

# SERVANT LEADER

## Leader's notes:

This reflection session is part of the Faith In Action awards, inspiring young people to take the next step in putting their faith into action. Please refer to main [Faith in Action guidelines](#) for further information.

**Length:** 90 minutes. This session is broken into different sections each with their corresponding estimated time, so please ensure you design the workshop with the suggestions below, using the timing as a guide.

**Structure:** Faith In Action guidelines suggest that you include an element from each section: 1) Scripture 2) Church story 3) Personal story and conclude with the liturgy at the end.

**Materials required:** Quotes for printing (below), candles for liturgy, El Salvador cross, postcards (or stones), felt tip pens.

## Welcome

*Welcome the young people, introduce the title of 'Servant Leader'.*

Jesus emphasised the importance of being of service to others, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). He revealed himself to be a servant-leader; someone who leads by example, by being in service to others.

**Q.** Why do you think Jesus puts service to others at the heart of being a disciple?

Start the session by watching the opening reflection **#Inspire** from the **#LoveNeverFails** reflections:

[cafod.org.uk/loveneverfails](http://cafod.org.uk/loveneverfails)



10 MINS

## Scripture reading

*John 13:4-10*

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

## Gathering prayer

*You can use the Faith In Action prayer here, or alternatively use:*

Loving Jesus,

Just as you taught us to serve others,

help us to be true disciples and followers of you by reaching out in service to those in need.

Awaken within us a love that seeks to serve,

a love that finds joy in the happiness of others

and a love that endures all the struggles to help those in need.

We ask this through Christ the Lord,

Amen.

10 MINS

No matter what we do  
no matter how small it may seem  
that if we do it with love  
it will make a difference  
for **#LoveNeverFails**

## Story of St Oscar Romero

Share this story of St Oscar Romero to help reflect on the theme of being a Servant-Leader. You can either read this story, or watch the animation - linked below.

First split the group into pairs, and ask each pair to name someone who they see as a servant-leader — an inspirational leader who puts other's needs before their own.

Ask each pair to think of all the qualities of leadership are.

After they feed back their thoughts, then get the group to think about what Servant Leadership is. What qualities would remain, and what qualities would you add to Servant Leadership?

St Oscar Romero, when he was made Archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador in 1977, was seen as a safe pair of hands, someone who would not rock the boat. As the political climate began to change around him, when his own people were being threatened with violence, tortured, disappeared and killed, he decided that he needed to speak up. He chose to be on the side of the poor and oppressed in his country.

During his three years as archbishop, Romero repeatedly spoke out against the violence and used his voice to support the victims of the civil war. In a time of heavy press censorship, he used his radio station to broadcast news updates and his sermons to the poor farmers, which was often the only way people could find out the truth about the atrocities that were happening in their country. He defended the right of the poor to demand political change, a stance which made him a troublesome adversary for the country's rulers.

St Oscar Romero, by standing with the poor, made many enemies who saw him as a very troublesome figure. It was extremely dangerous to stand up and be a voice for the poor. Although St Oscar Romero knew the risks he knew that he had to be faithful to the teachings of the Gospel. As he said:

*“A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed — what gospel is that?”*

Romero's sermons were a lifeline of hope for so many of the Salvadoran poor. And as the violence started to increase, when families began to 'disappear' and murders were commonplace, Romero preached ever more forcefully on the theme of love and justice.

*"Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world. Let us not tire of preaching love. Though we see that waves of violence succeed in drowning the fire of Christian love, love must win out; it is the only thing that can."*

Romero is an inspirational figure to millions of Catholics around the world. He didn't simply talk about the need to love your neighbour, but courageously named the injustices that plagued his country. He reminded us that Christ is found in people living in poverty, and that we cannot ignore the suffering of our brothers and sisters in need.

St Oscar Romero was one of the most remarkable figures of the 20th century, who deserves to be commemorated alongside the likes of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi as a peacemaker who sacrificed his life standing up to injustice. He was a true leader to the poor — a servant to his people. His witness continues to inspire, and his message of finding Christ in the poor is an important message for Catholics and the world today.

[Or watch this short animation on Oscar Romero's life.](#)



## Activity

Using the quotes below, place them around the room and ask the participants, in pairs, to walk around and decide which quote appeals to them the most.



Once they have found a quote, ask them to design a postcard with one of the quotes, or to paint images on a stone that reflect the quote.

They may want to copy the colourful style of the El Salvador cross.



