered by the Salvadoran military for their work and dedication to the poor. They dedicated their lives to accompanying the children and families who had fallen victim to the escalating violence and oppression that eventually brought about the civil war. Ita Ford talks about this accompaniment as she writes:

“Am I willing to suffer with the people here, the suffering of the powerless, the feeling impotent? Can I say to my neighbors I have no solutions to this situation; I don’t know the answers, but I will walk with you, search with you, be with you. Can I let myself be evangelized by this opportunity? Can I look at and accept my own poorness as I learn it from the poor ones?”

In 1981, SHARE El Salvador formed as a group of North Americans and Salvadorans dedicated to carrying on the legacy of Dorothy, Maura, Ita and Jean in accompanying the Salvadoran people as the civil war continued. Nearly thirty-five years later, we continue to support the Salvadoran people with a special emphasis on women’s development and empowerment.

On this 35th anniversary, SHARE wishes to commemorate these four women and celebrate their legacy by remembering ALL of the women who dedicated their lives to working for justice in El Salvador and all the women who continue their legacy today such as:

- The women SHARE supports in working for food sovereignty and economic stability in their communities
- The young women leaders who SHARE is helping gain the education, experience, and technical knowledge to organize and improve their communities
- The women SHARE supports in learning the skills to become community and political leaders, helping find equality for the women of El Salvador
- The women working for justice and reparations for all of the disappeared and for human rights across the country.

In the spirit of Jean, Dorothy, Ita and Maura, we raise awareness about injustices against women while partnering with groups working for women’s rights and empowerment, including: The Association for the Development of Chalatenango’s Women’s Program; Pro-Memoria, a coalition of human rights organizations; CODEFAM, the Committee of the Mothers of the Disappeared; and Las Medias, a national grassroots women’s organization that promotes women’s active leadership and participation in politics to advance the rights of women at municipal and national levels.

We hope you will join us in commemorating the four churchwomen, celebrating their legacy and raising awareness about current women’s issues. This packet provides resources to educate, commemorate, and take action. We invite you to use it as best fits your community, church or school.

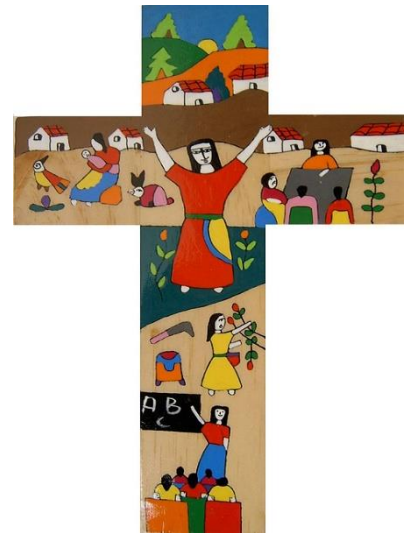
If you have any questions or would like support or accompaniment in planning and carrying out your gathering, please contact Lora Wedge at lora@share-elsalvador.org. Thank you for your commitment to the people of El Salvador.

In solidarity,

SHARE staff

Ideas for Commemorating the Four U.S. Churchwomen and Continuing their Legacy Today

- Plan a Women's Stations of the Cross in your community, church, or school (included on page 17).
- Hold a showing of *Roses in December*, *Justice and the Generals*, or *Return to El Salvador*. Begin the event by showing the SHARE video *Remembering Women* (video links on page 28) and passing out one or all of the reading materials from this packet. End the event by having a collection for SHARE women's projects.
- Set up a table at your church, school or community center, sell baked goods, homemade Christmas ornaments or roses, to raise money for SHARE's women's projects. Pass out reading materials from this packet to all who stop by.
- Make an announcement after your worship service, as part of your school's morning announcements, or in your local newspaper or community newsletter. When possible ask for a moment of silence to remember the four churchwomen and all women in El Salvador and around the world who lived and died for justice.
- Show the *Remembering Women* YouTube video (link on page 28) at the end of your church service or in your classroom. Read the story of the U.S. churchwomen. Hold a moment of silence. Ask the group (size permitting) to say aloud a prayer or intention for a woman they know, or an issue affecting women today.
- Hold a roundtable discussion; read the story of the churchwomen and talk about their legacy. Talk about the issues presenting women today (see pages 23-26), and talk about women's issues in your community. Encourage participants to donate or promote one of SHARE's women's projects.
- Send out an email to friends and family informing them of why this anniversary is important to you. Ask for your family and friends to make a donation to one of SHARE's women's projects in place of a Christmas present.



Biographies of Dorothy, Jean, Ita and Maura

courtesy of Interreligious Task Force of Cleveland

Sr. Dorothy Kazel

Dorothy Kazel was born on June 30, 1939, and joined the Ursuline Sisters, a teaching order in Cleveland, in 1960. Before entering religious life, she was engaged to be married. Feeling called to the life of a religious, she postponed her marriage in order to test her calling. She remained with the Ursulines until her death.

Dorothy taught for seven years in Cleveland and later became involved in ecumenical and interracial community programs in the city. At a 1968 community retreat, another sister remembers Dorothy saying that she wanted to be remembered as “an alleluia from head to foot.”



In 1974 Dorothy joined the diocese of Cleveland’s mission team in El Salvador. The team consisted of nine members working in three parishes. Their main tasks involved visiting the homes of parishioners and preparing people for the sacraments. Her brother James said of Dorothy’s decision, “She wanted to work with the people who didn’t have the advantages of the people in the United States. She wanted to spread the Gospel to people who needed help.”

But by the late 1970’s, the increased repression and political violence was changing the character of the team’s work. Explained Maryknoll priest Stephen T. DeMott, “Dorothy spent more and more time transporting homeless people, especially women and children, to the refugee centers. She wrote home about the corpses that daily were being found along the roadsides and described the mutilations as ‘sick, demonic.’”

Sr. Sheila Marie Tobbe, OSU, a friend and visitor to El Salvador, said of the work of Dorothy and her companion Jean Donovan, “They went to El Salvador, a country named after the Savior of the World, to preach the good news to the poor. They trained catechists, assisted in the formation of Basic Christian Communities, carried out sacramental preparation programs, and oversaw the distribution of Catholic Relief aid and Caritas food supplies.” They were also “engaged in working with refugees: securing food and medical supplies, finding shelters for them, taking the sick and wounded to medical clinics. They were unable to take the wounded to government-sponsored hospitals for fear that these innocent victims would be killed right there in the hospital...In the process of these duties, they fell in love with the beauty and warmth of the Salvadoran people” (reflection, December 14, 1980).

This cruel reality deeply affected Dorothy’s understanding and experience of her own faith as she shared the suffering of the people and accompanied them in their grief and in their hope. In a November 1980 letter, she wrote of El Salvador that it is a country “writhing in pain—a country that daily faces the loss of so many of its people—and yet a country that is waiting, hoping, yearning for peace. The steadfast faith and courage our leaders have to continue preaching the Word of the Lord even though it may mean ‘laying down your life’ in the very REAL sense is always a point of admiration and a vivid realization that JESUS is HERE with us. Yes, we have a sense of waiting, hoping, and yearning for a complete realization of the Kingdom, and yet we know it will come because we can celebrate Him here right now.”

While the danger of the repression was closing in on the mission team, Dorothy and the others wrestled with what they should do. On October 3, she wrote to a friend, “We talked quite a bit today about what happens IF something begins. Most of us feel we would want to stay here...We wouldn’t

want to just run out on the people...I thought I should say this to you because I don't want to say it to anyone else—because I don't think they would understand. Anyway, my beloved friend, just know how I feel and 'treasure it in your heart.' If a day comes when others will have to understand, please explain it for me.”

That same month, Dorothy wrote a letter to Sr. Theresa Kane, a member of the leadership team for the Sisters of Mercy. She was responding to an article she had read about a talk given by Theresa to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. She wrote: “I was especially impressed with what you had to say about the ‘middle class nature of US nuns’ work’—and how important it is to serve the poor and oppressed. I believe that wholeheartedly—that’s why I’m here in El Salvador. I should be coming back to the states next year—it will be then that I face a greater challenge...Within this past year I had been fortunate to meet women theologians...They, along with the little I’ve actually read about you, do give me the hope that the reign of God is making headway—and for this I am grateful. Do continue to be Spirit-filled and challenging. Please keep the people of El Salvador before the Lord as we are literally living in a time of persecution and in need of his strength.”

