

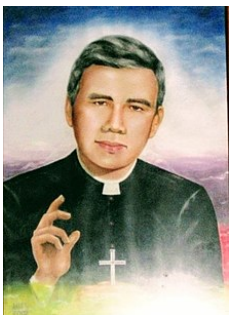
St Mary's, Inverness
The RC Diocese of Aberdeen: SC005122]
The Year of St Ignatius
20 MAY 2021 >31 JULY 2022

SIXTIETH IGNATIAN REFLECTION
IGNATIUS : IMPACT CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO
MODERN MARTYRS



Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

The missionary thrust of the Ignatian enterprise continued in South and Central America. Inevitably the concern for social justice and the identification with the poor led to severe problems.



Foremost among the Jesuits in El Salvador was Fr Rutilio Grande Garcia SJ. Rutilio Grande, the youngest of seven children was born on 5 July 1928 to a poor family in El Paisnal, El Salvador. Following the divorce of his parents he was raised by his older brother and grandmother, a devout and strongly Catholic woman. When he was

twelve the local archbishop selected him to attend the high school [a junior seminary] in San Salvador, the capital city of El Salvador. In his final year in this

Junior Seminary Rutilio Grande joined the Society of Jesus entering the Novitiate when he was seventeen. His Jesuit formation took him to Caracas in Venezuela where the central American Novitiate was based. After two years in Caracas, he made the traditional Jesuit vows of poverty, chastity and, obedience. The next stage in his Jesuit formation took him to Quito in Ecuador. He completed his studies of the humanities there in 1950. The following three years were spent teaching sacred history, and American and local history. The next steps on his road to priesthood were at the Major Seminary of San José de la Montaña. While there he became friendly with a fellow student, Oscar Romero, with whom his later life was entwined. Grande was ordained a priest in mid-1959 in Spain in the city of Oña. In Spain he completed his studies. The early nineteen sixties was a period of intellectual and theological ferment. At this time he attended the *Lumen Vitae Institute* in Brussels in Belgium, where he studied new directions in pastoral ministry. Rutilio Grande was drawn particularly to liturgy being 'inclusive' in which there was as much lay participation as was possible.

When Fr Rutilio Grande returned to El Salvador in 1965 he was appointed the 'Director of Social Action Projects' at the seminary in San Salvador, a position he held for nine years in conjunction with being the Professor of Pastoral Theology. Grande incorporated study of the social sciences to help the students understand the reality within which their Catholic life was being lived. He began a scheme of formation for the seminarians in which they were plunged into "pastoral immersions" into the communities. Grande explained ***"the first contact with the people was to be characterized by a human encounter; to try to enter into their reality in order to leave with common reality."***

Grande sought equilibrium between prayer, study, and apostolic activity. These innovative approaches led to difficulties with the hierarchies, particularly over his criticism of the seminary system.

Fr Grande undertook further study in 1972 at the Latin American Pastoral Institute (IPLA) in Quito, Ecuador. The pastoral theology perspectives [fundamental concerns for the poor and a developing theology of liberation] which followed from the meeting of Latin American bishops at the Medellín Conference in 1968

were now being absorbed. While at IPLA_Rutilio Grande was influenced by the theories about forming individual and social consciences of Paulo Freire. Freire's book *'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed'* looks at ways in which poor people in Latin America were inhibited by a 'colonial' educational system that did not challenge its goals or social context.

When Fr Rutilio Grande returned to El Salvador in 1973, he set up a team-based Jesuit "Mission" to Aguilares in El Salvador. This was community-based evangelism, beginning with an understanding of the Gospel. It was embedded in the lives of the people. This led Fr Grande to speak out on social and political issues. In his engaging and personal way he promoted a "pastoral" liberation ministry. Beginning with the Life and Teaching of Jesus from the Gospels he began an interpretation that sought social change. Lay people were attracted to this and instrumental in it. He addressed issues of land reform, the relationship of rich and poor, liturgical inclusiveness, workers' rights, and making the Catholic faith real for everybody, including the disadvantaged poor. He used to say that "***the Gospel must grow little feet***" if Christ is not to remain in the clouds.

During Grande's time, with other Jesuits, **Christian Base Communities** were formed. Lay people, '**Delegates of the Word**', often led these in the movement towards liberation from unjust systems of land ownership and oppressive Government which protected the rich. In all of this Fr Rutilio Grande was dedicated to organising the poor farmers in gaining respect for their rights. The rich, the landowners and government officials saw all of this as a challenge to their authority, privilege and power.

