

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# **THE FIFTH SUN**

by

**NICHOLAS A. PATRICCA**



**The Dramatic Publishing Company**

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY  
311 Washington St., Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

*COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.* This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

©MCMLXXXVI by  
NICHOLAS A. PATRICCA  
Revised copyright ©MCMXCII  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(THE FIFTH SUN)

ISBN 0-87129-207-6

# THE FIFTH SUN

A Play in Two Acts  
For a flexible cast of 10 to 14 players\*

## CHARACTERS

OSCAR ROMERO . . . . . Archbishop of San Salvador  
ANNE DUNN . . . . . a Mercy sister from the USA  
HECTOR NAVAREZ . . . . a Diocesan priest of San Salvador  
RUTILIO GRANDE . . . . . a Jesuit priest from El Salvador  
THE NUNCIO . . . . . papal ambassador to Central America  
THE COLONEL . . . . . an officer in the El Salvadoran special forces  
KUKULCAN . . . . . the Chief Priest and the Lord of Life  
AHPUCH . . . . . the Lord of Death  
CHAC . . . . . the Lord of Rain  
GHANAN . . . . . the Lord of Cultivation

SETTING: El Salvador.

TIME: February 22, 1977 to March 24, 1980.

\*The actors playing the Guardian Deities may be male or female. The Guardians, because they embody the spirit and voice of the El Salvadoran people, may also play the villagers, the strike organizers and other roles at the director's discretion. For economy, the size of the cast may be reduced to eight actors with the use of doubling (see Production Notes). In response to many requests, two special versions of *THE FIFTH SUN* have been written to accommodate those groups who wish to employ larger casts and those groups, mostly high school drama classes, who wish to perform a shorter version. The large cast ensemble version of *THE FIFTH SUN* more fully realizes the choral and ritual character of the play. The shorter one-hour version intensifies the dramatic focus of the play on the transformation of Oscar Romero. Both of these special versions are available in typescript form from the publisher.

The professional premiere performance of *THE FIFTH SUN* was given at the Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, Illinois on September 26 - November 4, 1984, with the following cast:

Oscar Romero ..... Jack McLaughlin-Gray  
Anne Dunn ..... Lorna Raver Johnson  
Hector Navarez ..... Ray Rodriguez  
Rutilio Grande/Assassin ..... Ramiro Carrillo  
Kukulcan/Nuncio ..... William J. Norris  
Ahpuch ..... Colette Kilroy  
Chac ..... Jill Holden  
Ghanan/Colonel ..... Dennis Cockrum

Directed by Dennis Zacek

Set Design by Rick Paul

Costume Design by Patricia Hart

Sound Design by Galen G. Ramsey

Lighting Design by Rita Pietraszek

The writing of this revised version of *THE FIFTH SUN* was provoked by the insights the author gained from his participation in many of the play's productions. He is especially grateful to Juan Ramirez, Artistic Director of Latino Chicago, to Judith Royer, Professor of Drama at Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles, and to Iverson Warinner, Professor of Drama at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky, for their inspiring production concepts.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

*THE FIFTH SUN* presents the life of Oscar Arnulfo Romero from the time of his installation as Archbishop of San Salvador (February 22, 1977) to the day of his assassination (March 24, 1980). It is a dramatic portrait of a human being struggling to cure the ills destroying his people. Rarely does it happen that a person becomes a true hero in the ancient and proper sense of that word, a person who suffers for the well-being of a people. Oscar Romero is one of those few, and that is why I wanted to tell his story.

In the spirit of original tragedy, *THE FIFTH SUN* is a tomb/ritual play that presents the suffering of the hero for the contemplation of the community. It is synthetically constructed, employing elements of Meso-American (Mayan/Nahuatl) temple dramas, European medieval mystery plays, and tomb rituals of the ancient Near East.

The title comes from the Mayan/Nahuatl story of the fifth sun, the son of the Lord of the Universe who voluntarily sacrifices himself for the well-being of all creation. Through this sacrifice Nanautzin becomes the fifth sun, the sun that gives light and life to our present world. The Franciscan missionaries, exploiting the obvious analogy here, identified Jesus as the fifth sun, thus facilitating the symbiotic absorption of Catholic myth and ritual into Indian culture. To this day, each religion lives through the other.

Although *THE FIFTH SUN* is based on real events and real people, it is a work of poetic fiction. Every character and every event has been dramatically constructed to reveal Romero and his predicament as I, the playwright, understand them. All the words of this play are my own, except for those of Romero's last sermon which is constructed from his sermon of March 23, 1980 and for those of the congressional hearing which is constructed from several interviews he gave shortly before his assassination.

