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"Archbishop Oscar Romero is going to be a deeply beloved saint"

The Prelate of Opus Dei has issued a brief statement about the upcoming beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero, soon to be declared a martyr by Pope Francis.

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The Holy Father Francis has authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate a

decree of martyrdom for the Servant of God Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez. Archbishop Romero (El Salvador: 1917-1980) was assassinated out of hatred for the faith on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Holy Mass.

On learning of the news, Bishop Javier Echevarria said: "The martyrs present a challenge to all men and women, both believers and non-believers, but they are a shining light especially for those who have placed their hope in God. I am sure that Archbishop Oscar Romero is going to be a deeply beloved saint.

"I met Archbishop Romero in Rome," the Prelate of Opus Dei said, "during one of his visits to Saint Josemaria, in 1974. He was a pious person, detached from his own interests and dedicated to his people. His struggle for sanctity was palpable. Archbishop Romero was one of the

first bishops who, following the death of Saint Josemaria in 1975, wrote to Paul VI asking that his cause of canonization be opened. I am certain that now, from Heaven, he continues interceding with his good friend Saint Josemaria for this portion of the People of God that is Opus Dei."

Saint Josemaria and Archbishop Romero had known one another since 1955. The Archbishop of San Salvador had great esteem for the spirit of Opus Dei and had frequent contact with the apostolic work of the faithful of the Prelature in El Salvador. In 1974 he came to Rome and had several conversations with Saint Josemaria. As Fr. Antonio Rodriguez Pedrezuela recounts in his book *A Sea Without Shores*, the founder of Opus Dei was concerned that the Archbishop have the opportunity to rest during his stay in Rome, because he realized the tense

situation he faced back in El Salvador.

The affection was mutual, and when the founder of Opus Dei died, Archbishop Romero, in his postulatory letter for Saint Josemaria's cause of canonization, expressed his gratitude "for having received from him encouragement and strength to be faithful to the unchangeable doctrine of Christ and to serve the Holy Roman Church with apostolic zeal."

In the same letter he wrote: "Msgr. Escriva's life was marked by a continuous dialogue with God and a deep humility. One could see that he was a man of God and that he dealt with people with great refinement, affection and good humor." A letter addressed to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo a few months after the founder's death shows that his

affection and esteem for Saint Josemaria had only grown stronger.

He also had a deep friendship with Archbishop Fernando Saenz, who was Vicar of Opus Dei in El Salvador, and later his successor as archbishop of San Salvador. The day he was assassinated, Archbishop Romero spent the morning with Fernando Saenz at a recollection for priests organized by Opus Dei. Afterwards Fernando Saenz accompanied the Archbishop to the church where he was to celebrate Mass. Saenz recalls: "They killed him during the offering of the bread and wine. It was, as it were, a marvelous external sign of his having offered his life for his people, for the poor, for justice, for peace."

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