The attempts of the Government to silence priests who spoke up for the poor were challenged by Fr Grande publicly. In 'The Apopa Sermon' preached on 13 February 1977 Fr Grande denounced the Government : ***I am fully aware that very soon the Bible and the Gospels will not be allowed to cross the border. All that will reach us will be the covers since all the pages are subversive – against sin, it is said. So that if Jesus crosses the border at Chalatenango, they will not allow him to enter. They would accuse him, the man-God ... of being an agitator, of being a Jewish foreigner, who confuses the people with exotic and***

foreign ideas, anti-democratic ideas, and, that is, against the minorities. Ideas against God, because this is a clan of Cain's. Brothers, they would undoubtedly crucify him again. And they have said so."

Almost a month later on 12 March 1977, Rutilio Grande was gunned down by Salvadoran security forces, as he travelled with some parishioners to his hometown. He is recognised as being a martyr for the people he served and loved, and for the Life and Teaching of Jesus.



News of the murders soon reached Archbishop Óscar Romero, the friend from seminary days of Fr Grande. By now he was the Archbishop of San Salvador. Romero in company with his auxiliary bishop Rivera y Damas, the Jesuit Provincial and three Jesuits from the Provincial office all travelled to El Paisnal.

Exchanges between the President and the Archbishop are not clear, who called whom first, but at 7.00 pm that evening President Arturo Armando Molina offered his condolences to Romero and promised a thorough investigation. However different interpretations between the narratives of the government and the Church continued during the period of violence that followed.

Five years later Archbishop Oscar Romero himself was assassinated while celebrating Mass. After the death of his friend, Fr Rutilio Grande, the Archbishop, who had begun his episcopate as a conservative, had become increasingly radical and spoke out against violations of human rights. 'He

defended the right of the poor to demand political change, a stance which made him a troublesome adversary for the country's rulers.

A month before he was assassinated, Romero wrote to President Jimmy Carter urging the US to stop backing the Salvadoran government and supplying it with arms and military advisers. And on the day before his assassination, he urged soldiers and police not to follow orders to kill civilians, and stop the repression:

"The peasants you kill are your own brothers and sisters," he preached. "When you hear a man telling you to kill, remember God's words, 'Thou shalt not kill'. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression!"

He was shot on 24 March 1980, aged sixty-two, while celebrating Mass.



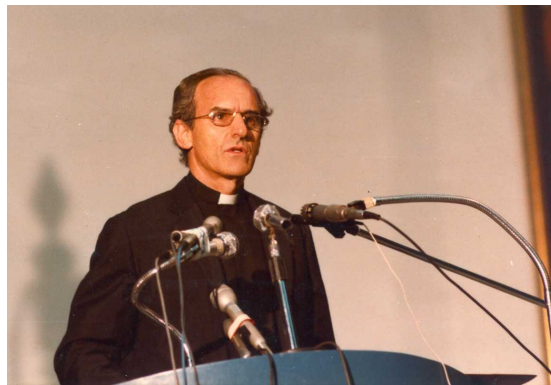
[Archbishop Oscar Romero, right, meeting Pope Paul VI six weeks before the latter's death. Romero is handing him a photo of Rutilio Grande, assassinated the year before].

The Civil War in El Salvador continued with acts of violence and repression until 1992. During this ghastly period where there was civil warfare between the Army of El Salvador and the FMLN, a liberation army of guerrilla fighters drawn from different groups on the socialist spectrum.

The Jesuits at the Central American University of San Salvador in El Salvador were trying to achieve an end to the fighting by getting both sides to negotiate a 'settlement'. This was seen by the more aggressively authoritarian elements in the Government as being supportive of the FMLN. On 16 November 1989 soldiers

from an elite unit of the Army killed six Jesuit priests, and the wife and daughter of the caretaker of the Jesuit Residence. These murders caught the attention of people and governments around the world and the efforts of the Jesuits were recognised.

The Vice-Minister for Public Security, had said that the Jesuits were "fully identified with subversive movements" because of their negotiations for a peaceful solution to the conflict, The Jesuit priest Fr Ignacio Ellacuría, the Rector of the University, was a key player in the attempts to secure peace with justice.