**To My Grandparents**

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### STAGING AREA:

The ruins of an ancient temple with the symbols of the Catholic and Mayan religions co-existing in creative tension. The space should have a quality that transcends time and space and should facilitate the rapid, iconographic transitions required by the script.

Because *THE FIFTH SUN* is constructed as a tomb/ritual drama, it should be performed with music and dance. The Guardians play primitive musical instruments, dance, and sing ritual chant to enhance and to develop the dramatic presentation.

Kukulcan, Ahpuch, Chac, and Ghanan are the four compass points or suns of the Mayan/Nahuatlán cosmos. They also function as the elemental forces and protectors of the Indian world. The fifth sun, the sun of the people, stands at the center of the cosmic grid. Each Guardian has a distinctive mask/headaddress which represents his special function in creation. Each is robed and painted in his cosmic color: Ahpuch (white), Ghanan (red), Chac (blue), Kukulcan (black). Gold is reserved for the fifth sun. The Guardians may be played by either men or women.

The actors playing the Guardians also play the bishops, the villagers, the strike organizers, and other roles according to the physical possibilities inherent in the script and the requirements of the particular production. In the Victory Gardens production in Chicago, the actor who played KUKULCAN also played THE NUNCIO, the actor who played GHANAN also played THE COLONEL, and the actor who played RUTILIO GRANDE also played THE ASSASSIN. In The Group production in Seattle, which enjoyed the advantage of having professional dancers playing the Guardians, none of the principal roles was doubled. In the Black Ensemble production at St. Louis University,



each Guardian was played by a chorus of actors to emphasize the poetic/vocal qualities of these roles.

The ensemble version of *THE FIFTH SUN* was developed in a series of workshops beginning in the spring of 1988 with the Latino Chicago Theater Company and concluding in the winter of 1990 with the Commons Theatre Company in Chicago. This ensemble version is available in typescript form by applying to the publishers.

#### CHARACTERS:

OSCAR ROMERO is a native Salvadoran man in his sixties and appears dressed in a plain black Roman cassock with modest purple piping. He wears a plain wooden crucifix around his neck and black rimmed glasses. He is an earthy man with a teasing sense of humor. He is a "mestizo," a Salvadoran of mixed white and Indian blood. Romero moved to a position of "solidarity with the poor" from a traditionalist, even pietistic, spirituality. He was judged to be a weak and sickly man by all sides prior to his installation. To the astonishment of all, he grew physically and emotionally stronger as the burdens of his office grew greater.

ANNE DUNN is a native of the USA, a woman in her late thirties and appears dressed in proper and neat civilian clothes. She is a highly intelligent and competent person, with a strong drive to succeed. She holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago and worked with the AFL/CIO union organizing and land reform projects in El Salvador before joining the Archdiocesan staff. Anne is a pragmatist and a questioning believer.

HECTOR NAVAREZ is a native-born Salvadoran man in his late twenties and appears in standard working-class clothes. He is of Indian blood, recently ordained, and is pas-

sionately committed to making the Catholic Church a revolutionary force on the side of the poor.

RUTILIO GRANDE is a native-born Salvadoran man in his fifties and appears dressed in a plain black Jesuit cassock. A seminary professor for twenty years, he left his "ivory tower" to become pastor of Aguilares and learn about God from the life of the poor.

THE NUNCIO is a Spaniard in his early seventies and appears dressed in an ornate Roman cassock with red sash and piping, red skull cap, and a gold crucifix around his neck. He is a career diplomat.

THE COLONEL is a native Salvadoran man in his early forties and appears impeccably dressed in an officer's uniform. He is a member of the upper class and fanatically dedicated to preserving the status quo.

THE ASSASSIN is a White Warrior of Christ and appears dressed in a business suit with a white hood over his head and a USA-type military rifle in his hands.

## *Glossary*

AHPUCH: (Ah-pooch) god of death, north.

CHAC: (Chahk) god of rain, south.

GHANAN: (Ga-nahn) god of maize or cultivation, east.

KUKULCAN: (Coo-cool-cahn) god of life, west.

BACAB BALAM: (Ba-cahb Ba-lahm) four gods of the cosmic grid.

NANAUTZIN: (Na-now-tseen) son of the lord of creation who willingly sacrifices himself to become the fifth sun, the sun of our world.

(All the above Mayan words are accented on the last syllable; the vowel "a" is sounded like the broad "a" in "father.")

**THE MATANZA:** "The massacre." In 1932, 30,000 Indians and peasants were slaughtered, allegedly to thwart a communist insurrection against the landowners. This massacre virtually wiped out Indian life in El Salvador.

**MEDELLIN CONFERENCE:** In 1968, the Latin American Bishops Conference met in Medellin, Colombia and declared the Catholic Church to be on the side of the poor. At this same conference, Pope Paul VI proclaimed the right of a people to employ the force of arms to overthrow "an evident and prolonged tyranny."