Dorothy never made it back to the US. On the evening of December 2, 1980, she and Jean Donovan got into their van and drove to the airport outside San Salvador to pick up the Maryknoll Sisters returning from their regional assembly in Managua.

Jean Donovan

Jean Donovan, the youngest of the four church women killed on December 2, 1980, was born on April 10, 1953. She was the younger of two children and raised in an upper-middle class family in Westport, Connecticut. Her father, Raymond, was an executive engineer, and later chief of design, at the nearby Sikorsky Aircraft Division of the United Technologies, a large defense contractor for the US and manufacturer of helicopters used in the Vietnam War.



Jean was very close to her brother Michael and was deeply affected when he was struck with Hodgkins disease, from which he made a complete recovery. The experience of the disease and his courageous battle to conquer it left a strong impression on Jean and, as she said later, gave her a deeper sense of the preciousness of life.

Jean received a master’s degree in business administration from Case Western Reserve University, then took a job as management consultant for an accounting firm in Cleveland. She was on her way to a successful business career.

Not the shy or withdrawn type, Jean was described by friends as outgoing, a “driver,” a “joker,” who often did outrageous things to get attention. Her mother, Patricia, described her as “a gutsy, loving, caring person.” She loved riding her motorcycle and was once known for pouring scotch, her drink of choice, over her cereal in the morning. Her spirit and generosity drew loyal friends who later were left to grapple with the choices Jean made.

But Jean was not content and began a search for some deeper meaning in life. While volunteering in the Cleveland Diocese Youth Ministry with the poor, she heard about the diocesan mission project in El Salvador. It was what she was looking for.

Jean attributed her decision to “a gut feeling,” and said “I want to get closer to Him, and that’s the only way I think I can.”

The director of the mission program, Maryknoll Sister Mary Anne O'Donnell, described Jean as intelligent, loving and apostolic and believed that, despite (or because of?) her fun-loving, hard-living ways, she had the signs of being a good missionary.

Jean had also been much affected by time she had spent in Ireland as an exchange student, where a priest who befriended her, Fr. Michael Crowley, a former missionary in Peru, introduced her to a different world, a world of the poor and a life of faith committed to a more radical following of the example of Jesus of Nazareth. Jean was haunted by what she experienced there, and this brought her to question the values of her own life.

After her training, including a stint at Maryknoll, Jean arrived in El Salvador in July 1979, a time when the repression was intensifying and the church had become a major target. She became Caritas coordinator for the diocesan mission program. In addition to keeping the books, she worked in La Libertad with Dorothy Kazel, distributing food for the poor and the refugees and carrying out family education programs. Her mother Patricia said of her work, "Jean took her commitment to the *campesinos* very seriously. She was strongly motivated by St. Francis of Assisi and by Archbishop Oscar Romero. She translated God's teachings into clothing for the poor, feeding the hungry, and caring for the wounded refugees—mainly children—who had lost what little they had..."

As for the people of La Libertad, they loved Jean Donovan and dubbed her, "St. Jean the Playful."

Jean was very devoted to Msgr. Romero, often coming to the cathedral on Sundays to hear his homilies which at that time were the only source of news and truth left in El Salvador. After his assassination, Jean and Dorothy were among those who took turns keeping vigil at his coffin. And they were present in the cathedral when the overflow crowd in the plaza attending his funeral on March 30, 1980, was attacked by security forces, resulting in a panicked stampede. The massacre left 44 dead and hundreds of wounded. As Jean sat crowded among the desperate people who fled into the cathedral for safety, she fully believed that she might die that day.

The repression touched her in other very personal ways. Friends were killed by death squads. She witnessed one such killing.

In the fall of 1980 Jean took a break from this tense reality to attend the wedding of a friend in Ireland. There she was reunited for a time with her fiancé, Dr. Douglas Cable. Many of her friends tried to persuade her to leave El Salvador, but she comforted them with the quip, "They don't kill blond-haired, blue-eyed North Americans."

In fact, she and Dorothy often used their very visible presence to accompany people in danger, or to get supplies into areas not accessible to others. They became a well-known sight, driving along the country-side in their mission van.

As the violence engulfed the country, Jean felt the personal challenge of trying to cope, to understand what was happening. It tested her faith. "I think that the hardship one endures maybe is God's way of taking you out into the desert and to prepare you to meet and love him more fully."

And while she had been a loyal patriotic Republican, she also saw the direct connection between the violence in El Salvador and the policies of the US. Ronald Reagan won the presidential election in November 1980 promising a strong stand against "Communism." The Salvadoran government got the message.

Wrote Patricia, "Things grew progressively worse in El Salvador after the United States election...The military believed they were given a blank check—no restrictions. In light of what happened, who's to say they weren't? Jean had told us that she feared there would be a bloodbath in El Salvador."

Two weeks before she was murdered, with the bloodbath already begun, she wrote to a friend in Connecticut: "Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could except for the children, the poor bruised victims of this insanity. Who would care for them? Whose heart would be so staunch as to favor the reasonable thing in a sea of their tears and helplessness. Not mine, dear friend, not mine."

For the family of Jean Donovan, her death was an indescribable blow. When she had first told them she was going to El Salvador, they had to pull out a map to find out where it was. Now they had lost their only daughter in this tiny country that had become a major focus of US foreign policy.

But Jean's death was not the only blow; following her death they had to deal with what for them became the betrayal by the very government they thought embodied values of justice and political good. As they approached the State Department for information, they were treated coolly, then with hostility. Eventually they were told to stop bothering State Department officials. In April 1981, at a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, all but one Republican Senator left the room when Michael appeared to testify.

The final insult came when the Donovans received a bill from the State Department for \$3,500 for the return of Jean's body to the US.

The scandal of the way the US government treated this case, including Reagan administration officials accusing the women of "running a roadblock," of engaging in "an exchange of fire," of being "not just nuns...but political activists," enraged the Donovans and other families of the women.

As levels of US military aid escalated, Jean's mother wrote, "Jean deserves, at the very least, that her native land not reward her killers."

The head of the National Guard, whose troops were responsible for the murders, Gen. Eugenio Vides Casanova, went on to become Minister of Defense under the "democratic" government of José Napoleon Duarte (1984-89).

Jean's time in El Salvador led her to those fundamental challenges of the meaning of life, of faith, in a world torn by injustice and violence against the poorest, the most vulnerable. It was a personal challenge.

"I'm 26 years old. I should be married. I shouldn't be running around doing all of these things. But then I think, I've got so many things I want to do. It's hard when I see my friends getting married and having babies, that's something I've thought about...am I ever going to have kids? Sometimes I wonder if I'm denying that to myself. I really don't want to, but that's maybe what I'm doing. And then I sit there and talk to God and say, why are you doing this to me? Why can't I just be your little suburban housewife? He hasn't answered yet."

Sr. Ita Ford

Ita Ford was born in Brooklyn, New York on April 23, 1940. After college at Marymount, she joined the Maryknoll Sisters in 1961. Health problems forced her to leave after three years. This was a difficult personal trial for Ita as she saw her plans for her life derailed.

However, after seven years working as an editor for a publishing company, she reapplied in 1971 and was accepted. In 1973 she was assigned to Chile, arriving there only a few months before the September 11, 1973, US-backed military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende.



The following years were bitter ones for Chile. Thousands of people, suspected government opponents, were rounded up and killed or disappeared. Thousands more endured torture and imprisonment. Ita lived in a poor shantytown of Santiago with Sr. Carla Piette. There the sisters ministered to the needs of the people during the time of repression, fear, and increased misery for the poor.

Her years in Chile had a profound impact on Ita. In 1977, coping with feelings of inadequacy in the face of the harsh reality, she wrote, “Am I willing to suffer with the people here, the suffering of the powerless, the feeling impotent? Can I say to my neighbors—I have no solutions to this situation; I don’t know the answers, but I will walk with you, search with you, be with you. Can I let myself be evangelized by this opportunity? Can I look at and accept my own poorness as I learn it from the poor ones?”

