

# WAY OF THE CROSS FROM LATIN AMERICA

Meditations by Maria Graf-Huber

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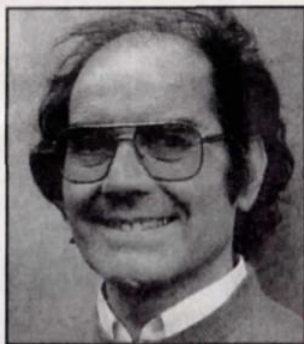
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*Impressum*

Meditations on the Stations of the Cross from Latin America



Adolfo Perez Esquivel was born in 1931, he studied architecture and sculpture. He was professor at the university of La Plata and at the school of Art in Buenos Aires.

From 1968 on he began to work for the peace movement inspired by Gandhi.

In 1974 he was elected Secretary General of the Peace and Justice Service Organisation (SERPAJ) which he helped found. It's aim is to co-ordinate all non-violent activity in defense of human rights in Latin America.

On 4 April 1977 he was arrested by the Argentinian Military Police and remained in prison until 22 June 1978 without being charged or tried.

On 10 December 1980 in recognition of the value of his work for human rights, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Adolfo Perez Esquivel is married and has three sons.



Maria Graf-Huber provided the text.

Born in 1953, she is a teacher involved in the education programme at the Romero building in Lucerne, Switzerland, and mother of three children.

In the years 1977-1979 she taught in a school in Nigeria. From 1983 to 1987 she lived among the landless farming families in the missionary compound in Northern Columbia.

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Adolfo Perez Esquivel's «Stations of the Cross from Latin America» were developed for the anniversary of «500 years of Latin America 1492-1992».

The pictures of these Stations of the Cross are a typical expression of today's Latin American popular religious feeling. The Stations of the Cross depict the way of suffering which the people of Latin America have trodden and which still lies before them. Each individual station reminds us of the hard lot inflicted on all children and women, on the weak and the poor, on Indians and black people. As the central figure, the suffering Christ of Latin American popular religious belief accompanies these people along the way. He suffers and dies in solidarity with them. The Resurrection follows as the 15th Station. Christ is walking towards the Resurrection together with all the Latin American men and women who have been martyred. Their martyrdom becomes a seed of hope and a source of life.

In 1992 the Stations of the Cross and the Hungercloth by Adolfo Perez Esquivel will be distributed simultaneously by all the Catholic development agencies of Europe and North America who work together as CIDSE.

Fourteen Catholic aid agencies come together as CIDSE, an international agency for development and solidarity, which has coordinated a campaign on Latin America for 1992. When the problems of our age threaten to overwhelm us, compassion and solidarity with the poor is an important first step. One way of demonstrating our compassion is to pray the Stations of the Cross from Latin America. May further steps in solidarity follow from our experience of Christian unity with the people of Latin America . . .

Fastenopfer, Switzerland

CAFOD, England and Wales

SCIAF, Scotland

Misereor, Germany

TROCAIRE, Ireland

*Adolfo M. P. Esquivel 1992*

«Pilate, handed Jesus over to be crucified.»  
(Mark 15, 15)



1st Station  
Condemnation to death

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ,  
you endure suffering and death  
because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* The evidence they have  
condemned you on is flimsy.  
You have loved people without reservation,  
you have given comfort and life to those who suffer,  
you have called those on the margins into the centre.  
But the leaders of your people feel threatened.  
Pilate recognises your innocence,  
but even he is concerned for his status  
and condemns you.

*Speaker:* Countless people in Latin America  
are bound in chains and taken away.  
They have fought against oppression,  
they have struggled for the right to life,  
they have cried out in desperation for human rights.  
But the powerful, fearing for their position,  
allow innocent people to disappear and be murdered.  
It is only those who love them,  
their <sup>parents</sup> mothers and <sup>spouses</sup> wives,  
who scream in protest and shout their names  
and cry out against the murderers.

*All:* Jesus, innocent people are sent  
to their deaths like you.  
In the face of this, are we to be silent?  
Christ have mercy on us.

### Human Rights Offences

Between 1976 and 1983 a military dictatorship ruled in Argentina and suppressed all forms of opposition through repression and offences against human rights. Even today, more than 5000 people are classified as «disappeared». Many people suffer from the consequences of torture inflicted in prisons and concentrations camps.

