

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

A priest for the poor

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

He was a good priest. Father Romero was bright. He was honest. He prayed. He cared about people.

He knew that most people in his country, Salvador, were very poor. He was aware that half the people in his Central American country earned less than \$10 a month. He knew, too, that most of the land was owned by a handful of rich families.

Father Romero helped rich and poor alike. He was kind and generous to the poor. He was popular among his fellow priests.

His bishop liked him and named Father Romero his private secretary. The bishop also put Father Romero in charge of the seminary where young men studied to become priests.

In 1970 the pope named him a bishop. Seven years later the pope named him archbishop of San Salvador, capital of his country.

As Archbishop Romero listened

to the priests of the diocese and to poor farmers, he became more aware that the poor remained poor because they were kept from owning land and earning enough money.

Then something tragic happened. More and more priests became victims of violence. Some members of society objected to the efforts by the priests to help the poor.

Archbishop Romero gradually stood up and spoke out for justice and against violence. He started a weekly radio program. Each Sunday he spoke of Christ's Gospel. He condemned the injustices that hurt the poor. He urged people to respect each other.

His weekly radio sermons became the most popular program in the country. Many poor families listened with earphones. They were afraid of what would happen if they were known to listen to the archbishop's radio program.

The more popular Archbishop Romero became with the poor,



the greater the danger he was in. He regularly received threats of death. Even some of his fellow bishops disagreed with his strong statements.

But the archbishop believed that the church must stand with the poor and speak up for them. He began to speak out more clearly against those who caused the violence. He challenged the leaders of his country to stop the violence and injustice.

He knew his life was in danger,

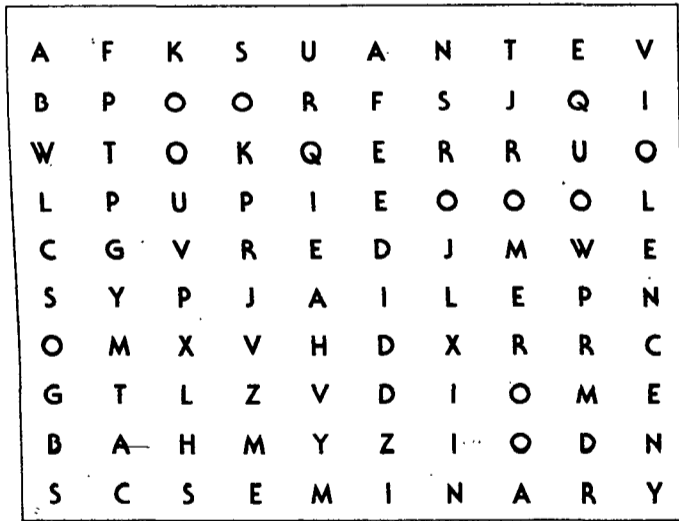
but he continued to speak out — until March 24, 1980. At 6:30 that evening he was celebrating Mass in a hospital. Two men walked to this scene after the homily. They shot the archbishop through the heart.

A fellow bishop called him "St. Romero of the Americas."

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

Hidden Words

Find the words hidden in the puzzle below. They can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal. All the words are in this week's children's story.



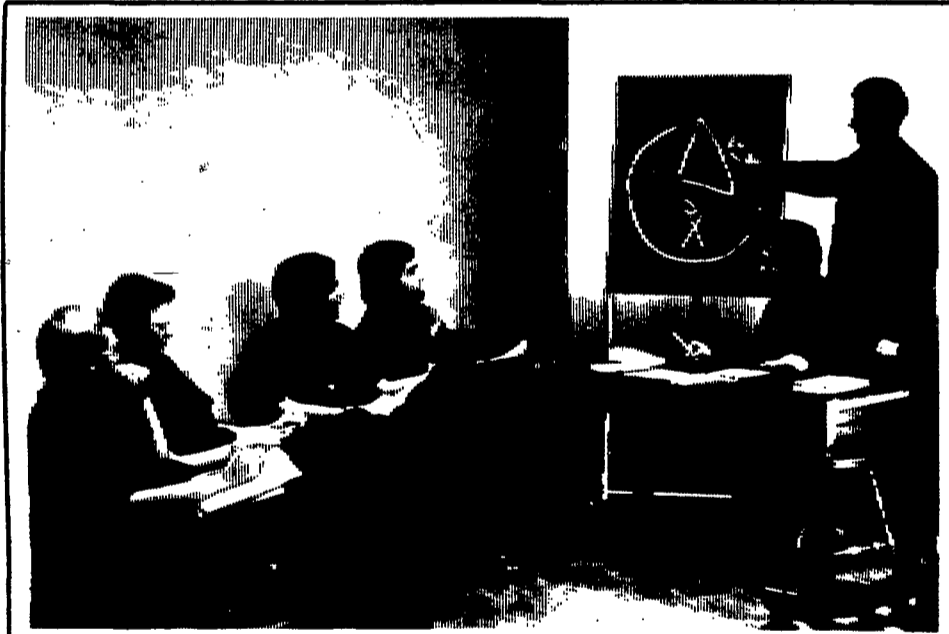
SALVADOR, ROMERO, POOR, RADIO, PRIEST, VIOLENCE, SEMINARY, POPE

HOW ABOUT YOU?

□ Find El Salvador on a map of Central America. See if you can find the city of San Salvador where Archbishop Oscar Romero lived.

Children's Reading Corner

"The Dancing Man" is a story by Ruth Bornstein. Children and adults might enjoy reading it together. Afterward they might talk about how people's special interests and deep desires affect the ways they live their lives. In the story, Joseph, who lives in a village where life is dreary and hard, sees how the world dances. He longs to dance with the world. In a mysterious, wonderful way he is given a pair of dancing shoes long before they fit him. But one day the shoes do fit and Joseph leaves his people to begin a new life. In the end he passes the shoes on to another child in the same way they were given to him. (Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. 1978. Hardback, \$6.95.)



Frontier

There is a frontier ruggedness about young men studying for the priesthood in Alaska. They have to be tough. After ordination, planes, boats and snowmobiles will take them to remote missions in Eskimo villages, logging camps and outposts in the Aleutian Islands.

With funding from the Catholic Church Extension Society, they are now able to pursue the priesthood with intense missionary zeal. They are part of a team that brings God's Word to isolated people here in the United States. But that team can't do

the job alone. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in remote home mission areas.

Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.



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