



## 8. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL

How often do people walk into our own personal space, or how often do we walk into another's personal space, without being noticed? Every once in a while, someone walks into our lives or we walk into other people's lives, changing our history forever. Here, Jesus enters the life of the Samaritan woman, noticing her, speaking to her and listening to her story. They entered one another's presence.

This woman, who was simply asked for a drink of water from Jacob's Well, the tradition of her ancestors, was empowered by the water of life. This exchange of presence resulted in Jesus mirroring her true-self, causing her to proclaim, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?" And with that, she impacted the world with her goodness.

*What does Jesus reflect back to me about my own Thirst?*



## 7. THE CROSS AND SUFFERING IN TODAY'S WORLD IN THE FRANCISCAN TRADITION

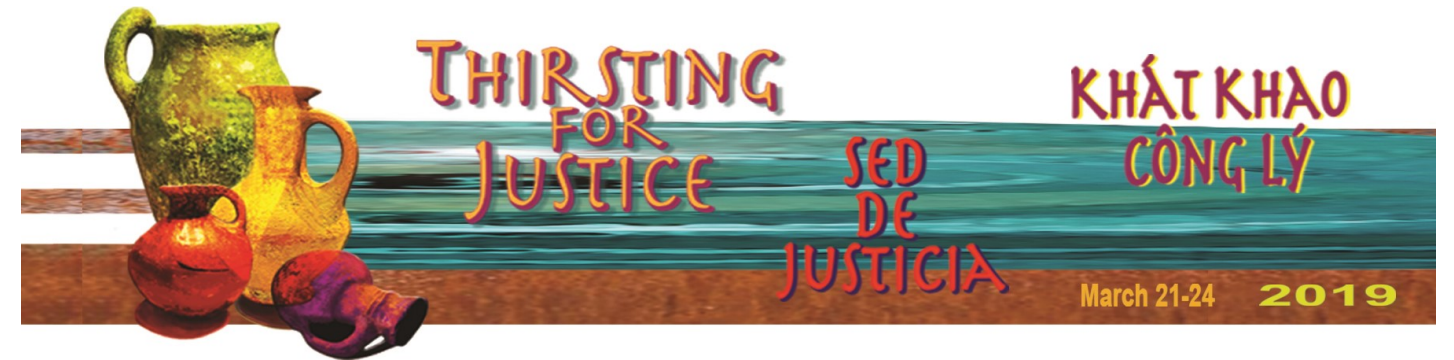
St. Francis of Assisi made a complete break with the pattern of history. A man of his time, Francis revived the primitive spirit of Christianity by reminding us of the suffering servant Jesus by which we are saved by the Paschal Mystery — his suffering on the cross, his death and his resurrection.

We are to embrace Jesus as the living image of that pattern; his crucified body transmuted and transformed into the risen Christ. We learn that "unless the grain of wheat dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). St. Francis reminds us to seek enlightenment for our personal and global suffering with hope.

Like St. Francis, we are called to be the prophets of today, entering into the inevitable suffering the kingdom requires, until we see the sacred in its midst recalling the words of the gospel, "for whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (cf. Matthew 10:39; 16:25).

*(Based on meditations by Richard Rohr, OFM; The Mystery of Suffering, January 24, 2018; Paschal Mystery, December 14, 2017; A Franciscan Revolution, Friday, June 23, 2017)*

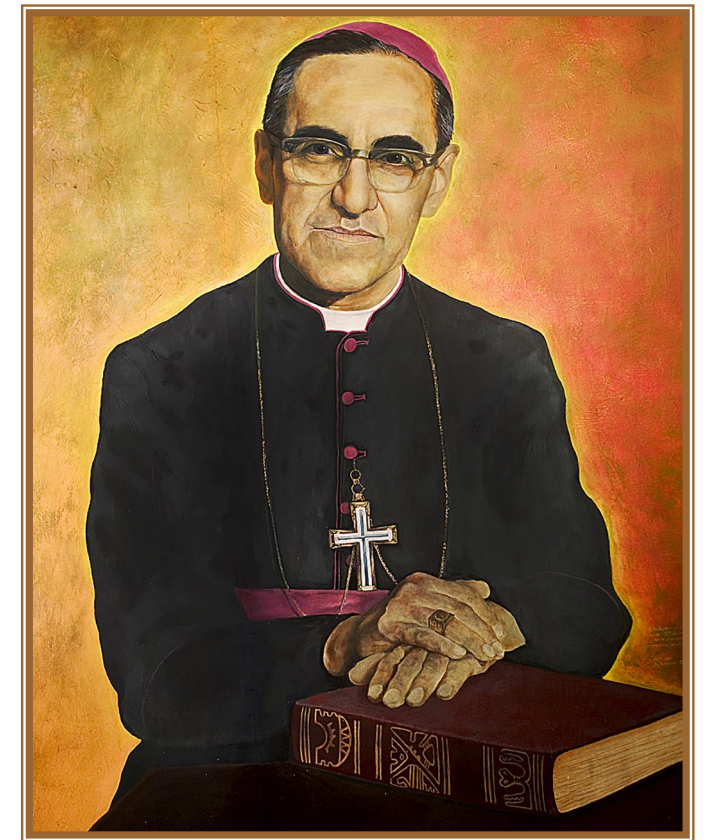
*How do you find the sacred amidst your own suffering?*