But even in the midst of this anguished searching, Ita was known for her lively and generous spirit. Maryknoll friends said of her, “Ita’s buoyant personality, her wit, her sense of humor and fun were striking contrast to the suffering and pain she experienced throughout her life. Her twinkling eyes and elfin grin would surface irrepressibly even in the midst of poverty and sorrow.”

In 1980 Ita and Carla responded to a call for help from El Salvador’s Archbishop Oscar Romero. While they were en route to their new mission, they learned of Romero’s assassination, March 24, 1980. They entered into the martyred church of El Salvador.

In June of that year, the two sisters began working with the Emergency Refugee Committee in Chalatenango. In this work Ita saw first-hand the Salvadoran reality, working with the homeless, the persecuted, the victims of savage repression and counterinsurgency war, the violence of a military dictatorship determined to wipe out any trace of opposition with incredible ruthlessness.

Ita and Carla wrote to Maryknoll President Melinda Roper, “Since the death of Monsignor Romero the news coverage on Salvador has declined to almost nothing. The Committee fears that decisive action will be taken by our [US] government under the guise of ‘stopping communism’—and that all of Central America will be involved if it happens. It’s a heavy scene—but if we have a preferential option for the poor as well as a commitment for justice as a basis for the coming of the Kingdom, we’re going to have to take sides in El Salvador—correction—we have.”

On August 23 Carla and Ita took their jeep to pick up a political prisoner and take him home—a service they often performed for those whose lives were threatened with violence. On the way back from his house, they were caught in a flash flood as they were crossing a river. Carla pushed Ita out a window. As the rampaging water carried her downstream, Ita remembered praying, “Receive me, Lord, I’m coming.” Finally she managed to grab onto a branch and pull herself to the river bank.

Carla's body was found the next morning. For Ita the impact of the loss of her dearest friend was profound, and left her with the question of why she had been spared. A catechist working with Basic Christian Communities, Hna. Noemí Ortiz, spoke of visiting Ita after the tragedy.

"After we rescued Ita from the waters, I remember Ita [lying] on the bed and we were all around her, and she was sharing the following with us. She said that Carla had just written a letter to a friend saying, 'I do feel, and today I can say, now I have a heart of flesh.' And Ita said, 'You're right, we do have hearts of flesh now. The Salvadoran people have converted us?'"

Following Carla's death, Sr. Maura Clarke, already in El Salvador to explore the possibility of working there, became Ita's new partner in the refugee work in Chalatenango.

Maura was a great personal support for Ita, and Maura said of her new colleague, "Ita is a powerful example, a blessing to be with her."

But real healing came for Ita at a five-day regional assembly of Maryknoll Sisters which took place on the Thanksgiving weekend. It was there that friends said they saw her old spirit returning.

At the closing liturgy on December 1, Ita read a passage from one of Romero's final homilies: "Christ invites us not to fear persecution because, believe me, brothers and sisters, the one who is committed to the poor must run the same fate as the poor, and in El Salvador we know what the fate of the poor signifies: to disappear, be tortured, to be held captive—and to be found dead."

The following day, December 2, 1980, she and Maura boarded a plane to return to El Salvador.

Sr. Maura Clarke

Maura Clarke was born on January 13, 1931, and lived in Queens, New York. She joined Maryknoll in 1950. In 1959 she was sent to Nicaragua where she taught school and did pastoral work in a Capuchin parish in Siuna, a remote city in eastern Nicaragua.

In the early 1970's she was working in a parish in the capital city of Managua and was there at the time of the devastating earthquake of 1972. Managua was hit hard; an estimated 10-20,000 people were killed. Trapped on an upper floor of the parish house, the Maryknoll Sisters climbed down through a window with a rope of sheets and immediately began ministering to the wounded and digging out the bodies of the dead.



Friends said of Maura, "She was outstanding in her generosity...She would give whatever she had to the poor. She was accustomed to living in poverty." Others said she was "supportive...always saw the good in others...was very gentle...could always make those whose lives she touched feel loved." In Nicaragua, she was known by the people as "the angel of our land."

In 1977 Maura returned to the US to take her turn doing the work of mission and vocation promotion. Traveling in various parts of the country with the Maryknoll Sisters World Awareness Team, she once said of this task, "I see in this work a channel for awakening real concern for the victims of injustice in today's world; a means to work for change, and to share...deep concern for the sufferings of the poor and marginalized, the non-persons of our human family."

Maura was not in Nicaragua for the July 19, 1979, fall of the Somoza dictatorship, but she greeted the news with joy. After 20 years in the country, she knew only too well the full impact of a military dictatorship on the lives of the people. And she saw with her own eyes how the international relief that

came into the country after the earthquake ended up in the pockets of the dictator, his family and friends among the elite. Meanwhile, the lives of the poor, especially in the devastated capital, became more desperate.

She returned for a visit in 1980, in time for the first anniversary celebration of the victory. She was described as “bubbling with joy” at the spirit she found upon her return, a spirit of incredible relief, of hope and freedom after the 45-year Somoza dynasty. And she was happy to be back with her friends of 20 long years.

But Maura had also been pondering the appeal of Archbishop Romero for help in El Salvador. On August 5, just two and a half weeks before the death of Sr. Carla Piette, Maura Clark went to El Salvador to explore the possibility of working there. It was a hard decision—to leave behind 20 years of relationships in Nicaragua at such an exciting moment in its history, and to take on the human and pastoral challenge of El Salvador in a time of persecution. After Carla’s death on August 23 Maura decided to take her place working at Ita’s side.

She was quickly immersed in the emergency work among the victims of the repression. “We have the refugees, women and children, outside our door and some of their stories are incredible. What is happening here is all so impossible, but happening. The endurance of the poor and their faith through this terrible pain is constantly pulling me to a deeper faith response.”

The days were often difficult and the internal struggle radically challenging. “My fear of death is being challenged constantly as children, lovely young girls, old people are being shot and some cut up with machetes and bodies thrown by the road and people prohibited from burying them. A loving Father must have a new life of unimaginable joy and peace prepared for these precious unknown, uncelebrated martyrs.

“One cries out: Lord how long? And then too what creeps into my mind is the little fear, or big, that when it touches me very personally, will I be faithful?”

Maura decided she would stay in El Salvador. She and Ita, and two other Maryknoll Sisters working in El Salvador, travelled in November to Nicaragua for the regional assembly. It was there that Maura affirmed her commitment before all the Maryknoll Sisters of the Central America region. She said she would remain in El Salvador, “to search out the missing, pray with the families of prisoners, bury the dead, and work with the people in their struggle to break out of the bonds of oppression, poverty, and violence” (words written by friends of Maura). She told them the days would be difficult and dangerous, but assured the other sisters of her “certain confidence in God’s loving care of her, Ita, and all the people.”

“I want to stay on now,” she wrote. “I believe now that this is right...Here I am starting from scratch but it must be His plan and He is teaching me and there is real peace in spite of many frustrations and the terror around us and the work, etc. God is very present in His seeming absence.” The day following the assembly, Maura gave her all, even her very life, for the people of El Salvador.

El Salvador: Past and Present

Originally populated by the Pipil and Lenca Indians, El Salvador was colonized by the Spanish over five hundred years ago. In the centuries that followed, a small land-owning elite held control of the country while the large majority of peasants, or campesinos, worked in deplorable conditions to harvest the major national crops of indigo, coffee and sugarcane. In 1932, a group of indigenous peasants revolted in a quest to gain the right to own land and were brutally massacred by the new military-run government, which almost completely wiped out indigenous culture. In the 1970's, rural peasants, labor unions, teachers, and student groups began to organize once again to demand their rights through regime after regime of military governments. The violent oppression that followed led to a twelve-year civil war from 1980-1992 between the FMLN guerrilla forces and the Salvadoran military, which the U.S. supported with an average of a million dollars a day over the course of the war. During the civil war, over 75,000 Salvadorans lost their lives.



After the signing of the peace accords in 1992, the FMLN was transformed into a political party and the former security forces were dissolved, and a new National Civilian Police force was created. Thousands of refugees returned to their homes or to newly populated communities to begin to rebuild their lives. For twenty years, the far right-wing party ARENA ran the country, creating neo-liberal policies

that negatively impacted the majority of the Salvadoran population. Immigration to the United States increased with an estimated three million Salvadorans living in the United States to date; in 1990 there were only half a million.



