

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.

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.

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“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