**ORDEN:** A paramilitary force organized in the '60s to police the campesinos of the El Salvadoran countryside. The members of ORDEN were so brutal that this organization was officially suppressed after the coup of 1979.

**FPL:** Popular Liberation Forces, the most powerful of the three main guerrilla groups. It forcefully opposed ORDEN in the countryside and union-busters in the cities.

**PLAZA LIBERTAD MASSACRE:** In 1977, five days after the installation of Monseñor Romero, thousands marched to Plaza Libertad to protest the fraudulent election of General Romero (no relation to the Monseñor). Several hundred demonstrators were killed when the police and army opened fire on them. Two thousand took refuge in Rosario Church and were saved through the intervention of Monseñor Chavez, the retired Archbishop of San Salvador.

**FR. RUTILIO GRANDE:** A Jesuit priest and close friend of Monseñor Romero. He and his two companions, Nelson and Manuel, were assassinated three weeks after the massacre in Plaza Libertad. Fr. Rutilio's death was the first of many assassinations of nuns, priests, and religious lay workers. Fr. Grande left his seminary professorship to become pastor of Aguilares, a village outside of San Salvador. In Aguilares, Fr. Grande established the first "base community" in El Salvador.

**WHITE WARRIORS:** A vigilante group which vowed to kill the remaining forty-seven Jesuits in El Salvador and all foreign or "Marxist" religious workers.

**BASE COMMUNITIES:** (*comunidades de base*) a grassroots movement among the Catholic poor based on the pedagogy of the oppressed by Paulo Freire. This movement began in Brazil where there are currently 70,000 such communities. The members of these communities teach themselves to read and write and to meet their own "basic" needs without having to rely on corrupt or inefficient social institutions.

## ***Select Bibliography***

*The Word Remains: A Life of Oscar Romero.* James R. Brockman. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY. 1982.

*Cry Of The People.* Penny Lemoux. Doubleday, Garden City, NY. 1980.

*Salvador Witness: The Life And Calling Of Jean Donovan.* Ana Carrigan. Simon and Schuster, New York, NY. 1984.

*Weakness And Deceit: U.S. Policy And El Salvador.* Raymond Bonner. Times Books, New York, NY. 1984.

## *Chronology*

1977

- February 3      Monseñor Luis Chavez y Gonzalez resigns as Archbishop of San Salvador.
- February 20     General Carlos Humberto Romero elected president in an election judged fraudulent by most observers.
- February 22     Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero installed as Archbishop of San Salvador.
- February 24     Colonel Ernesto Claramount, a retired cavalry officer, begins a demonstration/vigil in Plaza Libertad to protest the massive fraud by the government in the general elections.
- February 27     The army opens fire on the demonstrators in Plaza Libertad, killing or arresting (never to be seen again) between 80 and 300 people. Around 2,000 people seek sanctuary in Rosario Church which adjoins the square. Only the intervention of Monseñor Chavez saves them from the slaughter.
- March 12        Rutilio Grande, S.J., and his two companions, Nelson and Manuel, are assassinated on their way to El Paisnal, a mission parish in the mountains. Although many priests had been arrested and tortured prior to Fr. Grande's

death, this is the first time a priest or a religious has been murdered in El Salvador. This assassination of a religious is the first of many which continue to this day.

- March 14      Monseñor Romero excommunicates those responsible for the murder of Fr. Grande and his companions and he informs the out-going President Arturo Molina that the Church will not cooperate with the government until it brings the murderers to justice.
- March 26      Monseñor Romero goes to Rome to explain personally to the Pope (Paul VI) and to the Curia his actions in response to the murder of Fr. Rutilio Grande. This trip was made necessary because of the opposition of the Papal Nuncio who had denounced Romero's conduct.
- May 11        Four White Warriors murder Fr. Alfonso Navarro and his fifteen-year-old companion, Luis Torres.
- May 17        The first massacre of Aguilares takes place. Over fifty peasants are killed by the army. Three Jesuit priests are arrested and expelled.
- May 18        Monseñor Romero tries to go to Aguilares but the National Guard will not let him through. The National Guard desecrates the village church.

- June 19      Monseñor Romero goes to Aguilares to celebrate the restoration of the parish church and to install the new pastor.
- June 21      The White Warriors warn all Jesuits to leave El Salvador within 30 days, after which they and their institutions would become “military targets.”
- July 1        Monseñor Romero refuses to attend the inauguration of the new president, General Carlos Humberto Romero (no relation).
- July 11-13    The El Salvadoran bishops meet as a group to discuss policy issues. In general, the bishops, except for one, and the Nuncio disagree with Romero’s policies and actions.
- July 21        The deadline the White Warriors had given the Jesuits to leave El Salvador “or else.”
- United States House Sub-Committee on International Organizations holds hearings on religious persecutions in El Salvador.
- August 10     Monseñor Romero meets with President Romero to “reach an understanding.” This effort fails.
- August 15     Monseñor Romero’s birthday. The official opening of the chancery “snack bar” which he championed.



