

## Overview of the history of El Salvador.

- 1821—Central American Independence from Spain
- 1879-1882—Consolidation of land ownership in the country into an oligarchy of 14 families
- 1932—Massacre by Salvadoran military of 20-30,000 peasants in a peasant uprising. This ushers in 50 years of military rule.
- 1952—Robert Gussick, a Missouri synod Lutheran missionary from Milwaukee founds the first Lutheran congregation in El Salvador
- 1962—Rev. Ciro Mejia becomes first Salvadoran Lutheran pastor
- 1979—Catholic priest Rutilio Grande is murdered. He had been active working with the poor in the country.
- 1980—Salvadoran civil war begins.
- March 24, 1980—Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero is assassinated while saying mass.
- December 2, 1980—Four U.S. churchwomen raped and murdered by Salvadoran National Guard.
- January 1982—More than 1000 peasants massacred by US trained and advised troops of the Salvadoran military at El Mozote. US denies reports of the massacre.
- Spring 1982—Opening of Fe y Esperanza refugee camp by Lutheran church.
- April 1983—Detention and torture of Lutheran pastor Medardo Gomez.
- August 6, 1986—Consecration of Medardo Gomez as first Salvadoran Lutheran bishop at Fe y Esperanza refugee camp.
- November 11, 1989—Bishop Gomez is forced into exile in Milwaukee because of threats against his life and other supposed sympathizers with the FMLN.
- November 16, 1989—Murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America.
- January 1992—Peace Accords are signed ending the Salvadoran civil war.
- 1994—El Salvador holds its first presidential election since the war. The election is won by the right-wing ARENA party. The FMLN, the party of former guerrillas from the war, comes in second.
- 1998—Hurricane Mitch
- 1999—Second post-war presidential election. A delegation from Milwaukee, acts as election observers. ARENA wins again.
- 2001—El Salvador switches to US dollar as its currency
- 2001—Two devastating earthquakes
- 2002—FMLN wins a plurality of seats in the Salvadoran legislature
- 2004—ARENA wins presidency again
- 2005—Violence increases; ES has largest murder rate in Latin America
- 2005—Hurricane Stan
- 2006—CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement) implemented

## Transformed by the Cross



## THE STORY OF THE SUBVERSIVE CROSS

The end of 1989 brought an FMLN offensive, with a response from the government and armed forces. The Salvadoran people lived amidst confusion; violence generated more violence. Those in power sought to “eliminate the ideas and thoughts of those, who with their words ... justified social protest.” Church leaders were targets, as evidenced by the six Jesuit priests who were murdered on November 16, 1989.

Those in power had threatened Bishop Gómez with death before. Once, they destroyed his pastoral offices. God protected his servant, the Bishop. On a day that November, Resurrection Lutheran Church was full of refugees, victims of the offensive. Among so many people, the soldiers came seeking the Bishop. They asked for him and not finding him, they insulted him and cursed him; and revealed the orders they had received to assassinate him.

But the Bishop was not present in the church. God had protected him and had him in a secure place. The soldiers captured 12 foreigners and 3 Salvadorans, and they sunk so low as to capture and carry off a cross. A cross for them was subversive, just as the emperors of ancient Rome considered the universal symbol of Christianity subversive.

The cross which they took captive is a special symbol for the people of Resurrection. It is a tribute to God, since one good day, as a special offering to the Lord, the congregation wrote the sins committed against the people upon a plain, white cross. As they identified the sins of their country and their people, they committed themselves to work toward forgiveness, and to be strengthened for liberation. The cross carries messages of hope and love, as a testimony to the transforming power of God.

The soldiers' initial blindness didn't allow them to see the sin that they were committing, because in those moments the power of God was being manifested, bringing to them the prophetic message of liberation and, at the same time, pointing out their sins to them. The cross was imprisoned. There, the cross, apparently passive, was pointing out to soldiers the crime that they were committing in this war against the innocent people and their leaders.

For fear of being captured or assassinated, Bishop Gómez left the country in order to save his life, but was always thinking about the opportune moment to return. God provided a safe haven with friends in Milwaukee.

