



Óscar Arnulfo Romero: A Most Unlikely Saint

An All Saints Day Reflection, 2018

By
His Excellency
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“How beautiful will be the day when all the baptized understand that their work, their job, is a priestly work, that just as I celebrate Mass at this altar, so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his workbench, and each metalworker, each professional, each doctor with the scalpel, the market woman at her stand, is performing a priestly office! How many cabdrivers, I know, listen to this message there in their cabs? You are a priest at the wheel, my friend, if you work with honesty, consecrating that taxi of yours to God, bearing a message of peace and love to the passengers who ride in your cab.”
(St. Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*, November 20, 1977)

Dear People of God:

(1) In many ways, Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez of San Salvador, who was canonized on October 14, 2018, is a most unlikely saint. At the same time, he is a saint for our time and I am blessed to have met him. Since many of you may not know much about him, I would like to share these reflections with you from a somewhat personal perspective. The life of the Church’s newest saint is a life for our time and his story is one that should be better known by Catholics in southern Illinois, throughout the United States and around the world. He is a model of the kind of courage and compassion needed in our fractured world. I encourage the children preparing for Confirmation at Eastertide to consider St. Óscar Romero as their patron

and model of Christian discipleship. And since he was born August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and was murdered March 24th, the day before the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, his story is a timely meditation for the season of Advent and Christmastide when we are all praying fervently that the Lord Jesus Christ will be born anew in our hearts and in the cold stable of our world.

I. The Bishop and the Archbishop

(2) After Archbishop Romero, 62, was brutally murdered while celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence on Sunday evening, March 24, 1980, I knew that Bishop James A. Hickey (1920-2004) of Cleveland would want to participate in the Liturgy of Christian Burial. He was a great admirer of the Archbishop and he felt a genuine concern for the suffering poor of El Salvador. We spoke about them often during the years when I was his Theological Consultant and Research Assistant. Several years earlier, he had commissioned Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Ms. Jean Donovan of Cleveland to serve as missionaries in El Salvador. Their presence in the country meant that the Bishop took a keen interest in the political strife there. On December 2, 1980, just nine months after Archbishop Romero's murder, Sister Kazel and Ms. Donovan, along with Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford of New York, were violently attacked, raped, and murdered. In Archbishop Hickey's eyes (he became Archbishop of Washington in August 1980) they were, like Archbishop Romero, martyrs who died because of their service in the name of Jesus Christ to the poor and the oppressed. Whenever I entered Cardinal Hickey's private chapel, I saw the photographs of the slain missionaries and the slain Archbishop on the wall where I believe they remained for the rest of his life.

(3) It was through Bishop Hickey that I met Archbishop Romero and began to gain a greater knowledge about the civil war that was raging in El Salvador. It had been my hope to go with Bishop Hickey to San Salvador for the funeral. But circumstances prevented me from accompanying him. Hundreds of thousands attended the Funeral Mass on March 30, 1980. During the funeral, Ernesto Cardinal Corripio Ahumada of Mexico, the personal representative of Pope John Paul II, spoke of the Archbishop as a "beloved, peacemaking man of God whose blood will give fruit to brotherhood, love, and peace." As he spoke, violence broke out. A bomb exploded at the far edge of the plaza, gunfire and smoke bombs caused the crowd to stampede. More than forty people were killed. It was widely reported that government security forces threw bombs into the crowd and that those who fired into the chaos were members of the army wearing civilian clothes. They were firing from the rooftop of the National Palace. The body of the slain Archbishop was hastily buried in a crypt under the sanctuary of the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador in the midst of the gunfire.

(4) When Bishop Hickey returned to Cleveland from the funeral, he was clearly distressed by the fact that violence and death had erupted during a liturgy where so many thousands of people had gathered to pray for a man who had dedicated his life to challenging those who violently oppressed the poor, a man whose name had been recently suggested for the Nobel Peace Prize. Some weeks later when we were talking about the life and death of Archbishop

Romero, I could see the sadness in his eyes as he spoke, a sadness that was intensified by the December murders of the women missionaries. I asked the Bishop if he thought Archbishop Romero would ever be canonized. He said, “Well, in the eyes of those he served so unselfishly, he is already a saint. However, as far as formal canonization by the Church is concerned, he may be an unlikely saint because he was killed in the midst of such complex political turmoil. There may always be those who say he died because he meddled in politics when he should have stuck to strictly religious matters. Or, that he was led astray by Liberation Theology. But, to me, he is truly a saint because he, like Christ Himself, was willing to lay down his life for others.”

