

El Salvador church urged to work for sainthood for murdered priests

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

San Salvador--The El Salvadorian Roman Catholic Church should consider petitioning the Vatican to elevate to sainthood the six Jesuit priests who were murdered in 1989, according to a Jesuit official.

Pointing to the veneration of these priests by the faithful in El Salvador, Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach, general director of the Jesuits at the Vatican, said that the church needs to officially recognize the martyrs as saints.

On November 16, 1989, Fathers Segundo Montes, the Superior of the Jesuit order in El Salvador, Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of the Central American University, and Ignacio Martion Baro, vice rector of the University were killed by alleged right wing death squads backed by the government. Also killed in the incident were Father Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, professors Juan Ramon Moreno and Armando Lopez, and an employee of the priest's home and her daughter.

Father Kolvenbach said thousands attended a memorial mass last November to mark the anniversary of the murders. "If this movement continues, perhaps the church ought to believe in the cause of beatification. The church of San Salvador ought to take the initiative." he said.

Movements are already under way to elevate to sainthood Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero who was murdered by right-wing extremists while celebrating mass on March 24, 1980. "We also ought not to forget the hundreds of church members, priests and religious workers who died in witness to their faith during the long and cruel war which devastated the country," Father Kolvenbach said.

According to canon law, a person may be nominated for sainthood five years after their death.

"This case is a clear example of the evangelical witness tied to social justice in the world, and specifically in Latin America," the Jesuit leader said.

Father Kolvenbach said that his Jesuit movement continues to be willing to speak out for the dispossessed of Latin America, and has not abandoned its calling to operate in the field of social justice.

El Salvador church urged to work for sainthood for murdered priests, *Compass Direct*, Mar 12, 1995