Fr Ellacuria studied theology at Innsbruck in Austria, where the German theologian, fellow Jesuit Karl Rahner had an enormous influence on him. Ellacuría was ordained a priest in 1961 completing his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Madrid in 1965. In 1967 he returned to El Salvador and joined the philosophy faculty of the University of Central America (UCA). He was renowned for his commitment to academic excellence and he attracted the notice of the State Security Services because of his political activism. He founded a centre for theological reflection at the University, stressing service to the needs of the poor. Because of his activism, Fr Ellacuría received many death threats, and the UCA was subject to night raids and destruction of property by the Salvadoran army. The Jesuit priests, in the eyes of the Government, were associated with the rebels, because of their identification with the struggles and anxieties of the poor.

The Army commanders considered that recent FMLN offensives had produced a 'critical situation' which was to be countered by a strong offensive operation. To assist this it was the view of the Army General Staff that all "known subversive elements" should be eliminated. The plan was to eliminate Fr Ellacuría with no

witnesses. It was decided to lay the blame for the assassination on the FLMN by masquerading as FLMN fighters and using a captured AK-47 rifle.

When the soldiers arrived at the Jesuits' Residence the priests opened the doors to them. Fathers Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Amando López, and Father Joaquín López y López were all killed. The Army soldiers then shot the housekeeper Julia Elba Ramos and her sixteen year-old daughter, Celina Mariceth Ramos.

The Government soldiers fired at the façade of the Residence with rockets, throwing grenades at the building and raking it with machine-gunfire. In keeping with their deception the Army shifted the blame: "FMLN executed those who informed on it. Victory or death, FMLN".



A distinguished Jesuit Liberation theologian, **Fr Jon Sobrino**, normally resident, was overseas giving a lecture at the time. He said ***"We wanted to support dialogue and peace. We were against the war. But we have been considered Communists, Marxists, supporters of the rebels, all that type of thing."***

They were accustomed to receiving death threats.



Fr Jon Sobrino SJ



The words of Archbishop Helder Camara seem apt in the circumstances

"When I feed the hungry, they call me a saint. When I ask why they have no food, they call me a Communist."

Mexico

Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a parish priest from the town of Dolores, issued a call to rebellion against the Spanish Empire in September 1810. This resulted in the rebel leader, Vicente Guerrero, and a defecting royalist general, Agustín de Itúrbide, joining forces to wrest Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821. They drafted a Mexican constitution. However their unity was short lived for the following year Itúrbide declared



himself Emperor of Mexico. In 1823, General Antonio López de Santa Anna overthrew Itúrbide and drew up a new constitution that established a federal Mexican Republic..

From 1823 to 1836, Santa Anna served as president. He is remembered also for thwarting Texas' stand for independence in the Battle of the Alamo during his last year in office. He was later defeated by American forces during the Mexican-American War and by 1855 he had gone into exile.

Following Mexico's occupation by the French in the mid-nineteenth century, Porfirio Díaz served as president from 1876 to 1909.

Díaz promoted modernisation and industry and made improvements to the country's infrastructure, but he was a dictator who used political patronage to enrich and keep the support of the landowners and the wealthy. His regime was brutal and life for the urban and rural poor was tough.

The people, who were weary of the burdens of poverty and the inequitable distribution of resources, rose up in 1910 in what became the Mexican Revolution. A ten-year Civil War followed in which there were at least two million casualties. In the course of this the Mexican Constitution of 1917 reduced the power and wealth of the Catholic Church. This Constitution prohibited the Catholic clergy from working as teachers and as instructors in public and private schools; it established State control over the internal matters of the Mexican Catholic Church; nationalized all Church property; proscribed religious orders; forbade the presence in Mexico of foreign-born priests; granted each state of the Mexican republic the power to limit the number of, and to eliminate, priests in its territory; priests were deprived of the right to vote and to hold elected office; it banned Catholic organizations that advocated public policy; it forbade religious publications from editorial commentary about public policy; it prohibited the clergy from wearing clerical garb in public.

The tensions and antagonisms resulted in the Papal Encyclical of 18 November 1926, *Iniquis afflictisque (On the Persecution of the Church in Mexico)*. The Pope criticized the state's interference in matters of worship, the outlawing of religious orders and the expropriation of Church property. Alluding to the deprivation of the right to vote and of free speech, among other things, he noted that, ***"Priests are ... deprived of all civil and political rights. They are thus placed in the same class with criminals and the insane."***

Perhaps encouraged by this there was an up-rising in the Cristero Rebellion (1926–29), a clerically-abetted armed revolt of Catholic peasants known as "The Christers" (*Los Cristeros*).