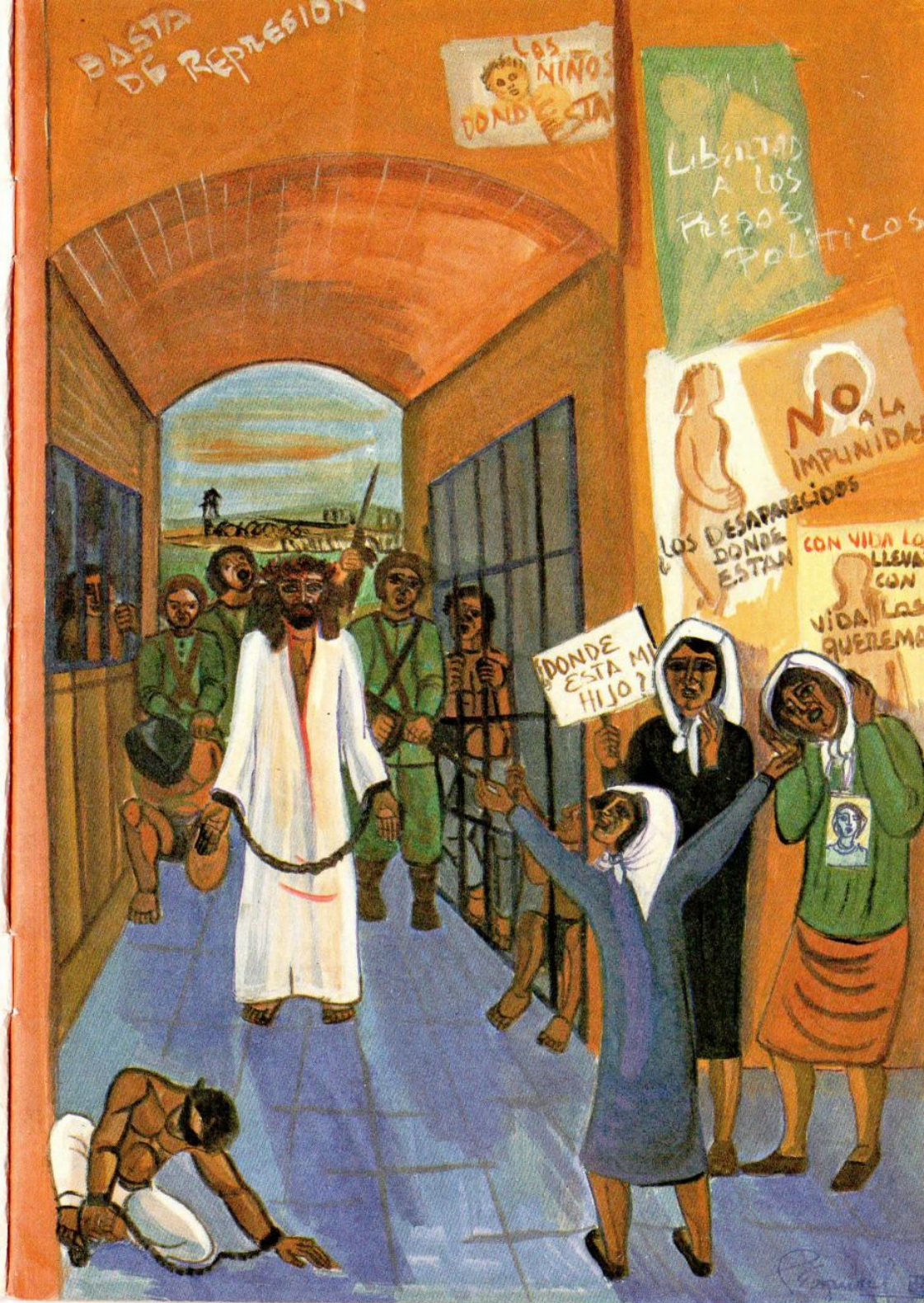


This past continues to affect the present and the establishment of democracy. In other Latin American countries abuses of human rights are still commonplace. The Andean Legal Commission in Columbia published a report which showed that:

- in 1989 an average of 8 people per day were murdered;
- in 1990 the average number of murders per day rose to 11.

According to information from the Pastoral Land Commission in Brazil, over the last six years 563 people have been killed in conflicts with major landowners over land. In Guatemala, too, numbers of political murders are shockingly high. The murder of six Jesuits, a housekeeper and her daughter in San Salvador caused outrage.

*Pic.:*  
At a notorious prison  
in Argentina.  
«Where is my son?»



«And carrying his own cross he went out of the city.» (John 19, 17)



2nd Station  
Abandoned by all

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* Where are they now, those who never wanted to leave your side, who swore loyalty to you?

They let you down, every one, men and women alike.

You stand there mocked, alone in your pain, humiliated. You take up your cross alone.

*Speaker:* Isolation and loneliness, the diseases of affluence, proliferate all around us. Cities of the south, Caracas, Bogota and Lima, have caught them too. People hurry past one another – nothing binds them, they are bridges to nowhere. Amongst them and yet far removed, the powerless struggle for survival: old people, hungry people, people with mental illness, young addicts. They are overlooked by the successful, those whose hearts have been turned to stone by their isolation.

*All:* Jesus, in our need we are linked together. Help us to build bridges to one another. Christ have mercy.

The Isolation of Old People

In the rural areas of Latin America old people usually live with their families. They are looked after within the social network of the village. However, living conditions in the countryside are very difficult. In many instances, the fertile land is owned by rich families who live in the towns. This is one of the most important factors accounting for the high level of unemployment among poor rural populations.

Furthermore there is a lack of infrastructure, health facilities and schools. The combination of factors pushes people into migration. They head for the towns in the hope of finding work and housing. However, the majority only find shelter in the slums areas. With the large influx of migrants from the rural areas these slums are mushrooming.

In such circumstances the old traditions and family structures are no longer appropriate. The old people are lonely and destitute without provision for their old age, and with a sense that they are superfluous. The road is often their only home.



Pic:  
The modern centre of a Latin American city.



«He has sent me to set the downtrodden free.»  
(Luke 4, 19)

3th Station  
Crushed by the cross

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* You wanted everyone to walk upright. There was the woman in the synagogue whose back was bent for eighteen years; you called her to your side, touched her, healed her and freed her to walk upright. Now your back is bent under the weight of the cross. You falter. You fall.

*Speaker:* Archbishop Romero, too, wavered and fell next to the altar, covered with blood. He gave himself for his oppressed people in El Salvador.

He stood, courageous, working for God's kingdom of love and justice. He ordered the weapons which were pointed at the people to be silent. He mixed with the poor so that they could find strength. But even he was hit by a bullet like countless people before him and many unrecorded after him. And each time, Jesus falls with the victim.

*All:* Jesus, wherever life is oppressed let us struggle courageously against that oppression. Christ have mercy.