- August 21      Monseñor Romero visits Aguilares again to consecrate the new tabernacle which had been desecrated by the National Guard.
- August 26      National Guard and Treasury Police attack catechists in the rural areas, killing and kidnapping them. Romero visits the attacked villages and the families of those killed or “disappeared.”
- October          Bishop Revelo, El Salvador’s delegate to Bishops’ Synod in Rome, charges that the best and brightest rural catechists are Marxists or under Marxist influence. Monseñor Romero writes Revelo and the Nuncio letters to protest this charge.
- November        *La Opinion* and *La Prensa Grafica* print many articles accusing Romero of being a Marxist and of supporting violence. In general, the press of El Salvador carry many articles and advertisements seeking to discredit Romero.
- December 1      Monseñor Romero says mass for the mothers of the thousands of “disappeared” persons. He tells them that to denounce injustice is not meddling in politics, but an act of faith against sin.

1978

- January            Monseñor Romero holds a three-day conference on peace and justice. The clergy and religious of the archdiocese release a statement announcing their support of Romero to counter the opposition of the Nuncio and the bishops (except for Bishop Rivera y Damas, Romero's lone supporter).
- February 14      Georgetown University bestows an honorary degree on Romero for his work for peace and human rights.
- March             Three hundred clergy and religious sign a letter which censures the Nuncio's (Emmanuele Gerada) conduct.
- April              Bishops Aparicio, Barrera, Alvarez, and Revelo publish a letter in support of the Nuncio. Aparicio publicly accuses Romero of "dividing and confusing" the nation.
- March/April      ORDEN, a para-military organization based in the countryside, launches a series of attacks on peasant organizations. Romero offers refugee peasants sanctuary in the chancery and in the seminary for which he is censured by some of the bishops.
- April 30          Romero denounces the judiciary of El Salvador for not protecting human rights and for not

- bringing to justice those responsible for the criminal activities of the security forces.
- May Romero again ordered to Rome to explain himself. He writes a long report to Cardinal Biaggi before going to Rome.
- June Romero goes to Rome, meets with Biaggi and Pope Paul VI. The Pope continues to support Romero over the opposition of the Curia and the Nuncio.
- August Romero issues a pastoral letter recognizing the right of peasants to organize and seek their rights. This letter also recognizes the right of a people to use force in protecting themselves against "an evident and prolonged tyranny that seriously attacks the fundamental rights of the person and dangerously harms the common good..."
- August 6 Pope Paul VI dies suddenly. The Nuncio, Cardinal Casariego of Guatemala, and President Romero seek to have Monseñor Romero removed from office.
- September John Paul I dies "mysteriously."
- October 16 John Paul II becomes Pope.
- November Monseñor Romero nominated by British Parliament for the Nobel Peace Prize.

- November 28 Fr. Ernesto "Neto" Barrera, a young priest who worked with labor unions, is killed along with four members of the FPL in a shoot-out with security forces.
- December Romero decides to give Fr. Barrera a priestly burial even though there is evidence he was a member of the FPL.
- December Bishop Antonio Quarracino of Avellaneda, Argentina, is appointed Apostolic Visitor to San Salvador and investigates Monseñor Romero. He recommends to Rome that an Apostolic Administrator be named to rule the archdiocese, leaving Romero only in charge of strictly religious duties.

1979

- January 20 Fr. Octavio Ortiz, and four young men, are killed by the police who attack some thirty young people on retreat at the diocesan retreat center. The government maintained this retreat was a clandestine meeting of subversives. In his homily, Romero calls the government's account of this incident "a lie from beginning to end."
- January 22 Monseñor Romero goes to the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Puebla, Mexico. The Pope had appointed him an extraordinary delegate to this conference to represent the *comunidades de base* of all Latin

America. The El Salvadoran bishops had refused to elect him to be their representative to this conference.

- April/May** Romero goes to Rome again where Pope John Paul informs him that Bishop Quarracino had recommended that an Apostolic Administrator be named to govern the Archdiocese of San Salvador. In Rome, Romero also discovers a document sent to Rome by Bishops Aparicio, Alvarez, Barrera, and Revelo in which they accuse Romero of being a Marxist and Rutilio Grande of being a leftist terrorist.
- May 1** The government illegally arrests five leaders of an opposition labor party. Members of the party occupy the cathedral to protest these arrests.
- May 8** Security forces open fire on a small group of demonstrators in front of the cathedral. Twenty-five are killed, seventy are wounded. This event was recorded by international TV crews which were covering the demonstration.
- May 22** Security forces open fire on another small group of demonstrators, killing fourteen.
- June 20** The White Warriors kill Fr. Rafael Palacios.