Gang violence also increased as large numbers of Salvadoran immigrants who had fled during the war joined the Los Angeles gangs, the 18th Street and MS-13. With change in U.S. deportation law, many gang members were deported back to post-war El Salvador where they spread their gangs and territories. Now they have established a whole network involved in violent and criminal activity. Government response to the gang violence was a harsh crackdown on Salvadoran youth, especially those living in

poor urban communities. A gang truce was signed in early 2012, dropping the levels of violence but then dissolved in early 2014. In August of 2014, the gangs reinstated the second phase of the gang truce, promising to reduce threats and violence.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) signed with the United States in 2005 opened the door for U.S. companies to flood the Salvadoran market with less expensive goods, increasing the agricultural crisis and deepening rural poverty.

Intense environmental degradation began with the deforestation of El Salvador under Spanish rule and continues today, particularly through contamination by foreign transnationals, including mining companies. Community resistance to mining has been met with violence, particularly in the rural department of Cabañas.

International mining company Pacific Rim (now Oceana Gold) has opened a \$301 million lawsuit against the Salvadoran government for not granting them permits to begin gold extraction.

Working for women's rights and empowerment also continues to be a challenge. The Salvadoran women's movement won a major victory on November 25th, 2010 with the unanimous passage of the Law for a Life Free of Violence Against Women.



Despite many challenges, Salvadorans “siguen adelante” or continue forward with great dedication and hope. In 2009, Mauricio Funes took office to become the first leftist president of El Salvador. The peaceful transition of power in 2009 was huge for Salvadoran society, as one of the contributing factors to the war was that people could not create change through elections due to blatant fraud. Since the 1992 Peace Accords, elections have only become increasingly transparent and democratic, through numerous reforms, and in part with presence from national and international observers. This was seen as a great achievement for the Salvadoran people, but the struggle for justice continues on, as not everything can be changed with a new party in office.

Funes implemented a number of social reforms, designed to combat inequality. Such programs include abolishing public healthcare fees, the Ciudad Mujer program (providing services to women), and distributing property titles to many families.

Again in 2014, the left won the presidency after a run-off election with former guerrilla commander Salvador Sánchez Cerén as president. He attributes his search for social justice and improving communities to his humble roots. He was a primary school teacher for ten years. During the war, he was appointed to the position of a Commander in the FMLN. Since the Peace Accords, he has worked the formal political sphere, and was sworn in as Vice-President in 2009. Sánchez Cerén has stated that the “three pillars” of his administration are employment, security, and education. Among his proposals for increasing employment include sponsoring a public development bank and the promotion of important industries. He also proposes to increase funding for police technologies, as well as promote anti-drug abuse campaigns, and training community peace officers. He has expressed his desire for alternative development models (such as those seen in left-wing governments in South America). His Vice-President is Oscar Ortiz, the exceedingly popular former mayor of Santa Tecla.



The spirits of civil war martyrs Oscar Romero, the four churchwomen, and Elba, Selina and the UCA Jesuits and countless others live on through the Salvadoran people as they struggle for a more just world.

Quotes for Reflection

“Preach the gospel every day; if necessary, use words.” ~ St. Francis of Assisi

“We must practice the presence of God. He said that when two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst of them. He is with us in our kitchens, at our tables, in our breadlines, with our visitors, on our farms. When we pray for our material needs, it brings us closer to His humanity. He, too, needed food and shelter. He, too, warmed His hands at a fire and lay down in a boat to sleep. When we have spiritual reading at meals, when we pray the Rosary at night, when we have study groups, forums...Christ is there with us. What we do is very little. But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the rest. What we do is so little we may seem to be constantly failing. But so did He fail. He met with apparent failure on the Cross. But unless the seed fall into the Earth and die, there is no harvest. And why must we see results? Our work is to sow. Another generation will be reaping the harvest.” ~ Dorothy Day

“When you pray, move your feet.” ~ African proverb

“The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?” ~ Dorothy Day

“So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other [people] and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed—but hate these things in yourself, not in another.” ~ Thomas Merton



Prayers for Reflection

Prayer for a Globalization of Solidarity

Awesome God of the expanding immensity of cosmic time and space,
Intimate God, at home in each human heart,
Energizing, Organizing God, drawing us together into global Solidarity,

Yaweh,
Allah,
Bra h man,
God of many names,
God of no name,
Abba,
Father Mother,
we thank You and we praise You
for the inspiration and human creativity
through which You are weaving us together
through communications and travel, social
movements and expanding consciousness
into one planetary web of Life,
one stunning revelation of Your Creativity and
Love.

Awesome
Intimate
Unifying
God,
we beg Your forgiveness
for every time,
for every way
that we let our small glimpses of Your
Immensity
swell our smallness into arrogance,
dividing us from our sisters and brothers in
whose hearts You dwell
through Other images, experiences, cultures,
revelations,
Longing for the Fullness
that only our Oneness can reveal.

We ask you to break us free
as gently as You can . . .
but as forcefully as we demand
from the unconscious/conscious idolatry
of wealth and “free markets” and individualism
and competition and consumption
that blind us to the rich complexity of Your
Presence,
that reduce our sisters and brothers
--and us--

to consumers or producers, competitors or
markets in our service.

Break the enduring chains
of slavery and colonialism
that have set our lives on such vastly diverging
paths of wealth and poverty.

Turn those paths toward each other into
Your True Path
to Fullness and Unity.

Purge us of whatever it is within us
that turns our eyes away from Your crucifixion-
by-poverty
in nearly three billion of
our sisters and brothers,
that allows us to starve Your Revealing and
Unifying Love
in 800 million of
our sisters and brothers,
that allows us to plunder our planet,
uncaring of our children’s children,
careless of the Sacredness it displays.

Yahweh,
Allah,
Bra h man,
God of many names,
God of no name,
Abba,
Mother Father,
alert us to
Your Sacred Presence,
Your Urgency,
Your Tireless Struggle
within each of us in our uniqueness,
in all of us in our infinite diversity,
through all the forces drawing us together into
one global village.



Fill us with as much awe and joy at Your
Presence in our sisters and brothers,
with as much energy and passion to work with
You
as we can bear

that we all may be
One in You
and

You

may be glorified in us.

Amen.

Alleluia.

~ James E. Hug, S.J.



A Prayer for Social Justice

God, we pray that Your Spirit may rule over all things.

May Your Spirit rule over kings and presidents
over prime ministers and generals
over CEOs and party bosses
over the legislature and over the bureaucrats
over all citizens.

May Your Spirit guide us on the way of peace
on the way of honest dialogue
on the way of reconciliation between peoples
on the way of disarmament and justice
on the way of freedom and life for all.

May Your Spirit lead us on the journey of blessings shared with all.
on the journey of educational opportunity for all our children.
on the adventure of research and study that helps all men and women.
on the road to meaningful work for all people.
on the path of solidarity and love between all our brothers and sisters.

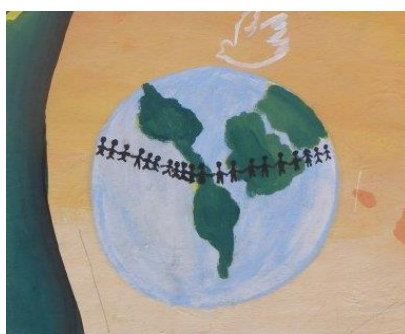
May Your Spirit help us
to speak up with courage
to share what we have and what we are
to challenge the powers that be
to offer a message of liberation and life.

We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Roses in December Reflection Activity

Watch the PBS special on Jean Donovan with your group then use these questions to promote discussion and reflection in your group:

1. What impressions of Jean Donovan do you have after viewing this movie?
2. What were your impressions of the other three women?
3. Why did the United States support the government of El Salvador?
4. Why would a woman of Jean's economic means and background choose to be a missionary?
5. How do you see her changing during the time she was in El Salvador?
6. Why did she choose to stay in El Salvador at a time when violence and repression were increasing in the country?
7. Why are we celebrating the lives of Jean and the three religious women, Ita, Dorothy, and Maura? What do they teach us today?
8. What Gospel story or teaching of Jesus comes to your mind as you think about these women?