\* COMMUNITY

Bishop Oscar Romero

When Oscar Romero was appointed bishop in 1977, the business community and generals in El Salvador thought they had an ally. Romero was regarded as a devout, honest, cautious man. As bishop he went out among his people who, for the most part, were living in poverty. His eyes were open to the injustices with which the rich and powerful oppressed the people.

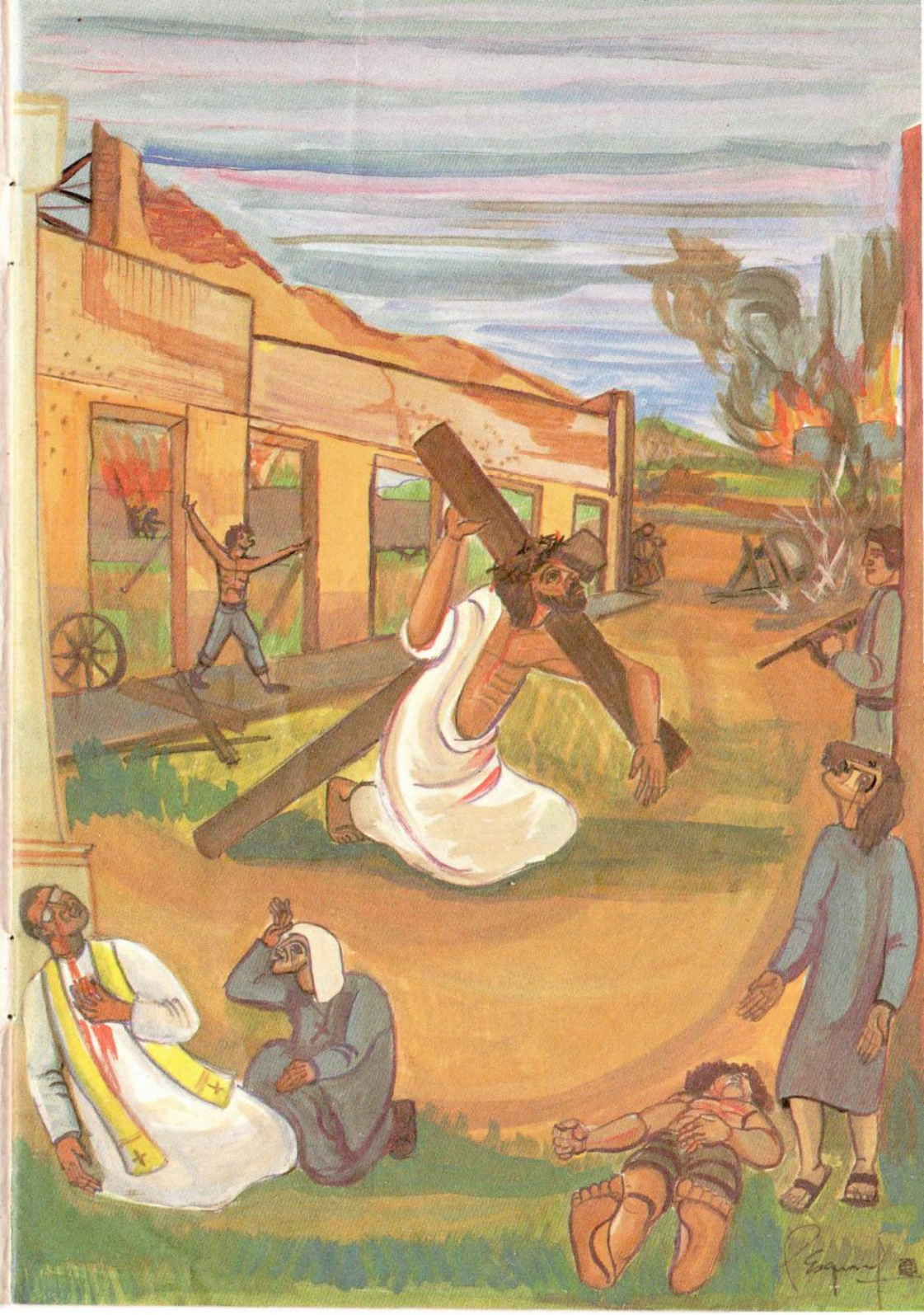


The murder of his beloved colleague Rutilio Grande opened the bishop's heart further to the poor. He set up a cafeteria at the Bishop's House where he met farmers, mothers of «the disappeared», sisters, priests and journalists.

He went to the slum areas and spoke with the people there. On the radio, he aligned himself openly with the Party of the Poor and demanded justice. He knew his life was in danger. He remained true to the path he had chosen without bitterness and with deep faith.

On the morning of 24 March 1980, he was shot as he stood at the altar celebrating Mass. On a previous occasion he had said «If they kill me I will rise up in the people of El Salvador».

> Pic:  
In the foreground,  
the murders  
of Bishop Romero  
and unknown Campesinos.



«His mother stored up all these things in her heart.»  
(Luke 2, 51)

4th Station  
Mother and son

IV

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* You see your mother, she sees you. She conceived you, carried you in her body, gave birth to you, nurtured you and brought you up. She preserves many images of you in her heart. And now this spectacle: her son mistreated, contorted with pain, stripped of his dignity.

*Speaker:* She brings to mind other encounters: a mother with empty hands who has to say no to her hungry child. An unemployed father who cannot buy medication for his ailing child. Parents who watch their children become crippled by poverty. These things take place a thousand times among the poor of Latin America – and not just there either.

*All:* Jesus, let us share with the parents struggling for the survival of their children. Christ have mercy.