(5) Thirty-eight years later, when I learned that His Holiness, Pope Francis would canonize Archbishop Romero, I was pleased that I was able to be present for the Mass of Canonization in the great square in front of the Basilica of St. Peter. Under a bright blue sky on a summer-like day, dozens of ambassadors to the Holy See and more than 100,000 pilgrims from around the world gathered with thousands of priests, hundreds of bishops, and many cardinals as Pope Francis solemnly proclaimed seven new saints of the Church.

(6) Each of these new saints lived unique and inspirational lives. St. Vincent Romano (1751-1831), a faithful parish priest from Torre del Greco, Italy; St. Francesco Spinelli (1853-1913), founder of the Institute of the Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament; St. Nunzio Sulprizio (1817-1836), a nineteen year old layman who, during his long illness with cancer, prayed that his suffering would bring others to Christ; St. Nazaria Ignacia Mesa (1889-1943), foundress of the Congregation of the Missionary Crusaders of the Church; St. Maria Katharina Kasper (1820-1898), foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ; St. Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini) (1897-1978), who presided over the final sessions of the Second Vatican Council and who wrote the encyclicals *Humanae Vitae*, on the regulation of human life, and *Populorum Progressio*, which taught the world that the path to peace must be paved with justice.

II. The Unlikely Saint’s Life Changing Experiences

(7) The life stories of these six saints make us think of them as likely candidates for canonization. The life of the seventh, St. Óscar Romero (1917-1980), might cause many to consider him an unlikely candidate.

(8) Formed in the spirituality of Opus Dei, Óscar Romero was ordained to the priesthood in Rome on April 4, 1942. The young priest remained in Rome to earn his Doctorate in Theology by writing a dissertation on Christian perfection in ascetical theology. The Bishops Conference of El Salvador appointed him Secretary of the Conference in 1966. At the same time, he was editor of *Orientación*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese. In this position, some criticized him as “too conservative” because the paper defended the official teachings of the Catholic Church.



Saint Paul VI and Saint Óscar Romero

(9) Pope Paul VI, who would be canonized with him, appointed Father Romero as Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador in 1970. The Pope transferred him to the poor, rural Diocese of Santiago de María in 1974. In 1977, the Pontiff transferred him again, naming him Archbishop of San Salvador. Certain priests, whose deep concern for the poor was influenced by what some Catholics considered a Marxist interpretation of Liberation Theology, were unhappy with his appointment, believing him to be “too conservative”. However, many government officials favored the appointment precisely because of his conservative reputation.

(10) Within weeks after his February 23rd installation, Archbishop Romero had profound experiences that triggered a transformation in his understanding of his ministry as a priest and bishop. His good friend, Fr. Rutilio Grande, S.J., and two companions were murdered March 12, 1977. Fr. Grande had been very involved in developing self-reliance groups among the poor sugar cane workers to enable them to confidently hold their own in the face of oppression. His murder seems to have shaken the Archbishop to his very core. He did not simply grieve the terrible loss of his dear friend. The emotional and spiritual turmoil born from seeing the bullet-riddled body of Fr. Grande brought about a deeper grasp of the meaning of his vocation. He expressed this call within a call when he said: "When I looked at Rutilio lying there dead I thought, 'If they have killed him for doing what he did, then I too have to walk the same path.'" These words seem to have been uttered from the depth of his soul. He announced that he and the Church could no longer be a part of any official government ceremony until the murderers were brought to justice. The Sunday after the murders, he had only one Mass at the Cathedral, a *misa única* — one Mass celebrated for those who had been slain. Tens of thousands attended. After these painful experiences, Archbishop Romero became more aggressively engaged in the struggles of the impoverished people of his country, speaking out about the political and governmental forces that maintained social injustice, and condemning torture and frequent assassinations. Like Jesus Himself, he had become the voice of the voiceless in San Salvador, a city named in honor of Jesus, the Holy Savior.