Churchwomen Biographies Reflection Activity

Read the biographies of the four U.S. Churchwomen on the first few pages and use these questions to promote discussion and reflection among your group:

1. These women are called the North American Women Martyrs. Where were they from in the United States? What ministry did they do while in the United States?
2. Why did they go to El Salvador? What was their ministry in El Salvador?
3. What was El Salvador like when the women worked there? How did they assist the people? How did they pray? How did their work and their prayer give them strength to minister to the people?
4. Which of the women's stories most stood out to you? Why?
5. Who were the poor of El Salvador in 1980? Who are the poor of El Salvador today?
6. Why are we celebrating the North American Women Martyrs today?

Women and World Suffering Stations of the Cross

Opening Prayer

We gather here today to remember the suffering of Jesus as he was crucified and to remember the suffering of women in El Salvador in the past and present. We specifically remember Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, and Jean Donovan who dedicated their lives to assuage the suffering of others and for this were brutally murdered by Salvadoran death squads, thirty-five years ago on December 2, 1980. We pray for all those who suffer as Jesus suffered, and recognized that as long as suffering exists for the poor around the world and for all those who are oppressed, especially women, the crucifixion continues. May we open our eyes to the pain of others and commit to be present and aware of all the worlds suffering and hold it in our hearts.

+ Jesus is condemned to death +

Washing his hands of innocent blood Pilate condemns Jesus to death.

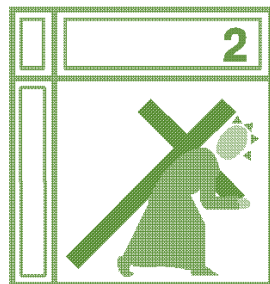
World leaders wash their hands of innocent blood: the US government did not want to take any blame for the deaths of Maura, Dorothy, Jean and Ita. After the civil war an Amnesty Law was put into place protecting war criminals from prosecution for the crimes they committed. Justice was not served for victims like the four churchwomen, Silvia Arriola, Celina and Elba Ramos, Marianela Garcia and Laura Lopez. Impunity still exists in El Salvador in cases such as the death of Dora Alicia Sorto, pregnant mother who fought in the anti-mining struggle and was killed by a masked gunman in December 2009.

Lord, forgive your people. Bring those who have died into the light of your presence; enfold them in your eternal mercy and love.

+ Jesus receives the Cross +

Taking upon himself the burden of unwarranted suffering Jesus shares the lot of all those who are overburdened.

So many women in El Salvador were already burdened with poverty, illness and sexism and now have the burdens of fear of death or severe injury, fear of what will happen to loved ones, what will happen to their future.



Lord, you share the burdens of those who are overwhelmed by fear and anguish of heart. Show us ways in which we can share their burden to be in solidarity with them, our sisters and brothers.

+ Jesus falls for the first time +

The burden of the cross becomes too great and Jesus falls.

People scabbling for food, but not strong enough to get to the front of the line. They are pushed aside, the children, the weak, the frail, the elderly. They fall and the food disappears into the hands of the strong or those who will sell it to them at extortionate prices. Their strength is further sapped, their weakness increases; in the dust they despair.

In El Salvador, the wealthy control and regulate food production. Trade treaties like CAFTA work against the poor and small farmers are unable to compete. They fall behind as prices of corn, beans and vegetables soar. This past year families had no food. No corn to make tortillas. They tried to make tortillas out of genetically modified corn that that given to them for planting. The chemicals in the corn poisoned the family and two of the small children died. The rest were hospitalized. Meanwhile expensive restaurants and fancy shopping malls continue to be built in nice parts of San Salvador, for the small elite who can afford it.

Lord, our brothers and sisters fall, too weak to stand up to the strong. Help us to support them through the work of agencies who can work alongside, protecting the weak raising the lowly.

+ Jesus meets his mother +

Where else can a mother be? Drawn to the suffering of her child, Mary meets her son.

So many mothers in El Salvador have watched their children die from past and present violence, from hunger, and from sickness that they are unable to treat do to lack of resources. We remember mothers like Madre Alicia Garcia whose children were disappeared and tortured during the Civil War and went on to help form Comadres, an organization dedicated to reaching out to victims of forced disappearances and their families.

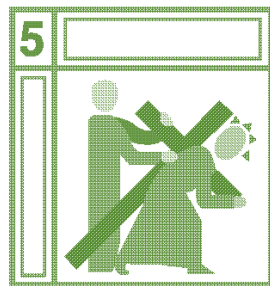
Lord, you looked into the eyes of your mother and saw how your suffering increased the anguish of her heart. Yet she would not leave you; she would not abandon you. May her mother's heart reach out in love to all the mothers whose hearts are broken or filled with fear for their children.

+ Simon of Cyrene helps to carry the cross +

Seeing Jesus' increasing weakness Simon of Cyrene is pressed into helping to carry the cross.

A man in the crowd, who did not even know Jesus, shared his burden. Dorothy, Maura, Jean and Ita were not from El Salvador, but they took up the cross of the Salvadoran people and helped shoulder the burden of suffering by providing love and care to the victims of war. They eventually made the ultimate sacrifice for helping to carry the cross of the Salvadorans and became victims as well.

Lord, you needed the strength of another to share an intolerable burden. Blessed are those, like the four churchwomen, who are sharing the intolerable burdens of others. Strengthen their sense of love and determination as they seek liberation together.

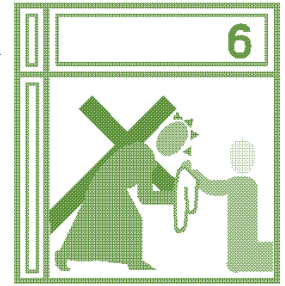


+ Veronica wipes the face of Jesus +

A woman overwhelmed with pity comes from the crowd and wipes the face of Jesus.

Like Veronica, the women of the Pequeña Comunidad in El Salvador have dedicated their lives to reaching out to those who suffer. During the war they were not afraid to be seen and to stand alongside the victims of oppression, even becoming victims themselves. Today they still work with the marginalized in society and speak out against injustices.

Lord, the tenderness of Veronica's gesture, simple and loving, reflected in countless simple gestures of loving service. Bless those who show the courage to come forward and be seen. Protect them as they show mercy and compassion for your people.



+ Jesus falls the second time +

The burden of the cross again overwhelms Jesus and he falls a second time.

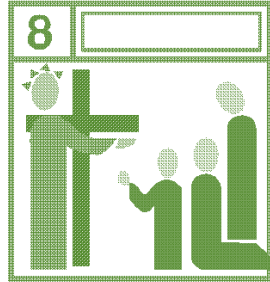
How often can we pick ourselves up and start again. An unjust economic system leaves families all of El Salvador unable to meet the basic needs of their families. Mothers and fathers, daughters and sons leave to go north to the United States in search of work, but many do not make it or fall slave to the hands of human traffickers. Women are especially vulnerable to the threat of human trafficking, often drawn in by promises of big salaries and glamorous work, they find themselves in situations of modern day slavery as household servants, manual laborers or as sex slaves.

Lord, the people victims of human trafficking are bruised and battered and some are without hope. Help them to escape their situations. Help us to speak out against their situations. Help us all to work for a better system in which families can support themselves economically and are not forced to migrate.

+ The women mourn for Jesus +

Mourning, weeping, wailing, keening—the sound of grief that filled homes, streets, hospitals, and bomb-sites during the civil war and still does today as violence in El Salvador persists.

Madre Guadalupe from CODEFAM stands by the Memorial Wall in Parque Cuscatlan and tells the story of how her husband and children were



disappeared. When her husband was killed and his body was laid out in public, she had to pretend she didn't know him in order to save her life. She also dedicated her life to working with families who lost loved ones, and still works with them today.

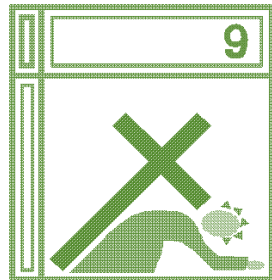
Lord, you told the women of Jerusalem to weep not for you but for themselves and their children in Jerusalem, in El Salvador, in Haiti, in Syria, in so many places, and now they do. Words spoken here cannot bring consolation, but take our love and our prayer, add it to your own, and let the little we can offer, be of some comfort and support to those left distraught and broken.

+ Jesus falls for the third time +

Weakened beyond endurance, Jesus falls for the third time.