*This cross is subversive.*

*The cross, together with the 15,  
Were taken by the police.*

*They committed a great error here,*

*Carrying this cross and those people to jail.*

*This abuse of power manifested itself*

*On the cross. The nation's sins were written*

*On the cross to teach us and to make us*

*A prophetic church of liberation.*

*The error of imprisoning the cross*

*Teaches us of the crimes committed*

*Against the pueblo by the leaders.*

*The cross only looks passive.*

*Two months passed with me in exile.*

*Other pastors from other countries came*

*And accompanied to the police.*

*The North American ambassador came to see me.*

*I saw this as an opportunity to liberate the cross.*

*The ambassador talked to the president*

*Who had it delivered to the Presidential Palace.*

*The President then brought it to me at the Church.*

*I've got a photo of him giving it to me*

*Pinned to the cross itself. See for yourself.*

*The pilgrim cross made the journey*

*From the carcel to the Presidential Palace*

*Before coming home. Por eso le decimos ahora*

*La cruz subversiva. This is why*

*We call it the subversive cross.*

Outside the Church where the Jesuits

Were slain, are these words cast in bronze

In letters 12 inches high:

*Con este pueblo*

*No cuesta ser*

*Buen pastor.*

With our people

There is no cost

To being a good pastor.

Giving us the cross and the stories

In the cross, Medardo sings *Tantas cosas*,

So many things.

There is only one cross and it's a cross of life.

The refugees and those in the margins

Have been forgotten.

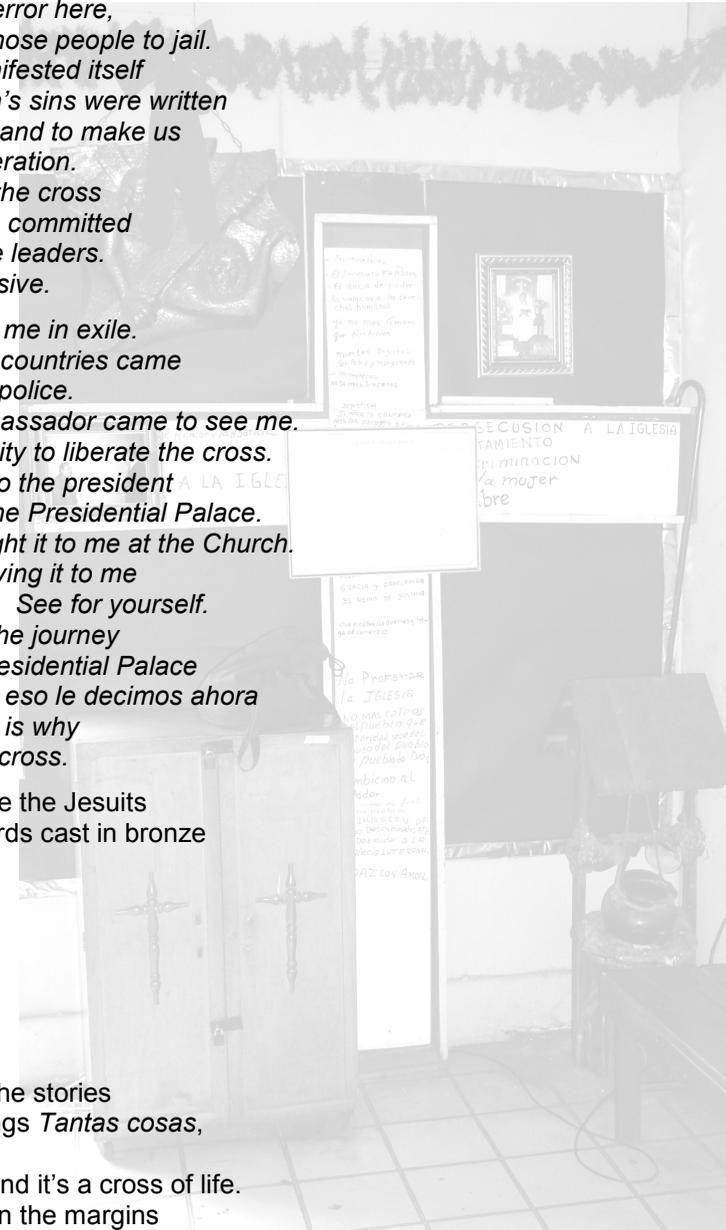
*Nuestro pan de cada día*, our daily bread,

Crosses only look passive, Medardo says.

This cross is an invitation to walk with the poor,

He says, the job remains the same,

Liberate all crosses.