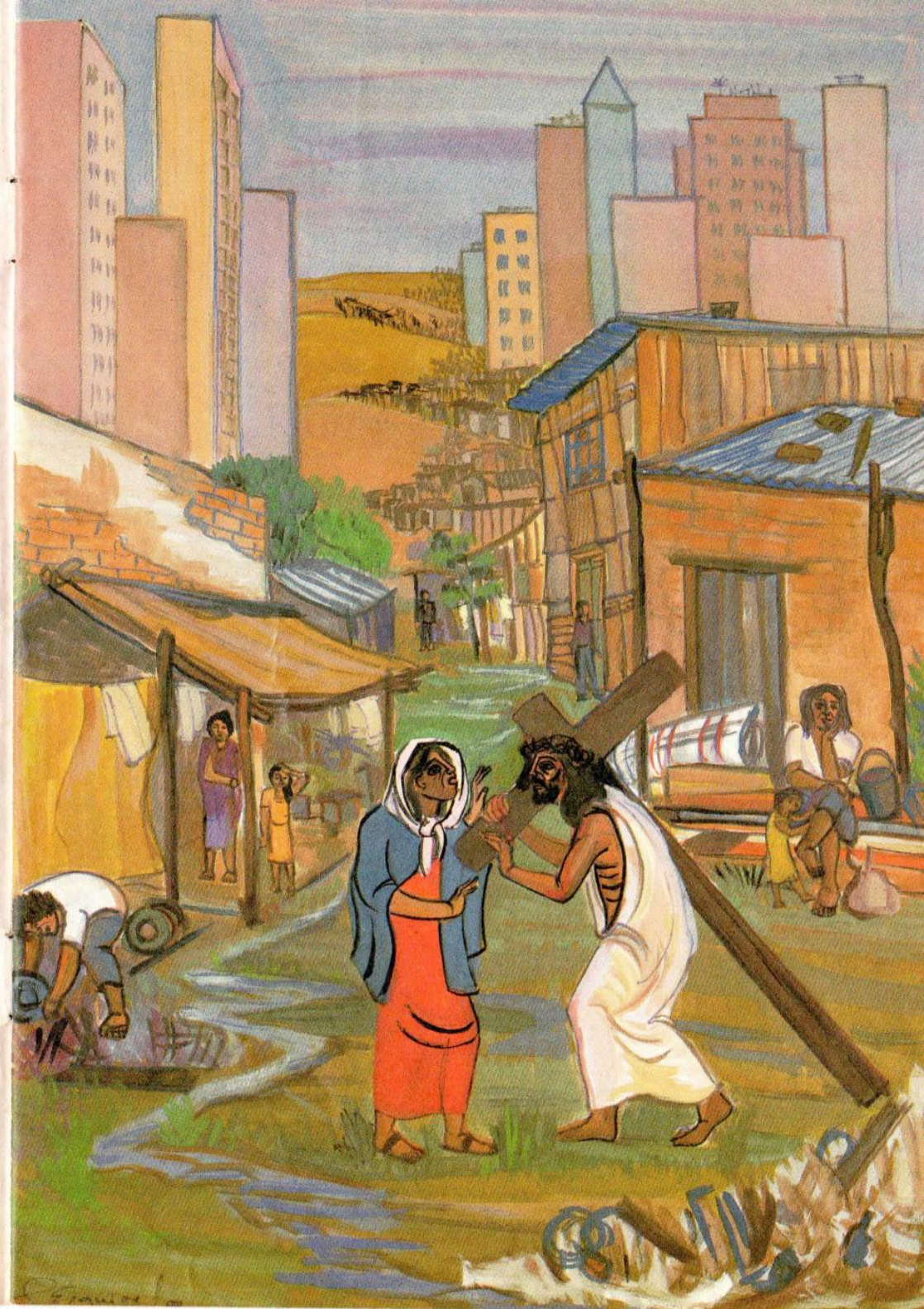
#### Hungry Children

The 2nd World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974, said: «Within 10 years, not one child should go to bed hungry.» And yet, UNICEF's 1990 Annual Report confirmed that more and more children are now living in misery. Impoverishment is a result of harsh conditions imposed on debtor-countries by the IMF (cf. Station II). Peru, for example, has made great efforts to repay its debt since 1988. As a consequence, the cost of living for the poor has soared out of all proportion. Eye-witnesses report that many children in Lima eat «paper soup». Mothers are forced to give their children paper soaked in water to stave off hunger pangs.



The communal kitchens remain an important focus of hope for many families in Peru. With the support of various charities, women have organised themselves into large groups so that they can produce food cheaply. They provide the one meal of the day that many children have.

> *Pic:*  
Slum area on the edge  
of a city.



«They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross.» (Mark 15, 21)

5th Station  
A stranger helps

V

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* Your steps falter, your strength is depleted. The cross is too heavy; even the soldiers can see that. But they don't lend a hand themselves. Instead, they force a stranger to share your burden. He doesn't resist – he knows there's no point. Your pain is nothing new to him.

*Speaker:* A stranger is forced to help! In Latin America today that might be one of the black community. They were captured in West Africa, transported across the sea and put to work as slaves on the plantations of white settlers. Slavery has been abolished and yet black people are often held in contempt and still perform the most menial tasks.