In these dramatic times the Jesuit Fr Miguel Pro sj carries forward the Ignatian Mission to support the poor and bring men and women to a knowledge of Jesus in the Gospels.

Miguel Pro, whose full name was José Ramón Miguel Agustín, was born into a mining family on 13 January 1891, in Guadalupe, Zacatecas. He was the third of eleven children, four of whom had died as infants or young children. Two of his sisters joined a convent. He entered the Jesuit novitiate at El Llano on 15 August, 1911.

Miguel Pro studied in Mexico until 1914 when a massive wave of government inspired anti-Catholicism forced the novitiate to pack up. The Jesuits then travelled out of the country to Los Gatos, California, in the United States. Afterwards Pro went to study in Granada, Spain (1915–19), and from 1919 to 1922 he taught in Nicaragua.

For his theological studies Pro was sent to Enghien, Belgium, where the French Jesuits (also in exile) had their faculty of Theology. There he was ordained a priest on August 31, 1925. He wrote on that occasion: ***"How can I explain to you the sweet grace of the Holy Spirit, which invades my poor miner's soul with such heavenly joys? I could not hold back the tears on the day of my ordination, above all at the moment when I pronounced, together with the bishop, the words of the consecration. After the ceremony the new priests gave their first blessing to their parents. I went to my room, laid out all the photographs of my family on the table, and then blessed them from the bottom of my heart."***

In 1926 the young Fr Miguel Pro returned to Mexico visiting the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes and celebrating Mass there.

On the Feast of St Ignatius Loyola, 31 July 1926, the President of Mexico, Plutarco Elias Calles, ratified the Calles Law which vigorously enforced the anti-Catholic provisions of the 1917 constitution. This provided specific penalties for priests

who criticized the government (five years' imprisonment) or who wore clerical clothes outside their churches (500 pesos).

Fr Pro had arrived at Veracruz some three weeks earlier on 8 July 1926. He was already embarked on a perilous mission in which Fr Pro served a Church which was forced to go "underground." He celebrated the Eucharist in secret and ministered the other sacraments to small groups of Catholics.

In October 1926, a warrant for his arrest was issued. He was arrested and released from prison the next day but kept under surveillance. In these turbulent and violent times an attempt was made to assassinate Álvaro Obregón, in November 1927, in which he was wounded. The coup ended in failure. The State Security Police now had a pretext for arresting Pro again.

On 23 November 1927, Fr Miguel Pro SJ was killed without trial on the orders of President Calles who had the execution photographed extensively. He ensured that, on the following day, throughout the country, the newspapers had photographs on every front page. If the intention was to put the fear of death into the Cristeros rebels Calles was mistaken. The sight of the courageous Fr Miguel Pro in his martyrdom gave them new impetus.

At the time of his execution by firing squad Fr Pro knelt to pray, and then with his hands extended, like Jesus, but holding a crucifix and his rosary, he cried aloud : ,
"May God have mercy on you! May God bless you! Lord, Thou knowest that I am innocent! With all my heart I forgive my enemies!"

His last words were "**VIVA CRISTO REY**" [Long live Christ the King]



Fr Miguel Pro's arrest and almost immediate execution without any proper trial was widely reported. He was beatified in Rome on 25 Sep 1988 by Pope John Paul II as a Catholic martyr who was killed *'in odium fidei'* [in hatred of the Faith]. He died in one of the most savage periods of anti-clerical and anti-Catholic persecution in Mexico under President Calles.

The English writer Graham Greene made a tour in Mexico during this period and subsequently published a book *'The Lawless Roads'* which was a documentary of his observations. Later he wrote a novel, *"The Power and the Glory"*, about a priest, with character flaws, but who nevertheless ministers faithfully in the times of persecution. He is pursued and hunted down by 'The Lieutenant' an officer who brings him to trial and execution. Yet as this priest dies we learn of another

anonymous priest entering the country to take his place. The novel captures the relentless persecution, the suspicion, the betrayals and the savagery as well as the fidelity and witness of quite ordinary people.

This period of persecution and political instability was gradually ended with the assistance of United States diplomacy, and economic *real politic*.

In the subsequent history of Mexico civil insurrection brutality began to give way when, in 1934, Lázaro Cárdenas, another former revolutionary general, won office as President after an election. His aim was to rebuild the nation after the fragmentation of numerous wars and insurrections. He inaugurated a period of stability and reform. Recalling the 'social revolution' of the revolutionary period he initiated an extensive programme of agrarian reforms. There was a redistribution of land, giving the peasant farmers nearly twice as much as all of his predecessors combined. In 1938, Cárdenas nationalised the oil industry within the country. He removed the properties of foreign owned companies and created a Government agency to administer the oil industry. In a sense this was the beginning of modern Mexico.