- July 19            The Sandinistas overthrow Somoza in Nicaragua. Romero publicly expresses his joy over Somoza's ouster.
- July 22            In his homily, Romero speaks of the proper role of Christians in revolution and social change, using Nicaragua as an example.
- August 6           Romero issues his fourth pastoral letter in which he again recognizes the right of a people to use force when there is no other remedy. He also distinguishes between Marxism as an ideology which he condemns and Marxism as a tool of social and economic analysis which ought to be judged by its demonstrated merits. Further, he repeats that the Church equally condemns the sins of liberal capitalism as well as those of Marxism. He says: "The fear of Marxism keeps many from confronting the oppressive reality of liberal capitalism."
- September        Romero receives a crude death threat from the White Warriors. He sends the threat to the Minister of Defense. Several churches are occupied by various popular organizations seeking justice.
- October 7         Romero's friend, Apolinario Serrano, a peasant leader, is assassinated along with several other peasants. Romero is secretly approached by a group of reform-minded colonels who seek his support and advice con-

cerning their plot to oust General Romero. Romero offers advice but refuses to endorse a coup.

**October 14** In his Sunday homily which is always broadcast throughout El Salvador via the archdiocesan radio station YSAX, Romero lists the deeds of General Romero's government, concluding: "This government has emptied the prisons of political prisoners only to fill the cemeteries with the dead."

**October 15** With U.S. support, the coup against General Romero is successful. The reform-minded colonels set-up a military/civilian junta to run the country. This junta, on paper, represents the first break in military rule of El Salvador since 1932.

Many observers consider this coup to be the most important event in the modern history of El Salvador. They see it as the first genuine opportunity for a truly democratic, coalition government.

**November** During the three weeks following the coup, the progressive military officers swiftly lost control of their own coup to the very generals they had sought to remove. Thus, their efforts to eliminate corruption, control the death squads, and establish a civilian government were entirely defeated. In fact, more innocent civilians were killed under this civil-

ian government than under the military government of General Romero.

- December 19 Leftist militants seize the chancery and other archdiocesan offices to protest Romero's support of the junta.
- December 28 The civilian members of the junta resign to protest the murder and repression of workers, peasants, and religious. The Christian democrats decide to form a new junta with the military.

1980

- January The Christian democrats try to organize a new government. They fail to attract capable civilian leaders and they fail to get the military to keep its promises concerning reform and control of the death squads.
- January 6 In his Sunday homily, Romero praises those civilians who resigned from the junta and asks the military members to resign as well, especially colonel Jose Guillermo Garcia who was closely identified with the death squads.
- January For the first time, the various groups and organizations opposed to government repression united in a broad coalition which included Christian democrats as well as communists. Also, two of the three armed resistance groups agree to join forces.



## **ARCHBISHOP ROMERO'S OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER**

*February 18, 1980*

In the last few days, news has appeared in the national press that worries me greatly. According to the reports, your government is studying the possibility of economic and military support and assistance to the present junta government.

Because you are a Christian and because you have shown that you want to defend human rights, I venture to set forth for you my pastoral point of view concerning this news and to make a request.

I am very worried by the news that the government of the United States is studying a form of abetting the arming of El Salvador by sending military teams and advisors to "train three Salvadoran battalions in logistics, communications and intelligence." If this information from the newspapers is correct, the contribution of your government, instead of promoting greater justice and peace in El Salvador, will without doubt sharpen the injustice and repression against the organizations of the people who repeatedly have been struggling to gain respect for their most fundamental human rights.

The present junta government, and above all the armed forces and security forces, unfortunately have not demonstrated their capacity to resolve, in political and structural practice, the grave national problems. In general they have only reverted to repressive violence, producing a total of deaths and injuries much greater than in the recent military regimes whose systematic violation of human rights was denounced by the Inter-American Committee on Human Rights.

The brutal form in which the security forces recently attacked and assassinated the occupiers of the headquarters of the Christian Democratic Party in spite of what appears to be

the lack of authorization for this operation from the junta government and the party is an indication that the junta and the party do not govern the country, but that political power is in the hands of the unscrupulous military who only know how to repress the people and promote the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy.

If it is true that last November "a group of six Americans were in El Salvador...providing \$200,000 in gas masks and flak jackets and instructing about their use against demonstrators," you yourself should be informed that it is evident since then that the security forces, with better personal protection and efficiency, have repressed the people even more violently using lethal weapons.