There will be some who will be overcome with despair, whose souls are ground down into the dust, for whom the prospect of rising to new challenges is beyond their strength, beyond wildest hopes.

Many women today are afraid to speak out, afraid to raise their voice. Afraid of those who oppress them. They have been told countless times that they are useless, that they are less, that they have no power, and they believe it.



Lord, you know the depths of utter fatigue, the sense of utter failure. Infuse your love and hope into the hearts of those who despair of beginning again, for whom future happiness is glimpsed only through the awareness of pain yet to come. Help us too to believe that we can make a difference, when all seems darkness, despair, and repeated failure.

+ Jesus is stripped of his clothing +

Jesus' clothing is taken and he stands naked before the crowd.

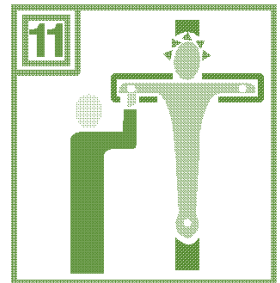
Shame and humiliation, just like Jesus endured is suffered by women who are victims of sexual abuse in this country. In El Salvador, 40% of women assassinated are sexually abused before death. Their bodies are often found in the doorway of their homes or in public places, as if the perpetrator wanted the act to be public. The majority of female victims' bodies bear marks of torture, and messages such as "whore" chiseled into the skin.

Lord, many women stand naked before the world's gaze. Let that gaze be compassionate; may their suffering evoke in us a desire to ease their suffering and the will to fight for justice for all victims.

+ Jesus is nailed to the cross +

Nails pressed through his hands, hold Jesus to the cross.

Stories of great cruelty inflicted on rivals—torture, rape and random killings of those who disagreed, those who raised their voices. Survivors living with deep, cruel scars, minds haunted by memories too fearful to share. Nails driven through minds and hearts, pinning them to terror, to fear, to despair.



Lord, we cannot begin to imagine the pain you endured but your pain makes your compassion real for those who have suffered unimaginable agony. Pour your healing love over them. Give them a sense of security so that the wounds inflicted on body, mind and spirit can slowly be healed and, like yours, become signs of glory, of witness to the triumph of healing.

+ Jesus dies on the cross +

Jesus takes his last breath and dies.

So many deaths—some swift and unexpected, some slow and lingering. Death, no respecter of age killing the elderly and frail, young mothers and children, those who fight for peace and justice, those who paid the ultimate price for speaking out.

Lord, death feels final. Sudden death leaves us stunned and reeling, our hearts bleed for those who suffer. We entrust the souls of all who have died in war to you. We ask you, who walked through the veil of death, to be there to meet them and lead them home.

+ Jesus is taken down from the cross +

Jesus is gathered up in the arms of Mary.

A mother holding her dead child. Friends standing in disbelief that the one they have loved has died. Long moments of weeping, sighing, longing to bring them back to life, but not to the suffering, never back to the suffering. The communities who were affected by losses of Dorothy, Jean, Ita, Maura and Silvia Arriola. Mothers like Guadalupe Mejia and Alicia Garcia who mourned the loss of their children, brutally murdered by Salvadoran death squads. Families like those of Dora Alicia Sorto, who mourn the loss of their mother, victim of the anti-mining struggle. Countless mothers in El Salvador who cry in disbelief that their children fell victim to the current violence of the gangs and human traffickers. Countless children, whose mothers were violently murdered by boyfriends and spouses. We hold their suffering in our hearts, just as we hold our own suffering.



Lord, we grieve for those moments of loss, as the reality that the one we love is no longer there. The hand we touch is cold, the heart is still. May those who mourn find comfort in the love of family and friends. May the love of your mother who held you in her arms bring them comfort. May our compassion transcend the distance that separates us and in the solidarity of humanity touch their souls with our love.

+ Jesus is placed in the tomb +

Jesus is taken to the tomb.

The final glimpse of the one who has been so loved. A last touch, and then, the end. A hasty burial with mourners. The moment when death becomes reality, the moment of parting, the moment of walking away to try to pick up the pieces and rebuild a life.

The day after Jean, Dorothy, Ita and Maura were raped and killed, their bodies were found by campesinos in the area. Local authorities instructed that the bodies be buried in shallow, common grave in a field. However, after burying the bodies, campesinos contacted the parish priest, and the local Bishop was soon informed. On December 4th, the bodies were exhumed in front of reporters, peasants and the US Ambassador, while Sisters Alexander and Dorsey prayed in front of the graves.

Lord, so many people are standing by gravesides wondering how to rebuild life without the one they love. May they find hope in the midst of their grief, a conviction that their loved one did not die in vain, and that they are safe, free from pain and fear, at rest in God for ever.

+ Awaiting resurrection +

In the rubble and carnage of war, in the senseless deaths of the Four Churchwomen and countless other Salvadoran martyrs—what hope can we find? In the suffering and despair of humanity, in the increasing number of femicides and violence in places like El Salvador how can we believe in the future? In the face of death how can we believe in resurrection?

Lord, at times like these our faith can be tested to the full. We share the desolation of people torn apart by suffering and wonder whether life really is stronger than death. Yet you have walked through death to new life—your family and friends bore witness to your resurrection. We trust your word and their witness and look to the future, confident in your way.

Modified from:

http://www.wellsprings.org.uk/liturgies/way_in_war.htm

Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Martyrdoms of the Four North American Churchwomen

by Sheila Marie Tobbe, OSU

A reflection from the 25th anniversary that is still speaks to us today

“I made my first trip to El Salvador in December of 1979 to visit my friend, Dorothy Kazel, and there I met her newly-arrived missionary companion Jean Donovan. It was a journey that transformed the way that I read the Word of God and understand the Church.” I wrote these words 25 years ago—just a few days after the martyrdoms of Jean and Dorothy—as the introduction to a reflection, entitled “Beatitude Women”. It described how Dorothy and Jean lived the Works of Mercy in the spirit of the Beatitudes and how their compassionate actions of caring for the needs of refugees, training leaders, and teaching basic literacy skills were seen as “subversive,” not only by the Salvadoran military who assassinated them on Dec. 2, 1980, (along with Ita Ford and Maura Clark, Maryknoll sisters from New York), but also by high-ranking officials in the USA. This reflection spoke too of the parents of Jean and Dorothy who sacrificed their only daughters and were the “blessed ones who mourn and know God’s consolations.” It also noted that we, those left behind, are challenged by our martyrs’ lives and heroic deaths “to hunger and thirst for justice.” We keep their memories alive as holy women who witnessed to meekness, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking as they cared for the oppressed and victimized, seeking justice for the campesinos of El Salvador.

Twenty-five years later this same challenge, “to live the Works of Mercy in the spirit of the Beatitudes,” continues to call us to faithfulness. We honor our beloved martyrs, as well as the many thousands more throughout the world, all those who have poured forth their hearts in love, freely choosing to minister in dangerous places, thus being willing to suffer the “same fate as the poor”—to be disappeared and assassinated.

As I reflect on my own journey of the past 25 years, I am deeply grateful for the privilege of having been introduced to the Central American people and mission life by my friend Dorothy Kazel. During the two weeks of sharing in her ministry there, many times the story of the Good Samaritan came alive before my very eyes. I felt like I was walking around in Gospel times. I wept at the airport, not wanting to return to the lifestyle of the USA. Dorothy lovingly cared for God’s crucified ones, expressed deep respect for the faith of her people, and told me of how she found herself continually evangelized by her beloved campesinos, people living on the edge of survival. She embraced Monsenor Romero’s wisdom and witness: “The people are my prophets.”

Dorothy and I attended a spirit-filled but lengthy Mass celebrated by Monsenor Romero. His two-hour homily was broadcast throughout the country on the Catholic radio station. As we left the Cathedral, overflowing with people standing on the benches cheering exuberantly, she remarked: “That man is going to be killed someday and it will be difficult to determine who killed him because he speaks out against violence perpetrated by the army and the guerrillas.” Three months later, he was dead—a year later so was she.

1980 became a year of mourning, not only for the two of them, but also for so many others whom I met in El Salvador and Guatemala during my first life-changing short visit there.