(11) In October 1979, a coup d'état brought the Revolutionary Government Junta of El Salvador to power as paramilitary right-wing groups and the government were accused again and again of human rights abuses. (The Junta was eventually dissolved because of its inability to

control the army's repression of the people who were fighting aggressively for agrarian reform, better wages, good health care, the right to form unions and freedom of expression.) Over time, conflicts and violence between the Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group (FMLN) and the military government erupted into the twelve-year brutal Salvadoran Civil War during which more than 80,000 people died, 8,000 were declared "missing" and over one million were displaced.

(12) Archbishop Romero disagreed with the administration of President Jimmy Carter which provided significant military assistance to the new government. When he wrote to the President in 1980, stressing that additional American military aid would "undoubtedly sharpen the injustice and the political repression inflicted on the organized people whose struggle has often been for their most basic human rights," the Archbishop's warning went unheeded. Some of the President's advisors judged the Archbishop to be a weak, well-meaning churchman who had unfortunately fallen under the influence of a group of idealistic and naïve Jesuits. Consequently, the United States continued to provide support and military aid to the government of El Salvador. Considered "too conservative" by some when he was named Archbishop, some clergy and wealthy laity at this point considered him to be "too liberal," writing to the Vatican to complain.

III. The Final Confrontation

(13) Speaking at the *Université catholique de Louvain* in Belgium on February 2, 1980, Archbishop Romero spoke a painful truth that was far from naïve or idealistic.

"In less than three years, more than fifty priests have been attacked, threatened, calumniated. Six are already martyrs — they were murdered. Some have been tortured and others expelled [from the country]. Nuns have also been persecuted. The archdiocesan radio station and educational institutions that are Catholic, or of a Christian inspiration, have been attacked, threatened, intimidated, even bombed. Several parish communities have been raided. If all this has happened to persons who are the most evident representatives of the Church, you can guess what has happened to ordinary Christians, to the *campesinos*, catechists, lay ministers, and to the ecclesial base communities. There have been threats, arrests, tortures, murders, numbering in the hundreds and thousands.... But it is important to note why the Church has been persecuted. Not any and every priest has been persecuted, not any and every institution has been attacked. That part of the Church has been attacked and persecuted that put itself on the side of the people and went to the people's defense. Here again we find the same key to understanding the persecution of the church: the poor."

(14) Shortly after that address, the Archbishop denounced the military government's campaign of violence against all who questioned the military rule. "I implore you, I beg you, I order you, in the name of God: stop the repression!" He spoke to the consciences of the members of the military urging them to disobey orders rather than commit immoral acts of violence. These confrontations angered the leaders of the military. This anger fueled the plot to kill him.

(15) The Archbishop made his plea in a Sunday homily broadcast nationwide on the radio on March 24, 1980. Military leaders who argued that the Church should be silent about political matters decided that he was a thorn in their side stirring up rebellion among the people. In their view, he was taunting them and asking for trouble. They plotted his murder. It was widely publicized that the Archbishop would be celebrating Mass that evening in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence. Many urged the Archbishop not to celebrate this Mass, but he disregarded their advice. The assassins drew lots to determine who would be the gunman. As the Archbishop read the Gospel, the assassins made their way to the chapel. As he was preparing the gifts, he was struck in the heart by one shot.

(16) Thirty years later, Madre Luz Isabel Cuevas, one of the Carmelite sisters with whom the Archbishop lived, recounted the moment of his death, which she witnessed. She wanted to correct inaccurate dramatizations of that terrible moment. When he was shot, the future saint was not elevating the chalice containing the Blood of Christ, as portrayed by Raúl Juliá in the film “Romero.” He was shot as he looked down at the corporal while preparing the gifts of bread and wine. As he fell, he pulled on the altar cloth. This caused the ciborium to tip over scattering unconsecrated hosts. The chalice remained on the altar. Madre Cuevas said, “He fell back toward the arms of the Jesus on the crucifix.” Many interpreted this to mean that in his death Archbishop Romero was truly acting *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ) as priest and victim. He himself became the Body and Blood of Christ for his people.