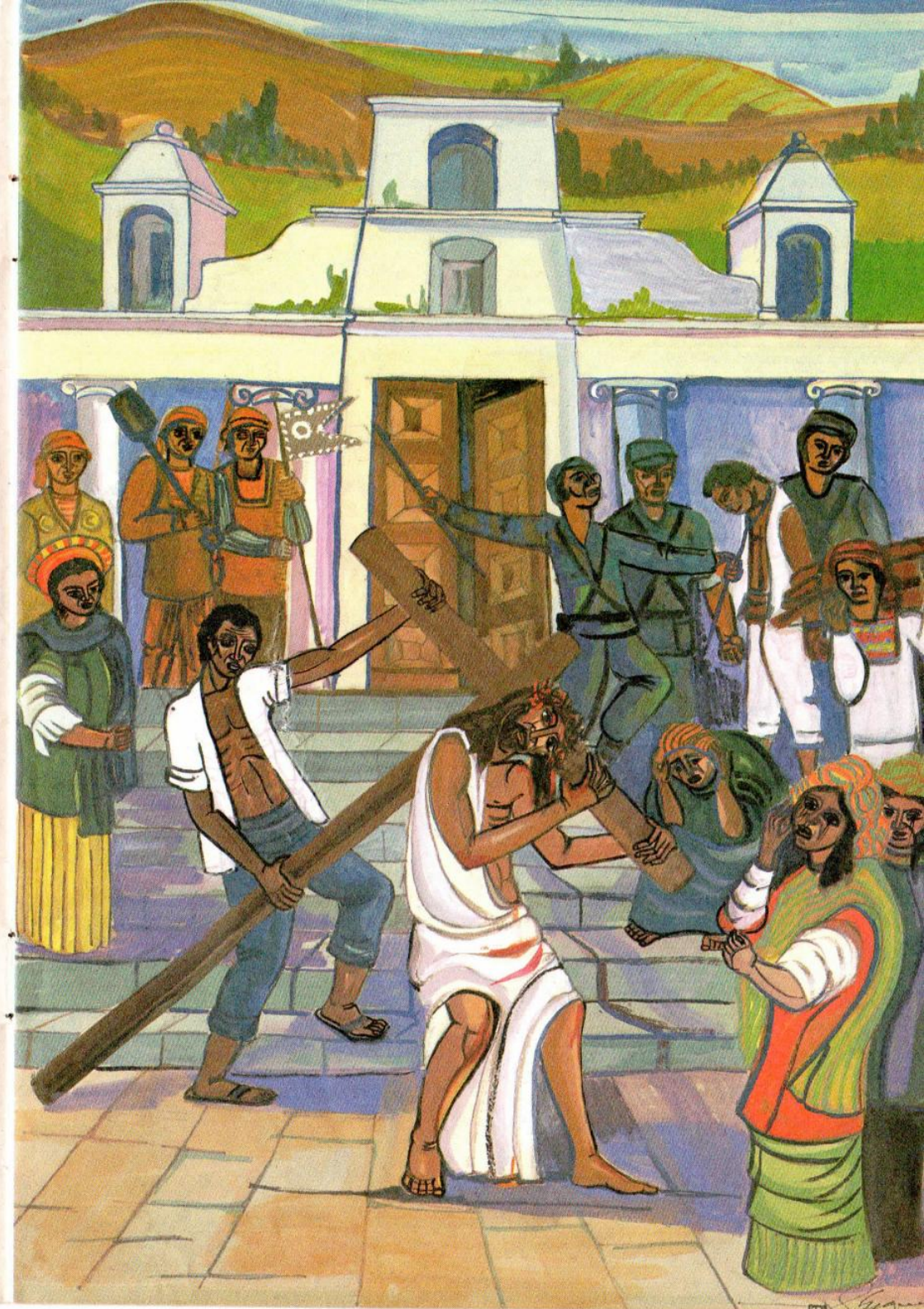
*All:* Jesus, ethnic minorities are discriminated against here too! Let us recognise them as our sisters and brothers. Christ have mercy.

Black People in Latin America



Today, millions of black people live in Latin America. In Brazil, for example, 43% of the population are black or are descended from black ancestors. Although slavery was abolished in 1888, they still suffer discrimination. The Brazilian Bishop's Conference said in their «Brotherhood Campaign, 1988»:

«Comparison of the status of black, white and dark skinned people in the sphere of employment leads to the conclusion that the majority of the black population secure manual labour which only brings in the most meagre wages. Therefore, black workers are usually found undertaking subordinate tasks and this phenomenon is mirrored in all spheres of employment in society (even the Church). One must ask oneself why there are so few black priests, nuns, monks and well-educated people active in pastoral work.» The Brazilian Bishop's Conference apologises to the black people and is looking with concrete proposals for action to improve their status.



> *Pic:*  
In the background  
a man is arrested.

«If you did this to the least of my brothers, you did it to me.» (Matthew 25, 40)

6th Station  
Community of the burdened

VI

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* There is blood on your face. Is there really no one to relieve your pain? Yes, a woman!

Courageously she pushes her way through the soldiers, ignoring their dirty insinuations. She only sees your wounded face. With a cloth she tenderly and carefully wipes you clean.

*Speaker:* In the high Andean valleys, the soil is barren. Survival is a burden. As if that wasn't enough, the people are often caught between the violence of the military and the guerrillas. How they suffer! Jesus calls out to us from their faces. Their features are his features, for he takes on brotherhood with all who suffer.

*All:* Jesus, open our hearts and eyes to your presence in those who suffer! Christ have mercy.

