

Archbishop Smith: Saint Who?

On Sunday, Pope Francis canonized seven people, thus proposing them to the universal Church as models of holiness. Two among them have long been famous and have thus garnered the lion's share of media attention: Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero. I have great admiration for them both. At the same time, I found myself wondering about the others: who are they; how has God been at work in their lives; how are they an example to be followed? As I read about their lives, my attention was drawn in a particular way to the one lay person among the new saints: Nunzio Sulprizio.



Saint Nunzio Sulprizio was canonized October 14, 2018. Jean-Marie Séaume, Public Domain

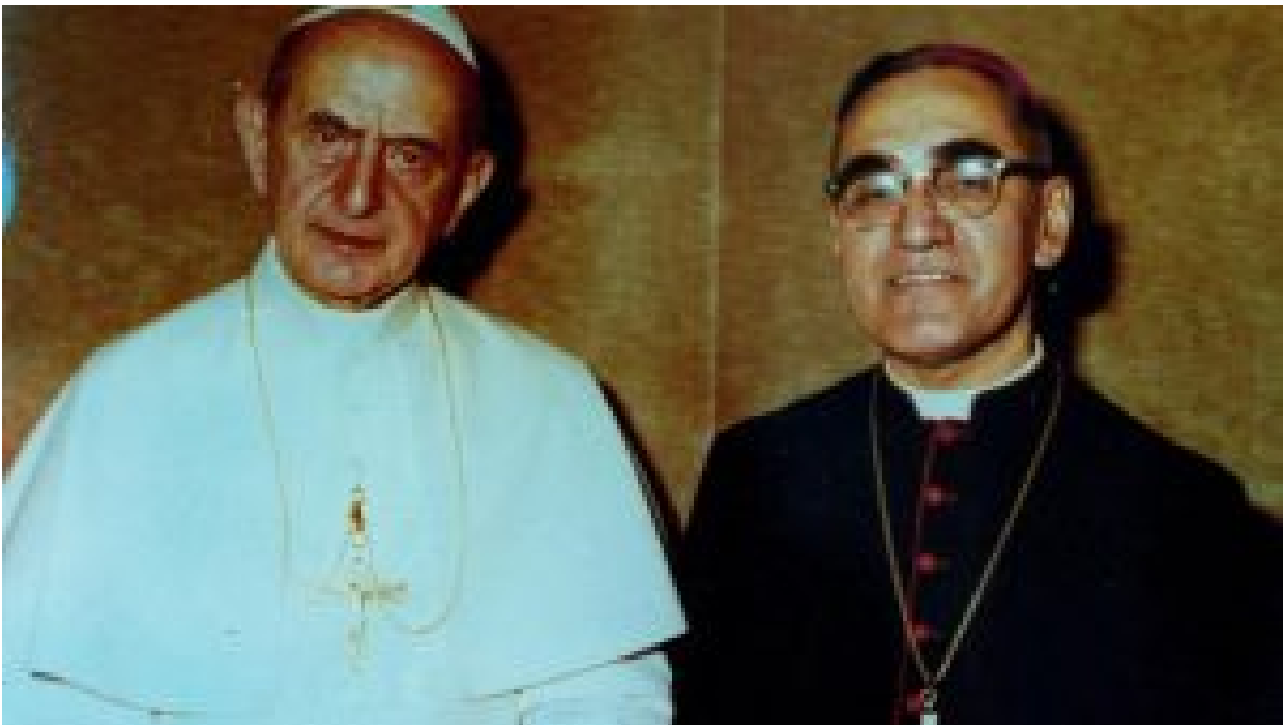
Here is the summary of his life as offered by Vatican News last September 19th:

"Blessed Nunzio was born in Pescosansonesco in Italy in April of 1817. He lost both of his parents while still a child and was brought up by an uncle. His uncle exploited him, not allowing him to go to school, and forcing him to work in his blacksmith shop. Regardless of extreme cold or intense heat, he was forced to carry enormous weights over great distances. He found refuge before the Tabernacle where he would keep Jesus company.

"After contracting gangrene in one of his legs, he was sent to a hospital for people with incurable diseases in Naples. He suffered tremendously on account of the pain. Yet, he is known to have said such things as:

"Jesus suffered so much for us and by his merits we await eternal life. If we suffer a little bit, we will taste the joy of paradise. Jesus suffered a lot for me. Why should I not suffer for Him? I would die in order to convert even one sinner.

"When asked who was taking care of him, he would respond: "God's Providence". Once he got better, he dedicated himself to helping other patients. But his health took a sudden turn for the worse. He died from bone cancer in May of 1836 before he reached his 20th birthday."



Monsignor Romero with Pope Paul VI. Approximately one year before the death of the pontiff.Arzobispado de San Salvador, Public Domain

When we consider the extraordinary witness of such giants as Paul VI and Oscar Romero, we may be tempted to think that sainthood is beyond us. Of course, that

is not true. We are all called to be saints, and if we open our lives to the working of God's grace, He will bring that call to fulfillment in us. Saint Nunzio teaches us that God leads us along the path to sanctity by offering us daily opportunities to rely solely upon Divine Providence, to offer our own concrete circumstances – both sufferings and joys – to Him, and to die to ourselves in order to be of service to others. What we do might seem to us to be very little. Often, it is. No matter. It is precisely by what St. Therese of Lisieux called “the little way” that we show ourselves to be disciples of Our Lord and proceed along the way of holiness.

The mass of canonization occurs when the attention of the Church is particularly focused upon the needs of young people. The Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, is currently underway in Rome. Saint Nunzio, who died at only nineteen years of age, reminds us by his life that the call to holiness of life stands at the heart of all vocational discernment. May the Holy Spirit help us to see how we can help our beloved young people, and how we can help one another, whatever our age, to embrace the call to sanctity.



Fr. Marc Cramer with a delegation from Blessed Oscar Romero High School at the canonization Mass. Source: ECSD Twitter Account