(17) To this day, no one has been convicted for the Archbishop’s murder. José Napoleón Duarte, who joined the Junta just weeks before the murder, argued that both sides of the conflict could be blamed for the lack of serious investigation of the assassination by the government. Eventually, the United Nations and Robert White, the former US Ambassador to El Salvador, stated that Roberto D'Aubuisson, the extreme right-wing politician and the leader of death squads, gave the order to kill the Archbishop.

(18) After Archbishop Romero’s death, Archbishop Hickey, testifying in 1981 before the House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, said, "Our position is to oppose military aid and intervention from all outside powers." Archbishop Hickey seriously questioned the policy of President Ronald Reagan which continued the position of President Carter by providing support for the military government of El Salvador. Archbishop Hickey was genuinely concerned about a possible Communist takeover in El Salvador; nevertheless, he was against the policy of providing military assistance. In his judgment, providing these weapons simply made the security forces more repressive.

(19) Now, nearly four decades later, Pope Francis has canonized Archbishop Romero, wearing the saint’s cincture stained with the martyr’s blood, which had become for the people of El Salvador the Blood of Christ. Cardinal Hickey would surely have thanked God had he lived to see that day. The Cardinal would have noticed an historic parallel. An Archbishop murdered at the altar, in the manner of England’s Archbishop Thomas à Becket (1118-1170). Becket was murdered in his Canterbury Cathedral by barons of King Henry II who asked, “Will no one rid

me of this meddlesome priest?” Sadly, many in the ruling class in El Salvador felt the same way about Archbishop Romero. Indeed, there were government-supported campaigns against priests who worked on behalf of the poor that distributed fliers declaring, “Be a patriot. Kill a priest!”

(20) Catholic people in El Salvador deeply involved in social change in the country deemed the murder of Archbishop Romero a tragic event equal in impact to the murder of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For them, his canonization, long hoped for, was overdue. Other groups of Catholics in El Salvador who would prefer the Church to be less outspoken on issues of social justice and refrain from criticizing the government and political leaders have been far less enthusiastic. Some have asked: did Archbishop Romero die a martyr for truly living his Catholic faith, or did he die for meddling in Salvadoran politics in the midst of a civil war? The tension between these two points of view may have made the path to canonization slower during pontificates of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis has stated forcefully his judgment that Archbishop Romero was murdered because of hatred of the Catholic faith (*odium fidei*) and not simply for reasons of politics. Clearly, in the slain Archbishop, the Holy Father sees an example of one who lived the “preferential option for the poor.”

(21) Since the Archbishop was a martyr for the faith, it was possible for him to be canonized even if there had been no documented miraculous healing through his intercession. However, a miracle was submitted to the Vatican medical experts and approved by Pope Francis in March 2018.

IV. Liberation and Conscientization



Saint John Paul II and Saint Óscar Romero

(22) In his homily at the canonization, the Pontiff said, “Jesus is radical. *He gives all and he asks all*: he gives a love that is total and asks for an undivided heart. Even today he gives himself to us as the living bread; can we give him crumbs in exchange? We cannot respond to

him, who made himself our servant even going to the cross for us, only by observing some of the commandments. We cannot give him, who offers us eternal life, some odd moment of time. Jesus is not content with a ‘percentage of love’: we cannot love him twenty or fifty or sixty percent. It is either all or nothing.”

(23) St. Óscar Romero did not give Jesus crumbs. He gave his unconditional love. He is generally thought of as a powerful, liberating force for oppressed people in El Salvador, but he was not a student of the Theology of Liberation. On more than one occasion, he said he was not concerned exclusively about material liberation. His commitment to justice and peace was nourished by his faith in the Incarnation of the Word of God. He took seriously the truth that is Jesus Christ the Word that became flesh in history. He rejected abstract, disembodied views of the Gospel insisting that the Good News can only be salvific if it engages the world. His priority was the liberation that comes from Jesus Christ and His Church, the profound liberation born of the supernatural, interior reform and transformation of individual lives. This liberation leads to the liberation of the larger community that embraces and transcends cultural, political, and social concerns. St. Óscar Romero’s Christ-centered liberation shunned violence as a source of liberation.