\* KINSHIP

Between Guerrilla and Soldier

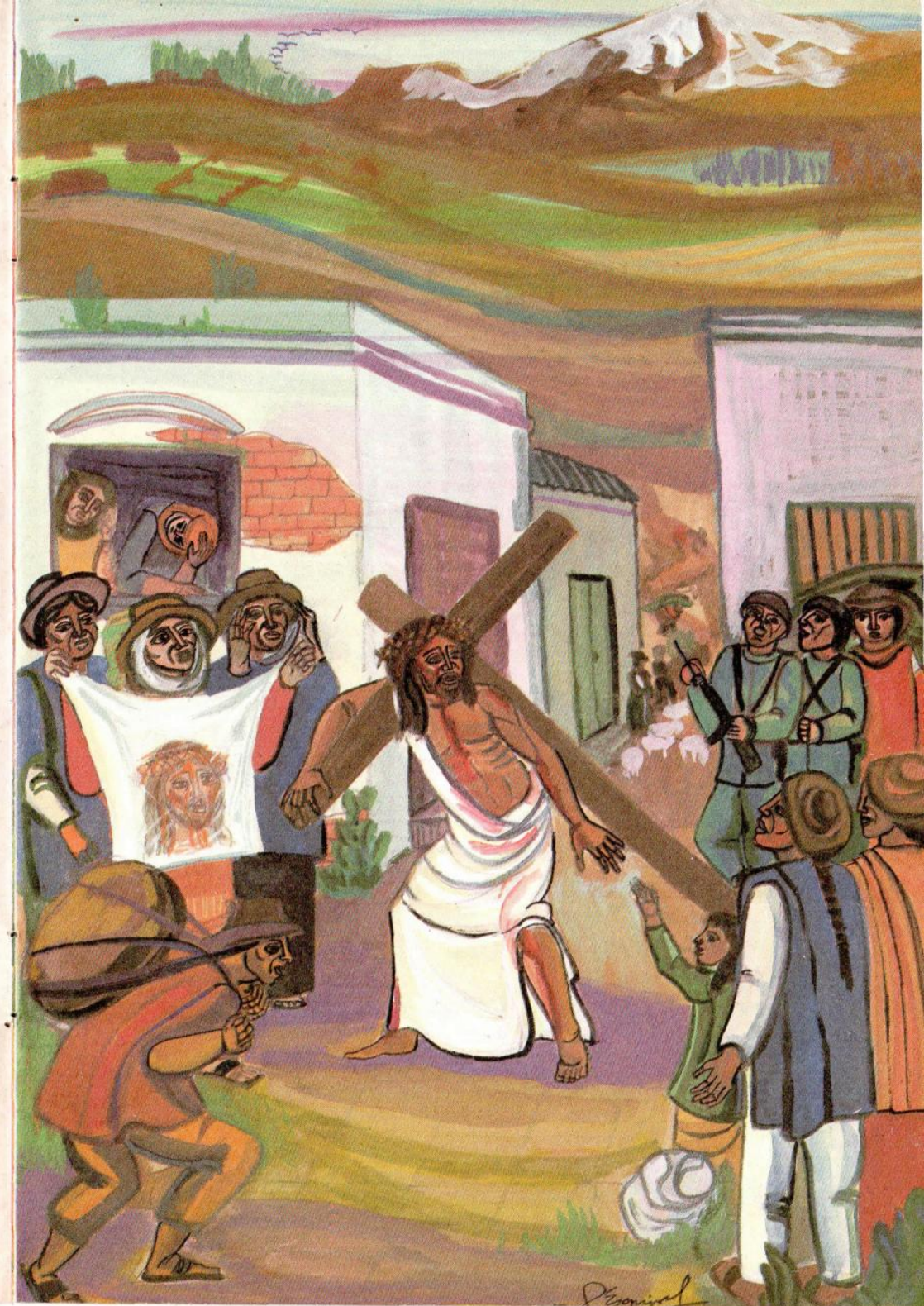
The civilian population suffers greatly in areas which serve as battle zones for guerrilla groups and the army: both sides threaten them and suspect them of working with «the enemy». At the moment the situation in the highlands of Peru is very bad. The following lines from a letter written by a pastoral team from Ayacucho highlight the problem:

«Along with the people here we have experienced how dreadful and senseless it is when lethal weapons have the say. In the last few months the army have treated us more or less like sheep. The villages in our parish are often looted, village leaders are threatened and tortured, inhabitants are summarily accused of being terrorists, although everyone lives in mortal fear of them. On the other hand, the Sendero rebels have limited the radius within which local people can operate. On the feast of the Assumption, they blocked our way to the church and interrogated us for five hours.»



In this context of violence the church can scarcely keep up with reconstruction. However, the commitment of the pastoral team, and their willingness share in the fear, can be a source of hope for the population.

> Pic:  
The picture on the handkerchief has the Indian facial characteristics.





«Give us this day our daily bread.»  
(Matthew 6, 11)



7th Station  
Landless

VII

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* The road winds on into the distance. You no longer feel the ground. You fall again.

Throughout your life you have done without possessions and comfort. You don't even have a bed at night to call your own. You teach prayers for daily bread. You put your trust in a God who is like a concerned father and a protective mother. He nourishes everyone.