Ten year later, I returned to this land of prophets and martyrs to serve in the same parish where Jean and Dorothy had ministered. It was the last years of the Civil War and we lived daily with the sounds



and sights and fears of a raging war. Nevertheless, I soon experienced the freeing realization that violence might kill my body, but it could not kill my soul because I was surrounded by a community of loving people, so appreciative that we as a team had stayed with them even after the deaths of our loved ones. The people did their best to protect us, at times risking their own lives for us. Again the words of Romero took on flesh and blood: “I will rise again in the Salvadoran people.”

To pilgrimage with visitors from North America to the sites of the martyrs were graced moments for me. Each time there was a profound silence as the sacred spaces proclaimed an intensity of faith, an awakening to the dangers of love, and an invitation to hope. Yet I find myself wondering sometimes if we dishonor our martyrs by putting them way up on a pedestal, seeing them as larger than life, as glorious heroes. Is that the way we distance ourselves from the reality of their choices, thus insulating ourselves from the demands of “living the Works of Mercy in the spirit of the Beatitudes” in our own circumstances? What I remember most about Dorothy and Jean is how very much they were “just part of the gang”, very ordinary, with all the same fears and hopes, anxieties and dreams as all their friends. It’s that very “normal” humanity that painfully challenges us as we live a lifestyle of comfort and security, well-established by our privileged place in the world economy.

By their own testimonies, each of these martyrs articulated a real fear of death. Maura Clark expressed it clearly: “If my time comes, will I be faithful.”

Their struggle to be people of integrity and commitment in the face of life-threatening situations continues to speak to us. If the lives and sacrifices of our many modern martyrs are going to have any ongoing meaning in the world today, it will be because we still feel their pain and are open to listen to the Gospel calling us:

- to risk
- to challenge ourselves to fidelity to the responsibilities of global/local citizenship
- to be a transforming presence of love, accepting all people as children of one God
- to hear the cries of oppression around us
- to live an ever-deepening awareness that what is worth dying for is also worth living for
- to pour forth ourselves in love, “living the Works of Mercy in the spirit of the Beatitudes”

The theme of our Ursuline Congregation for this year is “Love casts out fear.” (I John 4:18) Our martyrs’ love cast out fears within the hearts of their beloved campesinos, enabling them to know their worth and live in dignity. The love of the campesinos in turn cast out the fears of those ministering to them in traumatic circumstances, enabling them to accept these realities and not be paralyzed by fear.

May the grace of God be with us as we march courageously into the future casting out fears by our love, creating a world free of the violence that still is destroying life in so many ways, and seeking a peace that is rooted in justice for all. AMEN!

Remembering the Churchwomen, Continuing their Legacy Today in the Lives of Salvadoran Women

SHARE believes that women have a unique perspective on their communities, a deep understanding of the problems their communities face, and powerful ideas to break through the chains of poverty and oppression. We have seen women use these tools to lead their communities to a more prosperous and just future. When communities are empowered and organized, everyone's lives improve.

Help keep alive the spirit of Ita, Maura, Dorothy, Jean, and those who gave their lives to make a better future through a contribution to one of the following projects:

Women's Gardens and Microcredits

We support three women's gardens projects in three regions. Two of these projects include savings and loans features. The purpose of these projects is for women to establish food sovereignty through a steady supply of healthy fruits and vegetables, economic stability through an additional source of income, and by encouraging a culture of saving.

When plants produce well, the participants can sell the surplus at the market and contribute some of their earnings to a recycling savings and loans fund. That fund in turn helps lift community members out of poverty by supporting small community projects and initiatives.

Last November, during one of many visits to the countryside, we met with one group of women gardeners in rural La Libertad that reflected on the progress they had made during the year. All 20 of us sat in plastic chairs facing each other in a circle, in a small covered space outside a home. When asked about how the project went and how things changed for them, all of the women echoed the same message.

At the beginning of the year, none of them thought it was possible. They didn't believe they could successfully grow a garden. They didn't think they had the capacity to save any money. Yet, they had proved themselves wrong. Some of the women led us around their gardens and glowed with pride as they showed us their plentiful fruits and vegetables and talked about how happy they are that they now have a steady source of nutrition for themselves and their families.

Total project cost: \$40,000

\$75 helps us support one woman for a year



Scholarships for Young Leaders

While nutrition and economic security are vital for a better quality of life, so is education. SHARE supports the education of students who show promising leadership qualities, many of whom are women. One of these outstanding students, Rubia Guardado, lends her skills for organizing efforts to The Association for the Development of Chalatenango's (CCR) Women's Program.



During the last several years as the Women's Program Coordinator, Rubia played a vital role in shaping women's rights, education, and empowerment programs in the rural department of Chalatenango in northern El Salvador. She volunteered full time to organize rural women in her community and is now a lead promoter for the current Women's Program Coordinator.

Right now, Rubia is also studying social work at the university level, through a scholarship from SHARE. This SHARE scholarship creates opportunities for Rubia and other women in her community to find pathways to food sovereignty and equal rights: "I will have a better capacity to help the community. I will have more political advocacy experience and technical knowledge. The community gives me strength and the drive to continue studying."

Rubia's goal is to lead the women in her community to address sexism, food insecurity, and other issues women in Chalatenango face. She says "I do not believe the societal myth [that] women cannot dialogue as men do, and that women are simply born to have kids, to please men, and to take care of the elderly. I know that women have the same capacity as men."

Rubia's work with the CCR allows her to collaborate with rural women in her community to develop solutions to end discrimination and violence against women, to create a more equal culture, and ultimately, to create a voice for women in the sociopolitical world.

From Rubia's observations, "Women do a better job of organizing the community, and given the opportunity they will build it up. Education for each woman is critical because when given the necessary knowledge and tools, she is able to cultivate economic, social, and political growth within her community."

* This project is made possible by SHARE's **'Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean Legacy Fund'**. For more information visit: www.share-elsalvador.org/donate/legacy

Total project cost: \$70,000

\$150 helps us support one young leader for a month

Women's Leadership

As of 2014, women held only 32% of the seats in the Legislative Assembly while men composed the majority at 68%. All the while, women make up more than half of El Salvador's population. Without adequate representation at the political level, policies will continue to fail women who struggle on a daily basis with violence and discrimination. No country can properly develop when half of its population is silenced.



SHARE supports a joint project with Las Melidas (a national grassroots women's organization) and the University of El Salvador to promote women's active leadership and participation in politics to advance the rights of women in their municipalities and at the national level.

Through this project, last year 40 women leaders graduated with diplomas in organizing, gender issues, public management and municipal planning with a gender perspective. This year, we are supporting another 35 women. These skills make these women stronger candidates, help them build supportive networks among themselves, and enable them to continue pressing forward and working for success despite opposition and potential failure.

* This project is made possible by SHARE's **'Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean Legacy Fund'**. For more information on SHARE's Legacy Fund, visit: www.share-elsalvador.org/donate/legacy

Total project cost: \$12,000

\$115 helps us support one woman for a month

Truth, Justice, and Reparations for the Disappeared

SHARE supports the struggle for truth, justice, and reparations for the disappeared by supporting the Pro-Memoria coalition through sponsorship of staff person Carolina Nolasco's salary.

Carolina is of the generation of the children of the mothers of the disappeared and embraces their struggle. She is the key organizer/leader of CODEFAM (Committee of the Mothers of the Disappeared).

As a member organization of Pro-Memoria, a coalition of eight non-governmental organizations that monitor compliance and implementation of human rights in the country, CODEFAM and Carolina seek to clarify the truth of the serious cases of violations of human rights that occurred during the 12 years of civil war (1980 to 1992) in El Salvador. They pursue justice, the reparation of damage to the victims, and guarantees that these violations of human rights do not happen again.

The Pro-Memoria coalition was born in 1998, when human rights organizations saw that the Salvadoran state had no intention of implementing the recommendations of the Truth Commission of the United Nations as agreed in the process of Peace Agreements.

In its 17 years of struggle, Pro-Memoria has managed the construction of the Monument to Memory and Truth that records 30 thousand names of civilian victims assassinated during the civil war, and named a Cultural Asset of the Nation by the Ministry of Culture.

Pro-Memoria is leading the struggle for the ratification of international conventions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States for the protection of all persons against Forced Disappearances, and the recognition of August 30th as National Day of Victims of Forced Disappearances.