(24) I have not seen any documentation suggesting that St. Óscar Romero ever studied *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the seminal works of the Brazilian adult educator and political organizer Paulo Freire. But, I see at least an important partial kinship between St. Óscar Romero’s experiences of religious, spiritual, Christian and moral conversion and Dr. Freire’s protean idea of "*conscientizacao*" (Portuguese for “conscientization”, “critical-consciousness”, or “consciousness-raising”). Paulo Freire’s analysis of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed in unjust societies provides a pedagogy that can be liberating to both the powerless and the powerful by moving human awareness from a naïve level to a critical social consciousness. When this happens, a new level of consciousness has the power to show members of society how to come together to establish new social norms, new rules and new procedures that benefit all members of the community. This is authentic liberation.

(25) I believe that the extraordinary transformation in the vision of the Church and society that took place in St. Óscar Romero after the death of his Jesuit friend, Fr. Grande (whose canonization is now under consideration), was an example of "*conscientizacao*" critical-consciousness, illuminated by unswerving Christian faith and enlivened by grace.

(26) Critical-consciousness can impel an individual or a community towards achieving an in-depth understanding of the world around them. This leads to an awareness of social and political contradictions that need to be addressed. Consciousness-raising experiences lead almost inevitably to the commitment to act in ways that change and transform the oppressive elements in the lives of individuals and, more importantly, in whole communities. St. Óscar Romero committed his life to this consciousness-raising with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the social teachings of the Church and the authentic witness of his personal life for the good of all of the people of his country, El Salvador. Of course, the lasting benefits of conscientization could only come about if all parties to the conflict were actually open to inner religious, spiritual,

Christian and moral conversion. History has shown that for many in positions of power in El Salvador, this was not the case.

V. A Saint for Our Time

(27) I began this pastoral reflection on All Saints Day, a day when we honor all of the holy women and men who have gone before us learning their faith, loving their faith, and living their faith to a heroic degree. I am in the midst of my autumn pastoral visits to our Catholic elementary and secondary schools. When I asked the students if they knew the origins of the word Halloween, most said they did not. They were surprised when I informed them that “All Hallow’s Eve”, the day before All Hallow’s or All Saints’ Day gradually became Halloween, the secular day when children dress up in frightful costumes, sometimes evoking the dead (All Souls’ Day). Then they go “trick or treating”. When I asked the children if they knew any saints, they usually said that you have to die to become a saint. But you cannot really become a saint until the Pope makes you a saint after you perform two miracles. I then explained that when the Holy Father officially canonizes a saint, he is not “making them a saint”. He is confirming the sanctity of the lives that they have already lived and declaring them to be worthy of public veneration. And, while miracles are affirmation of saintly lives, they are not essential for sainthood. I pointed out that some of their relatives and friends who have died may well be saints in the Kingdom of Heaven. I reminded them that the saints are not figures in a church window, statues on pedestals or pictures on holy cards. They are real people like them, redeemed sinners who lived complex, challenging lives during which they gave Jesus their whole being and not mere crumbs. I encourage the children, their parents and teachers to strive to be keenly aware of saints in their midst and to strive to become one of them. Then I tell them the story of St. Óscar Romero who lived in the lifetime of their grandparents and their parents. Now, he has been canonized in their own lifetime.

(28) While he is an unlikely saint, St. Óscar Romero is truly a saint for our time. Our country and our world are fortunate to have so many extraordinary people of different religions, different political positions, with very different opinions about current events in the Catholic Church and in the United States, who are nevertheless doing all they can to transform the “city of man” into the “city of God”.

(29) At the same time, every day’s news brings harrowing accounts of division, conflict and wrongdoing. In our Catholic Church, we are confronting the deeply disturbing implications of the sin, scandal, and crime of the abuse of minors by members of the clergy and the inadequate responses of some bishops. This has undermined Catholic trust in priests and bishops, leading a number of them to withhold financial support or walk away from the Church altogether. Worst of all, there is evidence to suggest that this crisis may well have led some young men to forgo considering serving the Church as priests.