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this Sacred Space meditative journey where the convergence of experiences and events, people and cultures erupts with something new for all who come here. The liturgical themes of this Congress have been woven into this sacred space to enter into a deeper reflection of what we celebrate throughout the weekend. This reflective walk will take us to the well, inviting us to join the Samaritan Woman asking Jesus to quench our Thirst for Justice.

As we are sent forth from this Religious Education Congress, on Sunday March 24th, we join the **United Nations International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims**<sup>1</sup>. This annual observance pays tribute to the memory of Monsignor Óscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered on 24 March 1980. Monsignor Romero was actively en-



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gaged in denouncing violations of the human rights of the most vulnerable individuals in El Salvador.

It will be the first time the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of St. Oscar Romero, Bishop and Martyr, recently canonized by Pope Francis. And so, we dedicate this Sacred Space to our beloved Monseñor Romero, a prophet Thirsting for Justice.

1. <http://www.un.org/en/events/righttotruthday>



## 1. PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

We are given the grace to unite ourselves with Jesus' suffering. Many in the world thirst for meaning for their suffering and find none. Jesus embraces our plight, like with the Samaritan woman, and unites our story to his, gracing us with meaning, relationship and a spirit that helps us to be patient and charitable to ourselves in our realities.

May we seek truth in ourselves honoring the sacred in peoples of different cultures and creeds. We bring to heart Christians and anyone persecuted for their faith, that our faithfulness may reveal the deepest truth.

*We invite you to write the name of someone you know, or have read about, who has been persecuted because of their faith.*



## 2. HONORING OUR ANCESTORS IN FAITH FROM THE BLACK CULTURE PERSPECTIVE

In every age, culture and people, descendants are raised up to carry the essence of the ancestral past, to bring it to the present and to enrich the then and the now with the Gospel. We seek to be leaven in a world often shortsighted by our prejudices and biases. Our call is to raise up humanity, with all its complexities, from the origins of its goodness to soar as the image of the Creator God.

*What are your own personal struggles of embracing people of different ethnicities, creeds, customs or anything different than your own?*



## 3. PROMOTING HARMONY

The law of Love! Who but God could create a law so great so to have brought every human person into the divine image, into divine love? We long for peace and grace, endowed with the Spirit that leads us to wholeheartedness for all that makes us both human and divine, with purity of heart.

*What steps are you taking to advance harmony in your corner of the world?*



## 4. PROGRESS OF THE PEOPLE - CHURCH ON THE WAY OF UNITY

Every culture and every creed have placed a sacred name and imaged a sacred face on the God of the universe, ultimately unnamable and most often invisible but real! We are one human family ablaze with the love of the one and true God.

May we be stirred into flame with desire to advance one another in all that is good, lifting every life to reach the good things that God richly bestows upon us. In this way, every person is brought into perfection in a just and peaceful human society.

*How do you use your own personal resources to be generative for the common good and the advancement of peoples?*



## 5. MASS OF THOSE HELD IN CAPTIVITY

To the depths of human anguish, Jesus humbled himself as a slave to redeem humanity from the captivity of sin and death. We seek liberation for victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. We seek breakthroughs for those emotionally trapped in mental illness and inner conflict.

We seek healing for broken bodies in illness and broken spirits through forced harm in drug rings. We seek restorative justice for the incarcerated. May all hear the sacred utterance of love: You are my beloved!

*Offer the name of someone you know, who is held in captivity, whether physical imprisonment, mental health or spiritual binding.*



## 6. SANCTIFICATION OF HUMAN LABOR

In every civilization, labor has been the mark of human dignity. God created humankind to be the steward of all creation.

May the dignity of this call raise our respect for one another's work. Let us embrace the gifts that come to us through human labor, so that our interdependence as habitants of our common home may reflect the dignity of one another.

*How do you give praise to God through your work?*