In 1940 Manuel Avila Camacho became President, declaring ***"I am a [Catholic] believer," (soy creyente).***

While Church-State relations improved, it was not until 1992 that widespread reform came during the Presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. He vowed to "modernize Mexico" outlining his programme in his 1988 Inaugural Address. This included revisions in the Mexican Constitution which specifically restored the Catholic Church's juridical position as a Church within the nation. Most Mexicans in the twenty-first century identify themselves as being Catholic.



The Jesuit Pope Francis visited Mexico on 13 February 2016, enroute to Brazil. He spoke to a vast crowd in the violent suburb of Ecatepec, near Mexico City. In this poor neighbourhood Pope Francis spoke out clearly against corruption at all levels in Mexican society.

He was severely critical of all involved in the violence of the illegal drugs trade. His criticism was also aimed at Church leaders, particularly against bishops who were living expensively and were involved in 'deals' with politicians and business leaders. Francis reiterated the '***preferential option for the poor***' which should be a priority for Catholics.

His trenchant views on drug trafficking supported more active intervention by the Church to prevent the corrosive spread of this menace which destroys families and neighbourhoods.



Jesuit Fathers Campos and Mora

Recent events in Mexico underline the ghastly effects of drug trafficking. Twelve priests were murdered in recent years and as recently as 20 June 2022 two Jesuit priests were murdered as they tried to protect a man fleeing for his life, seeking refuge in the Church. Fr Luis Gerardo Moro Madrid, SJ, provincial of the Mexico province of the Society of Jesus, announced the news in the following statement:

"It is with deep pain and a sense of anguish that I inform you that in the afternoon of 20 June, in Cerocahui, Tarahumara, Jesuit Fathers Javier Campos, SJ, and Joaquín Mora, SJ, were murdered while trying to defend a man who was seeking refuge in the church and who was being pursued by an armed person."

The Provincial said the Jesuits were also working with federal and state authorities for the safety of three other Jesuits: Esteban Cornejo, Jesús Reyes, and Jesús Zaglul; and the pastoral team of the parish.

"I ask you to join us in prayer for them," Fr Madrid said.

Fr Arturo Sosa, General of the Society of Jesus, expressed his sorrow at the news. He said: ***"I am shocked and saddened by this news. My thoughts and prayers are with the Jesuits in Mexico and the families of the men. We have to stop violence in our world and so much unnecessary suffering."***

Points to ponder :

- Social deprivation and poverty are frequently the causes of human misery, degradation, and loss of dignity. Are we aware of these issues within our own experience?
- Martyrdom is a feature of the dedicated evangelisation and conversion that arises from Ignatian spirituality. The costly sacrificial deaths of Jesuit martyrs underlines the 'irrevocable dedication' to the Service of Christ the King [Exercises : The Two Standards]. Viva Cristos Rey – in the face of death! It inspires and encourages. Yet how do we make this our own cry and project?

