

“Your love and your grace. It is all I need.”

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Week of November 16, 2017

How many times had they prayed in solitude and in public, “Give me your love and your grace. It is all I need?” A thousand times? In the end, they had no time to utter lengthy prayers, perhaps not even this final verse of St. Ignatius’ self-offering. Leisurely, they had prayed it for years. Now they were suddenly called on to live it in death.

In the stealth of night, in those early hours of November 16th, 1989, six Jesuits were prodded from a deep sleep and dragged out of their beds to the grounds of their University of Central America. That moment had come when the prayer of self-giving would ask of them a final Yes. They were not entirely caught by surprise. Their residence had been visited a few days before. It was a warning as though to say: ‘Teach, but stay out of our business.’ Of all people, a young student of the Jesuit high school was enlisted to execute in cold blood six Jesuits, their cook and her daughter:

Ignacio Ellacuría, the University Rector, an internationally known philosopher and tireless in his efforts to promote peace through his writings, conferences and travels abroad; . . . They also split open his head and spread his brains on the grass to make it clear why he had been killed. They certainly understood the symbolism of the head, the seat of the intellect.

Segundo Montes. Head of the University of Central America sociology department, director of the new human rights institute, superior of the Jesuit community.

Ignacio Martin Baro. Vice president of the University of Central America, social psychologist, expert in the field of public opinion in El Salvador, he worked every weekend in the poor parish of Jayaque

Juan Ramon Moreno. Assistant director of the pastoral institute at the University of Central America, secretary of the Jesuit province, teacher of novices. He founded a Jesuit newsletter and set up a state of the art library in the new Romero Center which the death squads completely destroyed after killing the Jesuits. “The vocation of the church and of the followers of Jesus,” he wrote “is to be the innermost recess of Christ’s compassion.”

Amando Lopez. Former head of the San Salvador seminary and of the Jesuit University in Managua, Nicaragua, he worked every weekend among the poor in Soyapango. He was a friend to Jean Donovan, martyred in 1980.








Joaquin Lopez y Lopez. The oldest. He had recently been diagnosed with cancer. One of the founders of the University of Central America, he also founded “Fe Y Alegria,” a network of 13 schools that served eight thousand impoverished Salvadoran children, as well as two clinics which served 50,000.

Elba and Celina Ramos. To avoid leaving any witnesses, the guerillas shot the cook and her daughter who were asleep in the parlor.

Why were they killed?

The reason was no different from that of the martyrdom in 1977 of the Jesuit Rutilio Grande, or the assassination three years later of Archbishop Romero or of the three American sisters Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and laywoman Jean Donovan. They all shed their

blood with tens of thousands of lesser-known civilian victims of El Salvador's civil war of 1981 to 1992. They were one with Archbishop Romero who, shortly before his martyrdom, declared: "Let it be quite clear that if we are being asked to collaborate with a pseudo-peace, a false order, based on repression and fear, we must recall that the only order and the only peace that God wants is one based on truth and justice."

<p><i>Felices los pacientes porque recibirán la tierra en herencia</i></p>  <p>Amando López Quintana, S.J. 6, II, 1936 - 16 XI, 1989</p>	<p><i>Felices los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia, porque serán saciados.</i></p>  <p>Ignacio Eliacuría, S.J. 9, XI, 1930 - 16 XI, 1989</p>	<p><i>Felices los compasivos, porque obtendrán misericordia.</i></p>  <p>Juan Ramón Moreno Pardo, S.J. 29, VIII, 1933 - 16 XI, 1989</p>
<p><i>Felices los de corazón limpio, porque ellos verán a Dios.</i></p>  <p>Joaquín López y López, S.J. 16, VIII, 1918 - 16 XI, 1989</p>	<p>¿Qué significa hoy ser jesuita? "Comprometerse bajo el estandarte de la cruz en la lucha crucial de nuestro tiempo: la lucha por la fe y la lucha por la justicia que la misma fe exige." A.M.D.G.</p>	<p><i>Felices los que trabajan por la paz, porque serán reconocidos como hijos de Dios.</i></p>  <p>Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J. 7, XI, 1942 - 16 XI, 1989</p>
<p><i>Felices los perseguidos por causa del bien, porque de ellos es el Reino de los Cielos.</i></p>  <p>Segundo Montes Mozo, S.J. 15, V, 1933 - 16 XI, 1989</p>	<p><i>Felices los que tienen espíritu de pobre, porque de ellos es el Reino de los Cielos.</i></p>  <p>Celina Maricet Ramos 27, II, 1973 - 16 XI, 1989</p>	<p><i>Felices los que lloran, porque recibirán consuelo.</i></p>  <p>Elba Julia Ramos 5, III, 1947 - 16 XI, 1989</p>

Jesuit Martyrs, the Daughter of the Cook, and Her Mother

Not long after the executions, six more Jesuits volunteered and stepped up to take the places of their slain Jesuit companions.



Archbishop Oscar Romero & Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J.



**From top left and clockwise:
Sisters Ita Ford, MM, Maura Clarke, MM,
Dorothy Kazel, OSU. & Lay woman, Jean Donovan,**

On December 2nd, 2015, four American Catholic missionaries were tortured, raped, shot, and murdered in El Salvador by National Guardsmen of the military-led government. Two of the women, Sisters Ita Ford, M.M. and Maura Clarke, M.M. were members of the Maryknoll Missionaries, ages 40 and 49, respectively. Sister Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U., age 41, belonged to the Ursuline Order (Cleveland, OH), and Jean Donovan, age 27, a lay missionary, was Sister Dorothy's associate. In the spirit of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the women served the poor, training catechists, preparing programs, and caring for the many practical necessities of daily life

for those unable to care for themselves. As with the Archbishop, they had been under close surveillance by the government.

