

Did you know . . .

Pope St. Paul VI & St. Oscar Romero

Pope St. Paul VI led the Catholic Church from 1963 until his death on August 6, 1978, succeeding Pope St. John XXIII. He concluded the Second Vatican Council and implemented its many reforms.

He is most remembered for his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which he reaffirmed the Church's teaching on contraception. Even though his papacy lasted another 10 years, it was the last encyclical he wrote.

Four years earlier, he wrote *Ecclesiam Suam* (released Aug. 6, 1964), explaining that he wanted a Church in dialogue with the modern world.

But his encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, written in 1975, is the one Pope Francis calls "the greatest pastoral document written to date". It is an exhortation on evangelization, in which Paul VI wrote that the Church itself "has a constant need of being evangelized," and that people today listen "more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

He is the third Pope to be canonized by Pope Francis since he was elected 5 years ago.

When **Oscar Romero** became Archbishop of El Salvador in 1977, he was known as a traditional and conservative. But in three short years, he would be recognized throughout the world as a "voice for the voiceless." The change came within weeks of his installation when his friend, Rutillio Grande, a Jesuit dedicated to social justice, was assassinated. In the following weeks, Romero increasingly took on the cause of justice.

He came to embody the Church's "option for the poor". He said, "A Church that does not unite itself to the poor...is not truly the Church of Jesus Christ." He was outspoken against military oppression during his country's civil war.

On March 23, 1980, he appealed to members of the military, made up largely of peasants, to stop the fighting... they were killing their own people. "I beseech you, I beg you, I command you, stop the repression!" He was shot the next day while saying Mass, the first bishop slain at the altar since Thomas Becket in the 12th century.

His death is considered by the Catholic Church to have been in "*odium fidei*", meaning "in hatred of the faith." Thus St. Oscar Romero is a martyr.

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