For this reason, given that as a Salvadoran and as archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador I have an obligation to see that faith and justice reign in my country, I ask you, if you truly want to defend human rights, to prohibit the giving of this military aid to the Salvadoran government. Guarantee that your government will not intervene directly or indirectly with military, economic, diplomatic or other pressures to determine the destiny of the Salvadoran people.

In these moments we are living through a grave economic and political crisis in our country, but it is certain that it is increasingly the people who are awakening and organizing and have begun to prepare themselves to manage and be responsible for the future of El Salvador. Only they are capable of overcoming the crisis.

It would be unjust and deplorable if the intrusion of foreign powers were to frustrate the Salvadoran people, were to repress them and block their autonomous decisions about the economic and political path that our country ought to follow. It would violate a right which we Latin American bishops meeting in Puebla publicly recognized when we said: "The

legitimate self-determination of our people that permits them to organize according to their own genius and the march of their history and to cooperate in a new international order.”

I hope that your religious sentiments and your feelings for the defense of human rights will move you to accept my petition, avoiding by this action worse bloodshed in this suffering country.

# ACT ONE

## THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

### SCENE ONE: The Selection/Consecration

(1)

*The GUARDIANS speak from their respective compass points (of the theater or of the stage): CHAC, from the south, GHANAN, from the east, AHPUCH from the north, and KUKULCAN from the west.*

CHAC.

Where there was neither heaven nor earth  
The Word declared itself.

GHANAN.

The Word unfolded itself, all beauty and grace.  
And all the vastness of eternity shuddered.

AHPUCH.

And the Word asked its children:  
Which one of you will light this world  
and give it life, for now it stands  
In cold and darkness.

KUKULCAN.

And all were afraid.  
For each knew the price.

AHPUCH.

The Word asked again:

Which one of you will give light to the world?

Which one of you will give the world the gift of life?

*(The ceremonial drums beat. Then the chanting of DEMONSTRATORS is heard.)*

(2)

*(ROMERO enters alone. He has just been installed as the new Archbishop of San Salvador by the Apostolic Nuncio. He is still partially attired in the vestments from this ceremony. He hears the chanting of the demonstrators in the street protesting the Government's handling of the recent election. He goes to the window, looks out upon them, starts to pray. Enter the NUNCIO in regular attire. Throughout this subscene the chanting of the DEMONSTRATORS presses upon ROMERO.)*

NUNCIO *(responding to the demonstrators chanting and ROMERO's praying)*. Those people never tire of their parades. *(Joins ROMERO at the window.)* We'll never get to lunch on time.

ROMERO. There is considerable evidence that the government tampered with the results of the election.

NUNCIO. My dear Oscar, if they had power there wouldn't be any elections. These revolutionaries think themselves pure and virtuous. They don't know themselves. That's the difference between them and us. *(Pause.)* These are sad times, Oscar. All order has collapsed. How did you put it? So eloquent: "We must keep to the center, hold to the traditional way...Our mission is eminently religious and transcendent..."

ROMERO. While seeking justice...I said while seeking justice.

NUNCIO (*ignoring ROMERO*). "Our duty," you said, "is to serve our priests and the duty of our priests is to serve the religious needs of the people, not politics." (*While the NUNCIO speaks, ROMERO takes out a small vial which contains a liquid medicine for his stomach. He takes some of the medicine.*) You have a way with words. (*The NUNCIO notices ROMERO taking the medicine.*) Even those who think you without stomach for the job admit that. It's getting late, Oscar, it wouldn't look right to keep President Molina waiting.

ROMERO. Please give the president my apologies.

NUNCIO. A missed lunch is a missed opportunity, and, it can be misconstrued.

ROMERO. I'll send him a personal note.

NUNCIO. Oscar, an illness, even a real illness has political implications. In El Salvador, you are the Church, and that means the Church won't be sitting next to the president at lunch.

ROMERO. I'm sure you'll see to it that everyone properly interprets my absence.

NUNCIO. When the Holy Father asked me who should be archbishop, I chose you.

ROMERO. Yes, I know. Thank you.

NUNCIO. It isn't your thanks that I want. (*Beat.*) Take a little holiday, Oscar. Take a rest, build up your strength. (*The chanting intrudes.*) I'm going to the shore myself. Too noisy here. Disturbs the digestion.

ROMERO. I was planning to leave tomorrow for Santa Maria, to make my retreat.

NUNCIO. Excellent. Don't worry about things here. (*The chanting gets louder.*) These parades won't last forever. (*The NUNCIO starts to exit. Stops.*) When you get back, I insist you see my personal physician. We must fix this

stomach of yours. *(The NUNCIO exits. The chanting of the DEMONSTRATORS nags at ROMERO's conscience, pulls him to the window. He contemplates what is happening on the street. Suddenly gunfire is heard. There are sounds of people screaming and running in panic. ROMERO flees.)*

(3)

OFFSTAGE VOICES.