(30) Wars that seem unending rage around the world. Leaders of nations are torn between nationalistic concerns about the wellbeing of their countries and the wellbeing of the world, the global community and the planet itself. Women in the #Me Too Movement are confronting the

conscience of the nation because of decades of ignored sexual misconduct by men. Different racial, ethnic and social groups are crying out against systemic injustices that make it difficult for them to prosper. “Black lives matter!” “All lives matter!” The United States is torn by opposing views concerning the appropriate response to the immigration crisis, debating comprehensive immigration reform, building a wall on the nation’s southern border and sending troops to “defend” the border from desperate migrants seeking to enter the country without legal authorization. While the economy is flourishing, it seems to be benefiting the wealthy and the middle class, while those living at or below the poverty level feel a greater hopelessness. The list is long.

(31) St. Óscar Romero, the first canonized saint from El Salvador, is truly a saint for our time, a saint needed in our day. This is not because he had all of the solutions needed for the strife-ridden El Salvador of the 1970s. Nor is it because, if he were alive today, he would have solutions to the many vexing issues we face. He is a saint for our time because he lived and died, faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the turbulence of a messy, complex and conflict-filled era, not unlike our own. He, like St. Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII, navigated the stormy seas of life keeping a good grip on his interior values and beliefs. He knew what he would do and what he would not do. Like Thomas More, he was committed to “say none harm, do none harm, and think none harm.” Like More, Romero lost his life not because of any wrongdoing on his part, but because of the dishonesty and treachery of others. He is a saint for our time because he provides us with the towering example we urgently need.

(32) Most important of all, St. Óscar Romero is a saint for our time because he had the courage to accept the call to conversion, the call to a vocation within a vocation. He was willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit and walk through the door that Providence opened before him without knowing where it would lead. We are called to do the same. As a priest and bishop, I know that walking through that door is far from easy. In faith, we sometimes must walk through the door that Providence opened before us with a mixture of great fear but greater confidence, as the saint did when he walked into the sanctuary of the chapel at Divine Providence Hospital on Sunday evening, March 24, 1980. I pray earnestly that, rather than shunning the priesthood in this time of crises, young men in our Diocese will answer the call wholeheartedly. May they follow our unlikely saint through the door which Providence opens before them.

(33) To walk through that door we do not need to suffer the same profound experience of the ruthless, violent murder of a dear friend as St. Romero did. We do not need to study Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. All we need are hearts full of grace and spirits generated by love. If we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s call to religious, spiritual, Christian and moral conversion, we are on the path to bringing St. Óscar Romero’s world-altering spirituality to our families, our parishes, our neighborhoods, our diocese, our country, our Catholic Church and our world. All we need is a willingness to give the Lord Jesus Christ our whole hearts and not our crumbs!

Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez, pray for us!

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

+Edward K. Braxton

Bishop of Belleville



Sculptures of Mother Elizabeth of Russia, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Óscar Romero, and Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Gallery of 20th-century martyrs at Westminster Abbey, London, England

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Bishop Braxton is the author of the Wisdom Community, the Faith Community, and numerous articles on a wide range of theological and pastoral topics. A former member of the Faculty of Theology at Harvard Divinity School, the University of Notre Dame, and the Catholic University of America, Bishop Braxton has become a leading voice commenting on the Racial Divide in the United States. In 2015, he issued his Pastoral Letter, “The Racial Divide in the United States: A Reflection for the World Day of Peace 2015.” In 2016, he published the companion Pastoral Letter, “The Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement: The Racial Divide Revisited.” This was followed in July 2016 by his Pastoral Statements, “Moral Leadership in Action: All Lives Really Do Matter” and “There Are No Minority Voters.” In January 2017, he published “We, Too, Sing America: The Catholic Church and the Museum of African American History and Culture.” At the invitation of Peter Cardinal Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, the Bishop presided over a session of the Vatican’s international conference marking the 50th anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) in April 2017.

In September 2017, he delivered the 10th Annual Dorothy Day Lecture at Purdue University. Later that month, he addressed the faculty, staff, and students of the National Catholic School of Social Service at The Catholic University of America on “Horizons of Possibilities: The Racial Divide in the United States: Old Wounds Reopened.” On February 1, 2018, he delivered the address “Racial Justice and Peace in Our Day” at Northwestern University’s Sheil Catholic Center. On February 21, 2018, he delivered the 12th Annual Thomas Merton Lecture at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky on “Thomas Merton’s ‘Letter to a White Liberal’ and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s ‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail’.” He is scheduled to give a major address at the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Service in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on January 21, 2019.