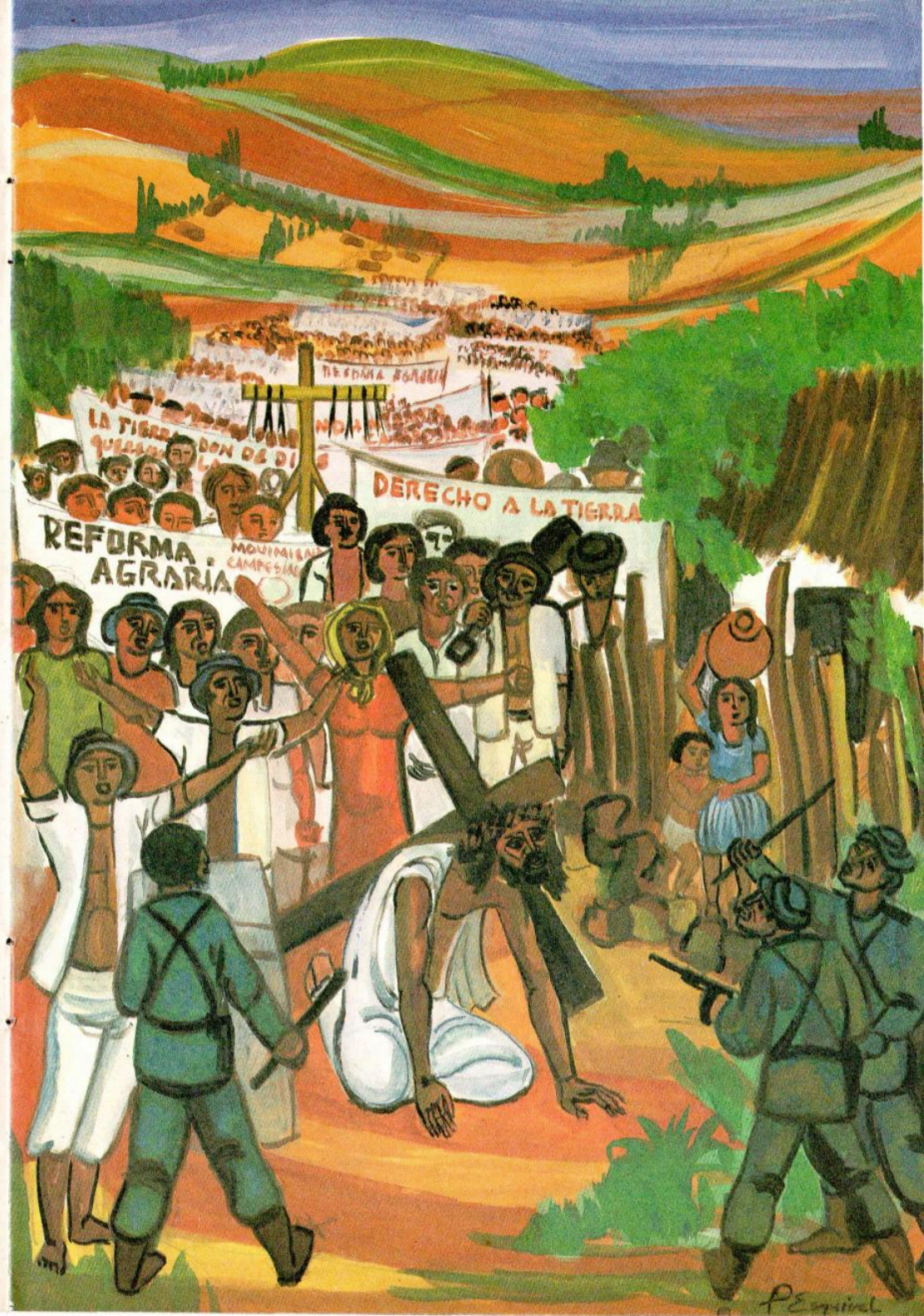
*Speaker:* If land is in the hands of a few, where will bread come from? The daily struggle for food forces impoverished farming families onto the streets. They call for the right to a piece of fertile ground. And when the landowners use violence to put pressure on community leaders the next woman and the next man are already standing up to take their place in the front ranks.

*All:* Jesus, give us our daily bread and let us pass on any surplus to others. Christ have mercy.

### Unjust Land Distribution

The concentration of Land in the hands of a few is an urgent problem in Latin America. In Guatemala, for example, 2.25% of the population owns 64.5% of the fertile land. By contrast, 90% of farmers have less than a tenth of an acre to provide basic foodstuffs. The situation is just as bad in other countries. Pope John Paul II wrote about the situation of the landless in *Laborem Exercens*:

«In some developing countries millions of people are forced to work on land which belongs to other people and in this way they are exploited by the large landowners and are without hope of one day having a small plot of land to call their own. There is a lack of personal legal protection for the farm-workers and their families in old age, during illness, or unemployment. Long working days and hard work are rewarded with the lowest of wages. Usable areas of land are left idle by landlords.»  
A fundamental agricultural reform is now urgent, in order to address the problems of hunger and poverty. The landless and impoverished farming families demand these rights again and again through non-violent protest marches. In doing this, they expose themselves to persecution. Thousands more have been murdered and thousands will be murdered over this issue in Latin America.



Pic:  
The black belts hanging on the cross belong to murdered Campesinos. Derecho a la tierra = «Right to land».

«Many women cried and lamented for him.»  
(Luke 23, 27)

8th Station  
The women cry out

VIII

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* There are women along the roadside.

They see how you have been abused;  
they lament and cry out.

People who publicly acknowledge you  
are now threatened with persecution.

The women are not very concerned for themselves –  
they are moved by compassion.

But you know their future:

«Women, do not cry for me!

Weep for yourselves and for your children!»

*Speaker:* They have reason to complain,  
the women among the poor of Latin America.

They bear a lot of the burden  
of work and responsibility.

Often they alone assume the whole responsibility  
for feeding their families.

Their children's future is gloomy  
but the women carry on;

they never give up.

This is what history has taught them to do.

Out of common need springs solidarity,  
shared laughter, singing and dancing –  
in spite of everything.

At rallies they take up the Word.

In the base communities the women are  
the fundamental strength.

*All:* Jesus, let us cry out like these women  
at injustice, and work steadfastly

for a future that is more just.

Christ have mercy.

