

Twenty-five years ago today Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed by gunfire while he was celebrating mass in El Salvador. People there regard him as a hero, a martyr and a saint. Through most of his life Romero never made waves. But after becoming archbishop of San Salvador, he began advocating for social reforms. The changes he wanted would have spread the ownership of land and power. His preaching united the poor, but eventually cost him his life. While he was celebrating mass in a hospital chapel on March 24, 1980, an assassin outside shot him through the window. Visitors there today can see Archbishop Romero's blood-stained vestments.

We call the eucharist the sacrifice of the mass. It is the sacrifice of Christ, who shed his blood for us. But it calls each of us to sacrifice as well.

The eucharist grew out of Passover. On the first Passover families each slaughtered a lamb, spread its blood on their doors and ate the meat together. The blood protected them from the last and most horrible plague – the death of the firstborn of every human and every beast. The sacrifice of lambs saved their lives.

There is no meal without sacrifice. Even at home, someone had to prepare the food; someone had to shop and set the table; someone had to go to work to pay the grocery bill; and someone had to farm the land to provide the food in the first place. Eating brings so much pleasure that we sometimes forget how much sacrifice it requires.

Archbishop Romero sacrificed his life for the eucharist. He wanted the poor to eat a better meal, and he lost his life at the most sacred meal of all.

If you believe strongly enough in something, you will sacrifice for it. Good students sacrifice free time. Husbands and wives sacrifice for each other. Parents sacrifice for their kids; kids for their parents.

But too often we expect others to sacrifice for us. We resent leaving tips. We object to taxes. We spend on our pleasures more than on the needs of the poor.

This eucharist will help. It feeds our spirit. It shows us Christ. And it helps us – no matter the cost – to be Christ for the world.