Events Leading Up to the Murders

The chilling events leading up to the murders were carried out quickly, decisively, and with savage brutality—the essence of assassinations. Below is a summary account of those events.

December 2nd Sometime after 9PM

The two Maryknoll churchwomen, Ita and Maura were returning to El Salvador from a two-month regional conference in Managua, Nicaragua. Dorothy and Jean drove to meet them at the airport. They were in a white van. The flight was scheduled for arrival at 9:11 PM. Shortly thereafter, the four left the airport, headed down the main road, homeward bound.

Five uniformed assassins, who changed into civilian clothes, waited for the women in the stealth of night. About fifteen miles from the airport, the attackers stopped the white van and took the women to a semi-secluded location. There they executed the well-planned orders of their commander. The massacred bodies lay exposed at the side of the road.

Local peasants who saw the white van only later reported that they had heard machine-gun fire followed by single shots. The five men fled the scene, reported the peasants. The lights in the van were on, the radio blaring. The van was then set on fire at the side of the airport road. No further details were available.

December 3rd Early Morning

Some local residents found the women's bodies. The authorities, a judge, three members of the civil guard, and two commanders, forced the men to bury the women nearby in a common grave. The local peasant men obeyed, but they informed their parish priest, Fr. Paul Schindler, of the murders. He himself had inquired about Jean and Sister Dorothy. News of the assassinations was dispatched to the local Catholic bishop and the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White. It was the feast day of St. Francis Xavier, the great missionary saint.

December 4th

The bodies were exhumed in the presence of fifteen reporters, other missionaries, and Ambassador White. Sister Madeline Dorsey, M.M., from a nearby mission and an eyewitness, describes the scene in her own words: "Then came the painful extraction of the four—piled one on top of the other. Jean was the first, her lovely face destroyed. Dorothy had a tranquil look. Maura's face was serene but seemed to utter a silent cry, and last little Ita. I went forward to wipe the dirt from her cheek and place her arm at her side. We Sisters fell to our knees in reverence."

December 5th A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated by Bishop Arturo Rivera y Damas.

December 6th

On the next day, the bodies of Jean Donovan and Sister Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U. were flown back to the United States for burial. In keeping with the tradition of the Maryknoll Missionaries, the bodies of Sisters Ita Ford, M.M. and Maura Clarke, M.M. were buried at their mission in Chalatenango, El Salvador.

Accountability

In 1984, four national guardsmen were convicted of the massacre and were sentenced to thirty years in prison. Their immediate superior was also charged and convicted of the murders. Some of these were subsequently released from prison.

Sister Ita Ford's brother and attorney, William, has spent more than twenty-five years in the U.S. court system attempting to obtain justice for his sister and the other three slain women. A legal battle has ensued to have these men brought to the United States. The case is not as yet resolved.

Who Were These Churchwomen?

Jean Donovan, raised in an upper middle-class home, was educated in fine schools. On completion of her master's degree in business from Case Western Reserve University, she took a position as a management consultant in Cleveland. She was engaged to a young physician but felt the call to volunteer for youth ministry with the poor. After completing her training as a lay missionary at Maryknoll, NY, she went to El Salvador in 1977 with Sister Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U.

Sister Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U. first taught in Cleveland and then did missionary work among the Papago Tribe in Arizona. She felt the call to join the mission team of the Diocese of Cleveland. Both she and Jean Donovan worked in the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Dorothy was known as "an alleluia from head to toe." She and Jean worked not far from the mission of the Maryknoll Sisters.

Sister Ita Ford, M.M. was the cousin of Bishop Francis Xavier Ford, M.M., the first seminarian to apply to the newly-established Maryknoll Fathers, founded in 1911. He went to

China as a missionary and in 1952 was martyred in a Communist prison camp. Ita Ford was taught by three religious institutes before entering the Maryknoll Missionaries, the Visitandine Sisters, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Prior to entering the convent at Maryknoll, Ita worked as an editor in a publishing company for seven years. As a missionary, she served in Bolivia, Chile, and then finally in El Salvador.

Sister Maura Clarke, M.M. was the oldest of the four slain churchwomen. She had spent seventeen years in Nicaragua working against the dictatorship there and was assigned to El Salvador only months before her death. “If we leave the people when they suffer the cross, how credible is our word to them?” she wrote only weeks before her death. “The Church’s role is to accompany those who suffer the most, and to witness our hope in the resurrection.”

The Martyr, Archbishop Oscar Romero

The murders of the women missionaries occurred some ten months after the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero by a similar death squad and before Father Rutilio Grande, S.J. Romero was shot in 1980, Grande, in 1977. Romero was celebrating Mass and just as he completed a homily on the government’s oppression and civil rights violations against the poor. Archbishop Romero’s cause for canonization was opened in 1997 by Pope John Paul II. On May 23rd, 2015, Pope Francis beatified him.

Like the Jesuit martyrs, their cook and daughter, like the Archbishop and Rutilio, the four women were martyred for their faith. They gave their lives for others in perfect charity.