

CHURCH DECLARES MURDERED PASTORS TO BE MARTYRS

November 7, 2006

“We have 2 more martyrs in our church, Francisco Carrillo and Jesús Calzada de Carrillo. They died carrying out their prophetic labors,” affirmed Bishop Medardo Gómez, president of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, during the burial of the two murdered pastors.

“I ask the world to recognize them as martyrs. By doing so, this helps us to reaffirm the prophetic work that we do, exercising a preferential option for those most in need in this context of violence, death and insanity in which we are called to be the church,” said the Bishop.



Pastor, Francisco Carrillo y pastora, Jesús calzada de Carrillo.

The two, Francisco Carrillo, 65, and Jesús Calzada, 57, were co-pastors of two Lutheran churches in the municipality of Jayaque, La Libertad department: Pan de Vida in the town center of Jayaque, and Montes de Penzberg located in the La Labor canton 15 km. from Jayaque where they were murdered this past Saturday, November 4.

The two pastors had concluded their customary Saturday afternoon worship

service (from 3:00 – 5:00) when three youthful subjects appeared on the scene and shot Pastor Carrillo who died in the act. Next, Pastor Jesús met the same fate as she sat in a parked vehicle a few steps away.

After almost two days of waiting, the Medical Forensic office released the bodies to their two children: Wilber Carrillo who serves as pastor of the Calderitas Lutheran Church in San Vicente department (central El Salvador) and Roxana Carrillo, youth leader of Pan de Vida church.

On Sunday afternoon at 6:00 p.m., the ambulance sirens of the Comandos de Salvamento (volunteer rescue squad), an organization to which the pastors had belonged for 15 years, broke the silence. Suddenly, the singing stopped that had maintained people’s attention in Resurrection Lutheran Church located on 5 de Noviembre Street in the San Miguelito barrio, just north of the heart of the capital.

Everyone’s attention was centered on the arrival of the caskets. A column of uniformed rescue workers, men and women, formed at the entrance to the church. Further inside, the gathered pastors of the church gazed upon the caskets of their fellow pastors, disheartened and grieved.

“This has been a very strong blow to our church. We are weeping for our pastors because they have been tireless in their ministry, as parents, as spouses, as citizens, as children of God, as pastors, and as men and women of good. It can’t be possible that so much evil, so much violence and death exist,” expressed Bishop Gómez.

Later, in front of the assembled congregation, the Bishop raised a chalice, a stole, a Bible and a cross and reaffirmed, “They have followed the way of the cross and this stole, the symbol that marks our commitment, no one, absolutely no one can take away from anyone who assumes ministry with the energy that they did. Therefore, in the name of God, I declare them to be martyrs and prophets.”

Next, he called for the imposition of hands on their caskets. In that very instant, a series of deafening shots rang out. Two blocks from the church, another act of ce was snuffing out the life of a young man from the neighborhood. In spite of this interruption, the act continued for a few more minutes, so that an announcement could be made concerning the transfer of the pastors’ bodies to their funeral wake in Pan de Vida church.

Minutes later, a column of ambulances led the way to Jayaque and woke the residents of that town who had been holding vigil in disbelief over what had occurred and in a state of fear for the violence that strikes without mercy, leaving 15 Salvadoran families in mourning each day without any immediate prospect for peace. In an instant, the church filled up. Solemn prayers and hymns were offered all night.

On Monday, after the customary devotional, the Bishop, together with all of his pastors, spoke to the national press about preliminary investigations into the crime. “We condemn these murders and

call on the competent authorities to conduct an exhaustive investigation until justice is done,” exclaimed the Bishop.



In response to a series of questions from the press regarding possible motives for the crime, Rev. Carlos Nájera, coordinator of pastoral and diaconal ministry, declared, “We cannot provide much advance information so as not to affect the ongoing investigations, but we are going to do all that we can to see that justice is done. This case cannot go unpunished.”

Later, a caravan of vehicles left for Jayaque where the church was filled to overflowing. Following funeral services, at 3:00 p.m. a procession formed and proceeded to the general cemetery of the town. Once again, sirens wailed and the people shuddered. A sea of people walked together. Other curious onlookers watched from their homes, all contemplating this irreparable loss.



At 5:00 p.m. the graveside ceremony woke the dead of this peaceful cemetery. The booming voice of Roberto Cruz, member of the Comandos de Salvamento, filled the air, demanding justice. From far away, it was possible to sense acceptance of the gesture of the profound words that he offered.

“We have time to weep, time to love, but now we demand justice . . . and you are all witnesses that these pastors, also members of the Comandos de Salvamento, gave wholly of themselves. We cannot let them down. We cannot forget them. Justice must be done,” he said.

“The only ‘bad’ that we do is to serve with all our heart, helping those who are most in need. And it is not right that today they kill us for making that sacrifice,” he pointed out.

A lone police agent appeared between the old niches of the cemetery in an attitude of accompaniment, while the cemetery workers waited to do their job. As the order to close the graves was given, people sang quietly. The sobs of the family increased and drew tears from everyone present. Then the murmuring ceased and quickly the exodus from the cemetery began.

While the two pastors were buried people whispered among themselves about the need to do justice. “We have come to accompany because it is no longer possible to endure so much violence. Something has to be done,” expressed Father Miguel Ventura of the Segundo Montes Foundation.

Franciscan priests of the Catholic Church and representatives of other organizations and institutions affirmed the need to unite in a crusade against violence and delinquency.

Later, a caravan left to visit the scene of the crime. When nearby residents saw the caravan, they came out as well. “What an atrocity, what an injustice. Why all they did was to help the poorest of the poor,” exclaimed a woman with tears in her eyes.



“Bishop, we can’t take the violence here any more. We live in the midst of death, anguish and fear. The pastors that accompanied us gave us courage, but now we are left unprotected,” she added.

During the ceremony, the Bishop promised to continue. “We are going to continue working here. This blood will not be shed in vain, rather it will be the seed that germinates in order to give hope,” said the place where the pastors were killed.

The bishop asked one of the Franciscan priests present, “Father, could you lead us in prayer, according to the custom of the Catholic Church?”. Prayers began immediately.

On Tuesday (Nov. 7), representatives of the Legal Aid Office of the Catholic Archbishop of El Salvador, of the Permanent Roundtable for the Mitigation of Disasters, of the Comandos de Salvamento, of the Lutheran University and other groups, offered proposals for following up on what had occurred.

In the planning discussion, the need was expressed for a proposal in three directions: A judicial initiative which includes a demand for justice to the National Attorney General, the filing of a formal complaint with the Human Rights Ombudsman and a demand to the Legislative Assembly for peace.

A second area is the need for organized popular accompaniment in demanding justice. On this point, the Church and Comandos de Salvamento will work on a joint proposal to call together more institutions and to unite everyone in a common struggle.

And the third area is to denounce what has happened and to declare our commitment to keep struggling before national and international public opinion with the support of sister organizations and churches around the world. On this point, the Bishop will indicate the immediate actions to be taken by the church this Wednesday (Nov. 8) in his weekly meeting with the church's pastors.

On Saturday (Nov. 11), a visit will be paid to Montes de Penzburg church, including a procession, immediately after an ecumenical act that the José Simeón Cañas University (UCA) has organized to celebrate the lives of the martyrs.

“We must honor the lives of the martyrs and we are certain that Francisco and Jesús Carrillo will help us in our ongoing struggle. For them, we are going to demand justice and peace,” said the Bishop in closing.

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