This March, for the 35th anniversary of Monseñor Romero's murder, SHARE supported a national general assembly of victims that produced twenty demands, including calls for: the derogation of the Amnesty law; the investigation and sanction of all responsible for violations of human rights (like the case of Romero); and reparations to the victims of human rights abuses. We believe that the root causes of the current violence engulfing the country include impunity and lack of justice.

Total project cost: \$20,000

\$525 helps us support Carolina's salary for a month



It's in *your* hands...

Help Us Help Women Create Strong Futures!

You can make this happen by:

- **Holding a Fundraising Event**
- **Requesting Support from Your Religious Order, Church, or Community Organization**
- **Contributing to SHARE's Legacy Fund**
- **Becoming a SHARE Sustainer**



Read more about each option below.

Hold a Fundraising Event

It is easy to raise support for SHARE's women's projects by holding one of the events listed on page 4, or designing your own fundraising event. When you invite others to share a meal, watch a video, or hold a conversation about SHARE's women's projects, and include an opportunity for participants to show their support with a donation, you increase solidarity with the people of El Salvador and their lives today.

Request Support from Your Religious Order, Church, or Community Organization

Are you part of a religious order, church, or community organization? If so, you can help support SHARE's work by asking for funds or matching funds from your organization. Following is a sample letter you can adapt for your organization.

Sample Support Letter

Dear Name,

I am a supporter of SHARE El Salvador and am calling on you today to ensure the continuation of this important work. For nearly 35 years, SHARE has been accompanying the people of El Salvador as they forge visionary solutions to build sustainable futures. Much of this energy SHARE has invested in women.

SHARE believes that women have a unique perspective on their communities, a deep understanding of the problems their communities face, and powerful ideas to break through the chains of poverty and oppression.

Since its beginning almost 35 years ago, SHARE has been supporting rural women with educational, agricultural, economic, and advocacy projects that originate from within these communities in need. This is a picture of Carmen from rural La Libertad glowing as she shows us her garden full of produce made possible by the support of faith groups like yours.

At the beginning of last year, before participating in this project, Carmen didn't think her land was suitable for growing. She also didn't think she would ever be able to save money. With some supplies and professional training, in a few short months Carmen started growing enough produce to nourish



her family and sell extra at the market. With this additional income, Carmen now has a personal savings of her own and also regularly contributes to her community's savings and loans fund to help lift other members out of poverty.

With your support, Carmen will receive continued technical assistance to keep her garden producing well and her community strong. I ask that your group make a contribution of what is possible to SHARE in support of Carmen and all of the strong women who are leading their communities toward better futures.

In justice,
[your name here]

Contribute to SHARE's Legacy Fund

For thirty-five years, SHARE El Salvador has supported human rights, sustainable community development, and civic participation in El Salvador. Providing opportunities for Salvadorans committed to social justice, especially women and young people, to access education has been an integral part of the success of our program.

With this in mind SHARE aims to double our support for the next generation of Salvadoran leaders by building a reliable, long-term source of funding.

We invite you to join us in providing access to scholarships, leadership workshops, and technical training to the next generation of Salvadoran leaders by making a contribution to the SHARE El Salvador Legacy Fund. Please consider for a moment the following list of opportunities to make a charitable gift to SHARE El Salvador.

Designated Gifts: You can make a donation to the Legacy Fund today that will provide educational opportunities for Salvadoran leaders for years to come. Contact us at 510-848-8487 or katherine@share-elsalvador.org for more information.

Bequests and Memorials: Through your will, you can perpetuate good works with a living memorial. The SHARE Legacy Fund can be a beneficiary of all or a portion of your estate. The value of your gift is deductible for federal estate tax purposes. In addition, any funeral memorials that are contributed in your memory can be directed to the SHARE Legacy Fund.

Real Estate: You can also choose to donate the remainder interest of a personal residence to the SHARE Legacy Fund while retaining a life interest in the residence by transferring the residence to a qualified personal residence trust.

Life Insurance: There are several ways to give life insurance to the SHARE Legacy Fund. You can transfer the ownership of an existing life insurance policy, purchase a new contract of insurance in the name of the SHARE Legacy Fund or name the SHARE Legacy Fund as a beneficiary of the life insurance policy. In addition to estate tax benefits, the donor may also obtain a charitable income tax deduction for lifetime transfers.

See more at: www.share-elsalvador.org/donate/legacy

Become a SHARE Sustainer

We invite you to become a SHARE Sustainer—to participate directly in the creation of a strong future for the women of El Salvador.

Your monthly contribution will provide hardworking Salvadorans the support they need to overcome the challenges they face. We need your pledge to contribute a monthly gift to SHARE. We make it easy by setting up an automatic monthly deduction from your credit card!

With your donation of...

- \$35 per month one woman can participate in community strengthening workshops
- \$75 per month one woman can gain food sovereignty for her family and community
- \$115 per month one woman can learn the skills to run for office and become an effective leader
- \$150 per month one young woman can receive a scholarship that will help her become a leader in fighting for an equal future for all Salvadoran women
- \$525 per month women leaders can work for justice and reparations for human rights violations

**¡Sí—YES!
I'd/We'd Like to Sustain SHARE's Work
Towards Women's Rights in El Salvador!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Credit card number _____ Expiration Date _____

Pledge: \$35 \$75 \$115 \$150 \$525 other \$ ____ per month | quarterly | semi-annually | annually

Please mail to:

SHARE El Salvador, 2425 College Ave, Berkeley, CA 94704

Or donate online at:

<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1443341?uniqueID=634348343115921530>

Resources List

Books about the Churchwomen

Ana Carrigan, *Salvador Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984

Cynthia Glavac, O.S.U, *In the Fullness of Life*, Dimension Books, 1997. Biography of Dorothy Kazel.

Judith M. Noone, MM. *The Same Fate as the Poor*, 2d.edn. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 1994. The Story of Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and Carla Piette

Margaret Swedish. *A Message Too Precious to be Silenced, The four US churchwomen and the meaning of martyrdom*, illustrations by Lee Miller, booklet, September 1992.

Margaret Swedish. *Truth That Sets Free*, A Morality Play. Uses letters of the women, and other public records to create script for 25 minute play that can be performed in various local settings. From Religious Task Force on Central America & Mexico.

Phyllis Zagano. *Ita Ford: Missionary Martyr*. New York: Paulist, 1996. Brief biography of Ita Ford.

Articles and Reflections about the Churchwomen

Article by John Dear, S.J. about Jean Donovan:

http://www.fatherjohndear.org/articles/the_life_jean.htm

Article by Sr. Madeline Dorsey, MM: <http://www.maryknollmagazine.org/index.php/magazines/201-remembering-the-martyrs-30-years-later>

Films about the Churchwomen and El Salvador

Roses in December. The story of Jean Donovan by Ana Carrigan and Bernard Stone. Available at: <http://firstrunfeatures.com/rosesindecemberdvd.html>

Justice and the Generals. PBS special produced by Gail Pellett Productions. Available at: <http://gailpellettproductions.com/justice-and-the-generals/>

Return to El Salvador. Directed by Jamie Moffet. Available at: <http://www.returntoelsalvador.com/>

YouTube Videos about the Churchwomen and Women in El Salvador

SHARE video about Remembering Women in El Salvador: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRpPeRRrzyk>

SHARE video about Women's Vegetable Gardens: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SHAREFoundationES#p/a/u/1/ntI5q1TEeQc>

Maryknoll video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piqCdLJTe_0

New York Times video about the killings: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8E -VwWXKLU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8E-VwWXKLU)

University of Central America video on the life of Dorothy Kazel:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcpjCi3IDFI>

Online Information on El Salvador and Current Events

The SHARE blog: <http://www.share-elsalvador.org/category/blog>

The Voices on the Border blog: <https://voiceselsalvador.wordpress.com/>

Tim's El Salvador blog: <http://luterano.blogspot.com/>

Upside Down World: www.upsidedownworld.org

El Salvador on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ElSalvador>

United Nations Development Report on El Salvador:
<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/SLV.pdf>

The School of the Americas Watch: www.soaw.org

Committee of People in Solidarity with El Salvador (CISPES): www.cispes.org

El Salvador Sister Cities: www.elsalvadorsolidarity.org

Latin America Solidarity Coalition: www.lasolidarity.org