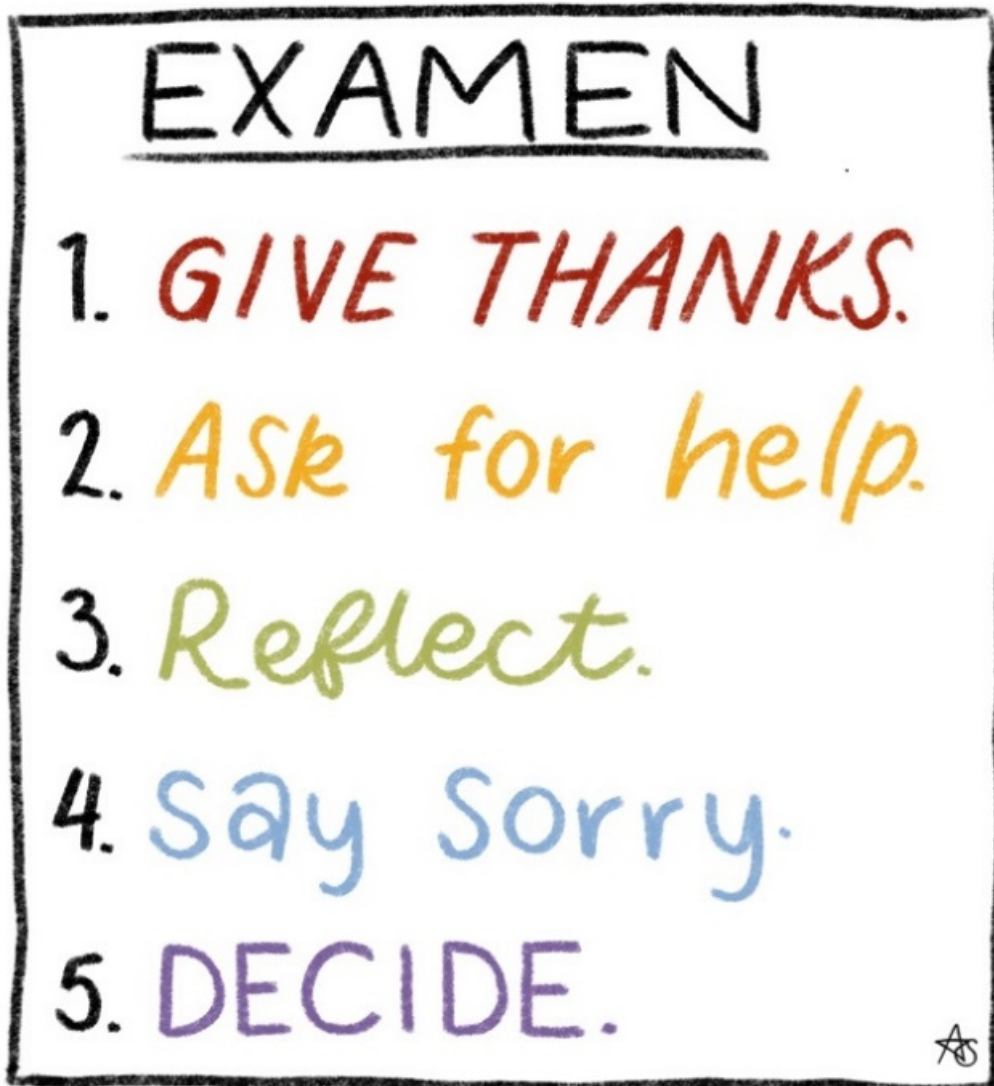
- The 'preferential option for the poor' ” was first used in 1968 by the superior general of the Jesuits, Father Pedro Arrupe, in a letter to his fellow Jesuits.
- The Liberation Theologians associated the poor and vulnerable with Jesus himself, citing Matthew 25, “Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.”
- In 1991, Pope John Paul II used the term, and elaborated on the concept in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. In that encyclical, which celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labour), John Paul II expanded the use of the “option for the poor” to include spiritual as well as material poverty.
- Pope Benedict XVI, embraced ‘the option for the poor’ as a true Catholic obligation, and extended the understanding of the poor to include all those who are marginalized in society: widows, children, people with disabilities, and victims of oppression, among others.
- Having reflected on “The Preferential Option for the Poor” do we see it as having significance in our own Catholic identity and witness?



EXAMINATION OF OUR LIVES [THE EXAMEN]

Daily Examen:

Looking with quiet sincerity and simplicity of heart at the day



GETTING READY FOR THE GIFT OF SCRIPTURE

- We ask the Holy Spirit to settle our minds and open our hearts.
- Our conversation with God begins as we express our gratitude for our blessings and by expressing our sorrow for personal sin.
- We ask that The Holy Spirit may enliven our reading and understanding. *Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire and lighten with celestial fire;*

- We place ourselves into the scene of the Scripture : what we see, what we hear, what it feels like, what we smell, what we might taste.
- Reading silently or aloud we form the words as they take shape in our creative imagination.

Passage of Scripture for Reflection : 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 (NIV)

“Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.””

Points for Reflection:

- Paul is writing to the Corinthian church making a request of them about taking up a collection to support the church in Jerusalem, and urges the Corinthians to give generously: *“As you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking” (8:7)*
- The needs of the world-wide Church are met by various charities; Aid to the Church in Need ; SCIAF; CAFOD ;: how supportive are we?

Mary's Meals?!!



- At a local level the St Vincent de Paul Society is engaged in the Social Apostolate of visiting, care of the lonely, and helping to support those in need. Are we aware of this work and witness?



Conversational prayer : Opening up to Jesus asking Him for insight into our reflections.....then we pray : ***Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.***

After a moment of quiet we offer our day and our week:

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.



Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray

Praise God Always