- Where is Romero?
- Where is the Monsenor?
- We are dying!
- Where is Romero?
- Where is the Archbishop!?

*(In the commotion ANNE and HECTOR enter. They run into each other. They are fleeing the National Guard.)*

ANNE. Hector, thank God, you're okay.

HECTOR. Where's Romero.

ANNE. In Santa Maria...on retreat.

HECTOR. The bastard! I told you he's one of them. This was planned!

ANNE. We've got to stop this. See if you can get through to Monsenor Chavez. Perhaps he can do something. I'll try to get through to the American ambassador.

*(The gunshots get closer and louder. They BOTH flee. The GUARDIANS present themselves.)*

AHPUCH. Ahpuch, Lord of Death.

GHANAN. Ghanan, Lord of Corn.

CHAC. Chac, Lord of Rain.

KUKULCAN (*center stage and forward*). Kukulcan, Lord of Life.

CHAC. To us was entrusted the creation.

ALL. We are the guardians!

GHANAN. To us was entrusted the care of the peoples of this land:

AHPUCH. Of Chiapas

GHANAN. Of the Yucatan

CHAC. Of Guatemala

GHANAN. Of Honduras

AHPUCH. Of El Salvador.

ALL. We are the Bacab Balam! We are the Jaguar Priests of the Sun! (*KUKULCAN places his great shield at the apex of what will become the sun/cross tomb monument for ROMERO.*)

AHPUCH. To us was entrusted the sacrifice!

KUKULCAN. Then and forever!

## SCENE TWO: The Call To Service

*ANNE and HECTOR in the chancery. One week later.*

ANNE. Give me a cigarette.

HECTOR. Why, Sister Anne, I thought you quit smoking for Lent.

ANNE. I need the butt-ends to kill the aphids on my begonias.

HECTOR. Women are not supposed to smoke in front of archbishops.

ANNE. If an archbishop doesn't want me to smoke, he shouldn't summon me to the chancery and keep me wait-



ing for an hour. (*HECTOR gives her a cigarette. She lights it herself.*)

HECTOR. Come the revolution...

ANNE. I know...there will be no aphids on my begonias.

HECTOR. No. They have to live too. Come the revolution we shall summon the Archbishop to explain himself to us and we'll keep him waiting for two hours.

ANNE. God! I hate waiting, especially to be told I've been naughty and have to be sent home...especially when I've already decided to go home.

HECTOR. Quit before you're fired. Saves face. Did they teach you that at the University of Chicago?

ANNE. Unfortunately, I've been educated for success only. First my father, then my teachers. No one ever taught me anything about failure.

(*RUTILIO enters.*)

RUTILIO. My God, (*Greeting in Spanish to HECTOR.*) it's good to see you. (*RUTILIO embraces them both.*) I heard you were both trapped in Rosario Church.

ANNE. We were lucky.

HECTOR. Anne's good looks got us through the (National) Guard lines.

RUTILIO. Thank God you're okay. How many died?

ANNE. Anywhere between eighty and three hundred. It's hard to tell. We're conducting a canvass.

HECTOR. Our new Archbishop was conveniently out of town.

RUTILIO. He was on retreat.

HECTOR. It was planned.

ANNE. Since he took office, the government has expelled six priests and four nuns.

RUTILIO. I'm sure he had nothing to do with that.

ANNE. He didn't stop it.

RUTILIO. He was trained as a spiritual director, not a politician. Give him a chance.

HECTOR. We don't have time for on-the-job training. People are dying. Don't let your friendship with him cloud your vision.

ANNE. We need a leader, now.

HECTOR. He's a weak old woman. (*Repeats in Spanish to RUTILIO.*) That's why they picked him. They're going to use him to destroy us.

ANNE. One more weak old woman out of you, Hector, and I'm going to abandon a lifetime of nonviolence.

RUTILIO. Don't prejudge him. He's a good man.

HECTOR. We don't need a saint. We need a prince. Someone who knows power and how to use it.

*(Enter ROMERO. Those who are seated rise.)*

ROMERO. Sorry to keep you waiting. (*He embraces RUTILIO.*) Good to see you, my friend. Please be seated. I have called you here to discuss your work with the grass-roots communities. Some of your communities have been conducting Eucharistic services without a priest...

ANNE. Monsenor, if they waited for a priest, they could only have mass twice a year.

ROMERO. Lay people must not usurp the role of the priest.

RUTILIO. These are extreme situations, Monsenor, extreme times. The people are not attacking the authority of the Church. They are meeting their needs for the sacraments.

