Oscar Romero’s conversion to (costly) love – by theologian Normal Wirzba

What love requires from us and how our hearts need to be transformed are movingly illustrated in the life of Oscar Romero [1917–1980], the former archbishop of San Salvador. Romero came to this realization about the personally transforming nature of love in a profound but costly way…. In his role as priest and then bishop, he assumed that the ways of God were in fairly close alignment with the priorities of the Roman [Catholic] magisterium and the Salvadoran government. For him, at this time, Jesus was not a revolutionary figure. Romero saw in Jesus someone who could be used to defend his country’s status quo….

It was by opening himself to the love of God expressed by the common people that Romero found the courage to change and align himself with love. He decided to live in solidarity with the poor and learn from them the ways of love and the ways of God. Poor people, rather than professors, would now be his teachers….

In the sermon just preached [minutes before his assassination], Romero had said that Christ’s gospel teaches that:

One must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us, and that those who try to fend off the danger will lose their lives, while those who out of love for Christ give themselves to the service of others will live, like the grain of wheat that dies, but only apparently. If it did not die, it would remain alone. The harvest comes about only because it dies, allowing itself to be sacrificed in the earth and destroyed. Only by undoing itself does it produce the harvest [see John 12:24].

As Romero had come to see, love does not allow people to flee or shield themselves from the pain or the troubles of this life. Genuine lovers move deeply into the life-and-death dramas of this world, like a plant that sinks roots deep into fertile soil, and there give themselves wholly to the flourishing of life. To withhold oneself from love is to withhold oneself from participating in a complete life.…

Love is the outbound movement that trains people to heal injustice and kindly embrace the world.

From the daily email of Franciscan Father Richard Rohr, 2/21/2023, <https://email.cac.org/t/d-e-zdjite-tlkrtrjjdh-f/> -- quoting:

* Norman Wirzba, Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 4–5, 6, 7.
* Óscar Romero, homily, March 24, 1980, in *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, by Óscar Romero, trans. Michael J. Walsh, anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, 2020), 209–210.