## Personal Story

**Q. Which quote did you choose and why?**

**Q. What Faith In Action service hours have you done, or could you do, that show you care about people living in poverty or with injustice?**

**Q. If St Oscar Romero was alive today, what do you think he would be saying?**

## Activity

Write a plan for what you can do with your personal service hours.

25 MINS

I believe that it is within us to care for others to reach out to those in need #LoveNeverFails

## Servant Leader liturgy

Using the quotes for the earlier session, display them at the front as part of a central prayer focus. Use an El Salvador Cross if you have one, along with some unlit candles. Pause for reflection after each prayer. You may wish to play some background music as part of this liturgy reflection.



*Suggested songs to sing for the gathering and after the final prayer:*

*The Servant song (Richard Gillard)*

*The Servant King (Graham Kendrick)*

**Leader:** Jesus tells us that he has come to serve, not to be served.

As we try to follow Jesus' example, let us take a moment to reflect on how we can be of service to others, to put others' needs before our own.

[Silent reflection]

## Servant prayer

Loving creator,  
You gave your servant St Oscar Romero  
the courage to be a witness of Christ's sacrificial love.

As he followed in the footsteps of Jesus,  
giving his life to others,  
may we too follow in this path,  
seeking a love that serves,  
a love that does not fear,  
a love that speaks the truth in times of trouble.

And may we also be a witness of a love  
that places the needs of others before our own,  
so that we too can be a living witness of Christ's  
transformative love.

We offer this prayer  
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## Light ritual

With some background music playing, ask everyone to reflect on the needs of the poor around the world. Ask how can we all be of service to others, especially those in need, including our friends, our families, our neighbours and our global neighbours.



Invite each person to take a candle, light it, and share how they can be of service to others. They can do this by finishing off this sentence (which you may want to write out as a prompt).

"I can serve others by..."

You may want to give some examples to help start off. Think of examples that are relevant to the group.

## St Oscar Romero

**Leader:** Let us now remember in our prayers anyone else we may want to pray for.

[Silent reflection]

Loving God, let us remember the people of El Salvador, that St Oscar Romero gave his life for. May we reach out in love to his people, as well as poor communities around the world. May we serve them, putting their needs before our own. And may our lives be a reflection of the hope, love and compassion that St Oscar Romero portrayed in his life.

**Lord Jesus,  
We give thanks for the life of  
St Oscar Romero  
who spread your message  
and struggled against injustice in El Salvador.**

Like you,  
he was a shepherd, a pastor, a brother;  
Like you, he was taken from us;  
Like you, he remains in our hearts.

Spirit of hope, work within us,  
just as you worked  
in St Oscar Romero,  
so that we too may work for justice  
and spread the Good News,  
by living out the Gospel  
in solidarity with those living in poverty.

Amen.

*Jack Tunnecliffe/CAFOD*

**Leader:** As we finish our liturgy let us, as a sign of service to one another, give each other the sign of peace.



St Oscar Romero - Pray for us.

Play a final song on servant leadership.

Love always protects  
Love always trusts  
Love always hopes  
Love always perseveres  
#LoveNeverFails

“

The ones who  
have a voice must  
speak for those  
who are voiceless.

”

- St. Oscar Romero



“

**Aspire not to have  
more, but to be  
more.**

”

- St. Oscar Romero

**SERVANT LEADER**

“

There are many  
things that can only  
be seen through  
eyes that have cried.

”

- St. Oscar Romero

“

**We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas cribs. We must seek him among the under-nourished children who have gone to bed at night with nothing to eat.**

- St. Oscar Romero

”

“

**Each time we look upon the poor, on the farmworkers who harvest the coffee, the sugar cane, or the cotton... remember, there is the face of Christ.**

”

- St. Oscar Romero

**SERVANT LEADER**



“

**God is not satisfied with appearance. God wants the garment of justice. God wants his Christians dressed in love.**

”

- St. Oscar Romero

“

Every priest, religious,  
or lay person who  
wants to announce  
Christ's gospel in  
truth must suffer.

”

- St. Oscar Romero

“

Without poverty  
of spirit there can  
be no abundance  
of God.

”

- St. Oscar Romero

“

Each one of you must  
be God's microphone,  
each one of you must  
be a messenger,  
a prophet.

”

- St. Oscar Romero

**SERVANT LEADER**

“

The great need today is for Christians who are active and critical, who don't accept situations without analysing them.

”

- St. Oscar Romero

SERVANT LEADER

“

It is not God's  
will for some  
to have everything  
and others  
to have nothing.

- St. Oscar Romero

”

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