ROMERO. Your Jesuit seminarians, Rutilio, are organizing the campesinos of Aguilares into labor unions. That's politics, not religion.

HECTOR. Justice is the work of every Christian.

ROMERO. And you, Fr. Navarez, have been leading workers on strikes, teaching them Marxist economics.

HECTOR. Before we talk about us, I want to talk about you. I want to know why you were so conspicuously absent when the National Guard was murdering our people in Plaza Libertad.

ROMERO (*visibly disturbed*). Church law requires that I make a retreat before I assume the responsibilities of my office.

HECTOR. How convenient for the government death squads.

ROMERO. I needed to prepare myself.

HECTOR. Those who plunder the people are always ready. They don't need to go on retreats to prepare themselves. You went to Santa Maria because you knew they were planning to attack us. Whose side are you on?!

ROMERO. I'm on no one's side! (*Takes medicine.*) I am pastor to all the people.

HECTOR. I know that's what they taught you to say in Rome, but this is the real world. Here, in El Salvador, you are on the side of the poor or you're on the side of the Oligarchy.

ROMERO. In the real world, Hector, taking sides leads to death. The only place taking sides accomplishes anything is in your ideological fantasies. There is no necessary antagonism between the rich and the poor. The rich are called to service.

HECTOR. They are wolves!

ROMERO. The rich are called to use their wealth and position for the welfare of the whole community.

ANNE. The Fourteen Families take the wealth of this nation and put it into Swiss bank accounts.

RUTILIO. Monsenor, there are those who say you were made Archbishop to destroy us.

ROMERO. The government sees your communities as communist cells. My brother bishops see your communities as threats to—

ANNE (*interrupting*). What do you see us as?

*(As ROMERO contemplates his answer, the GUARDIANS appear and slowly surround him. They are voices of his conscience, reminding him of the Gospel. He speaks to them as if they were Jesus and he were Peter.)*

KUKULCAN. Simon Peter, why are you troubled?

AHPUCH. Are they casting out devils in my name?

ROMERO. Yes, Lord.

GHANAN. Are they curing the sick in my name?

ROMERO. Yes, Lord.

CHAC. Are they preaching the Gospel to the poor?

ROMERO. Yes, Lord.

ALL. Are these not the signs of the kingdom? Are these not the signs of the reign of God?

KUKULCAN. Then, why are you troubled? (*ROMERO returns to ordinary time and space.*)

ROMERO. I need more time...I will visit every family who lost someone in the massacre in Plaza Libertad. We will have a public funeral mass—

HECTOR (*interrupting*). We don't need prayers.

RUTILIO. Monsenor, my people need your support. The plantation owners keep taking more and more of their land.

ROMERO. We shall protect their lands in the courts.

ANNE. We have cases pending in the courts since 1970.

HECTOR. Elementary politics: The landowners own the judges.

ROMERO. I will speak personally to President Molina.

HECTOR. That will accomplish nothing and you know it.

ROMERO (*angry*). What would you have me do? Because of your work, already one factory owner has been killed, three factories bombed! Violence breeds violence. Jesus told Peter to sheath his sword. He said: Those who live by the sword shall die by it. We are supposed to be peacemakers.

HECTOR. St. Thomas says a person has a right to defend his liberty with force if necessary.

ROMERO. I will never support violence!

RUTILIO. Monsenor, the United States government is building a road to Aguilares...(*As RUTILIO speaks, the GUARDIANS begin to chant softly.*)

GUARDIANS.

First the Road, then the Soldiers

First the Road, then no Land

RUTILIO. ...once the road is built, the large landowners will extend their cotton plantations. My people will be forced off their land. They'll be forced to move to the city or to work on the plantations. They won't be able to grow food anymore to feed themselves...

*(The chanting of the GUARDIANS builds. The GUARDIANS become visible and encircle ROMERO as the narration develops.)*

ROMERO. I will speak to the American Ambassador.

RUTILIO. Fourteen villagers have died already.

ROMERO. I will speak to President Molina.

RUTILIO. My people can't eat cotton!

ROMERO. We must educate all sides. Violence is not the answer. Jesus stood naked before his accusers. Before the entire might of Rome and Jerusalem he stood naked. We

follow him, not Karl Marx, not even Thomas Aquinas. We are priests and nuns of Jesus Christ. We are dedicated to the Gospel, to the conversion of all peoples, to the reconciliation of all classes, rich and poor. You don't do that with a gun!

**HECTOR.** With a prayer, I suppose. (*AHPUCH hands ROMERO a note.*)

**ROMERO.** There's been some trouble in Aguilares...paratroopers.

**ANNE.** Oh my God!

**HECTOR.** The bastards! (*RUTILIO exits.*)

**ROMERO.** Rutilio, I'll go with you. (*Exit ROMERO.*)