El Salvador  
One cross,  
two stories

Jim Bodeen  
2005

This is a story as story about two crosses  
In San Salvador. One is a cross made from  
Houses destroyed in the earthquake,  
*El terremoto*. The other is the cross

That hangs by the musicians  
In the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection.  
This cross is the subversive cross,  
*La cruz subersiva*. Both crosses

Come from Medardo Gómez,  
The Bishop who pastors the church.  
The Bishop calls the cross made  
From ruins, the Cross of Life —

*No es la cruz de la muerte*, he says  
It's not the cross of death.  
The Subversive Cross is the cross  
That went to prison. The Cross of Life

Is for the Church, maybe for the library.  
The Subversive Cross is for the heart,  
It has other work to do. Bishop Gómez  
Ministers to refugees from the war,

He says he's a refugee himself.  
He says we're all beggars  
*Medardo es El Obispo de la Paz*,  
The bishop of Peace, he calls his Church

A prophetic Church. Now, during the time  
of this telling, a guard has been killed  
At the Lutheran University. Medardo says  
It wasn't just murder, it was Death Squads, *again*.

*Los escuadrones de la muerte*, that operated  
More openly during the time of the war.  
The Death Squad murder of the guard  
Triggers the Bishop's memory

Of the *Cruz Subersiva*, the cross in prison.  
It was November 16, 1989. Six Jesuits killed,  
Two co-workers dead and burned typewriters.  
*Then they came to get me*.

*There were pastors  
From Europe and North America  
Acting as my shields. I went into exile  
In Guatemala. They bombed my church  
Two times. When they couldn't find me  
They took the people in the church. 15 of them.  
They took them captive. 12 foreigners,  
And three people from my church.  
They took my cross to prison, too.*

Two months later, the pastor returned to his country, heeding the calls of the Lutheran people. The Bishop returned to the country accompanied by North American pastors and citizens who were received by the Ambassador of the United States. The Bishop asked the Ambassador to help him to free the cross.

The Ambassador interceded and communicated with the President of El Salvador. Once again the action of God returned to manifest itself. The pilgrim cross made a journey from the prison to the Presidential House, the place where the cross completed its mission of pointing out sins.

Some time later, Bishop Gómez was again accompanied, this time by pastors from Germany. They spoke with the President and finally "The Subversive Cross" was handed over, and returned to Resurrection Lutheran Church.

The cross now is found resting, "timidly but at the same time valiantly," in the church, pointing out sins, injustices and the arduous labor which its members must continue to do in social and Christian accompaniment; a mission which God has entrusted to us so that we might inspire in the people the repentance and the light that leads to liberation.

*Taken from "Pastoral Notebooks 1991" ~ a publication of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod. Edited by Linda Muth.*

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for He has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
He has sent me to announce liberty to the captives  
and give sight to the blind;  
to free the oppressed and  
announce the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19

## THE SUBVERSIVE CROSS LITANY

*based upon the words of Bishop Medardo Gómez*

**Leader:** There is no greater injustice than the one that Jesus suffered in the Cross,

**People:** no greater suffering, no greater treason, no greater pain.

**L:** The Cross is the symbol of the liberation of God.

**P:** There is no greater sign of the salvation story than the Cross of Christ.

**L:** The Cross was an instrument of Roman punishment;

**P:** but as the tool of crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Cross was transformed,

**L:** becoming the Cross of Love,

**P:** The Cross of Faith, the Cross of Hope.

**L:** In the presence of the Crucified One, we find consolation,

**P:** a refuge from our pains and our worries.

**L:** Where there is a Cross, there is a place for prayer

**P:** and a place where we can cry out for divine aid.

**L:** The sins of the world, all the sins committed by humanity are written in the Cross

**P:** and for that reason, the Lamb of God was sacrificed.

**L:** Before the eyes of evil, the Cross of Jesus is subversive,

**P:** because it denounces to the powerful ones, to the rich ones, to the poor ones, to all men and women ... their sins.

**L:** The Cross means life

**P:** and has a mission against death and all the projects of death.



## The Lord's Prayer

**L:** Padre nuestro, que estas en el cielo, santificado sea tu nombre;

**P:** **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**

**L:** Venga a nosotros tu reino,

**P:** **Thy kingdom come,**

**L:** Hágase tu voluntad, en la tierra como en el cielo.

**P:** **Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**L:** Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día,

**P:** **Give us this day our daily bread,**

**L:** Perdona nuestras ofensas, como también nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden.

**P:** **Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**L:** No nos dejes caer en la tentación

**P:** **Lead us not into temptation**

**L:** Y líbranos del mal

**P:** **And deliver us from evil.**

**L:** Porque tuyo es el reino, el poder, y la gloria,

**P:** **For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory**

**L:** Ahora y siempre. Amen.

**P:** **Now and forever. Amen.**