Erlina, one like a million others

«How can I get my hands on something edible for my four children» wonders Erlina. Today her husband is working as a day-labourer, like yesterday. But he doesn't bring anything home. On Saturday he drank a great deal at Don Juan's, it didn't matter that he had no money. Now he has to work cheaply to pay it off. Erlina thinks: «Didn't Magdalena sell a wall hanging yesterday? Maybe she can lend me something?»

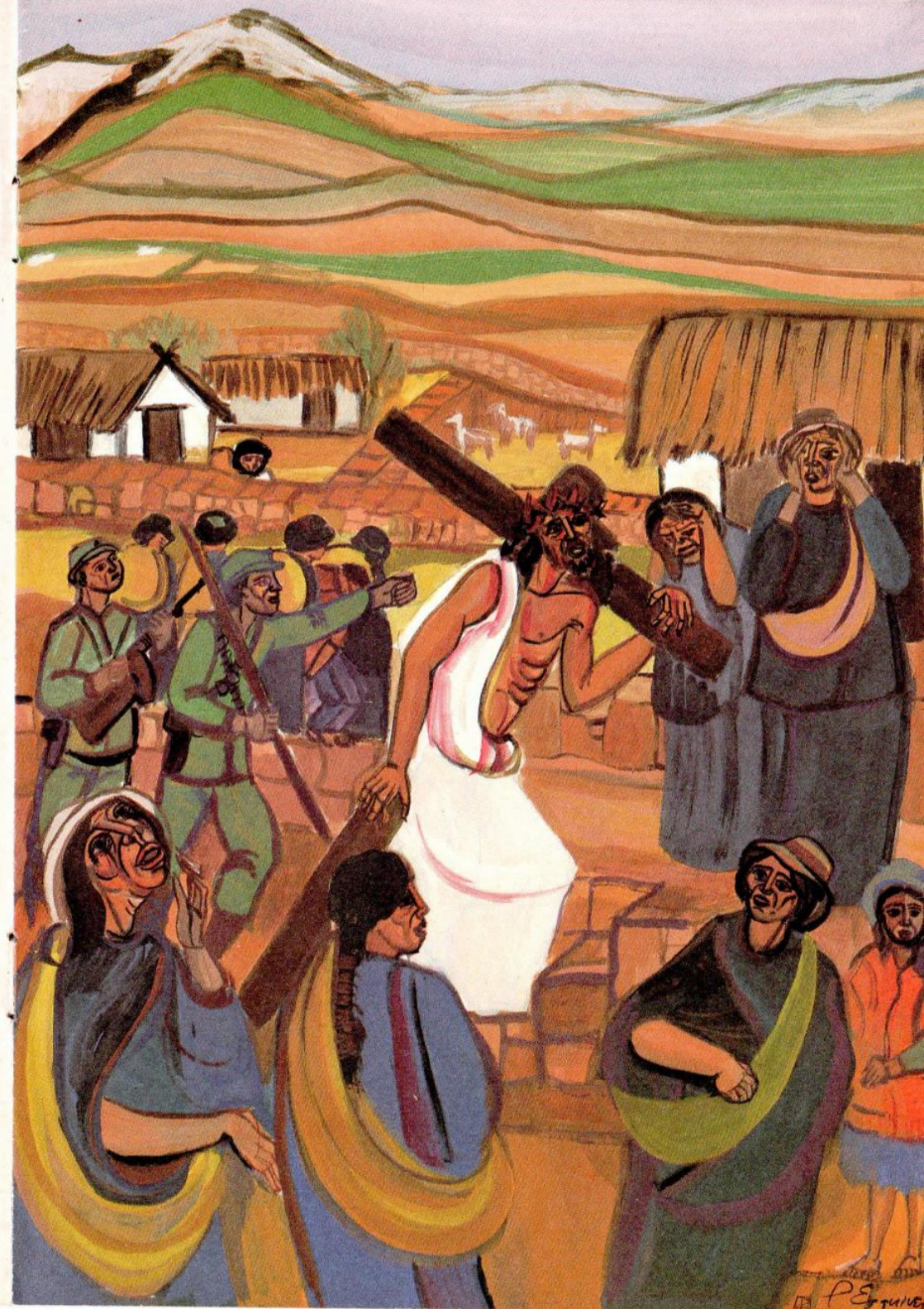
She goes over to her neighbour. Like Erlina, Magdalena has a loom in her kitchen and she spends every spare minute working on it. But Magdalena cannot help out. She used the money she got from selling the wall hanging to pay off her debts.

«We simply must have a plot of land, plant yucca and maize, but all the land belongs to the large landowners. It is outrageous!»



Magdalena agrees with Erlina and adds: «Yesterday in the Bible group we read how the people of Israel were oppressed in Egypt. Aren't we in the same position? God wants to lead us to the promised land too. Isn't it our right and our duty to demand land in a non-violent but determined fashion? We should discuss this with the others!»

> Pic: Women in Indian dress.  
In the background  
a man is led away.



«Whoever welcomes such a child  
in my name welcomes me.»  
(Mark 9, 37)

9th Station  
Abandoned and beaten

IX

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* You are near to collapse.  
You fall down on the road.  
You are wretched, like the street children.  
Children are special for you;  
you bless and embrace them even when you are tired.  
You said clearly that God's new world  
is open precisely to such as these.  
These soldiers push you on again  
and beat you like an abused child.

*Speaker:* In Latin American cities  
abandoned children live on the streets.  
They beg and search for the most basic  
necessities for survival.  
They spend the nights in hiding  
with little real protection.  
They are hunted, beaten and even murdered  
by police and traders  
who want to make the city «clean».

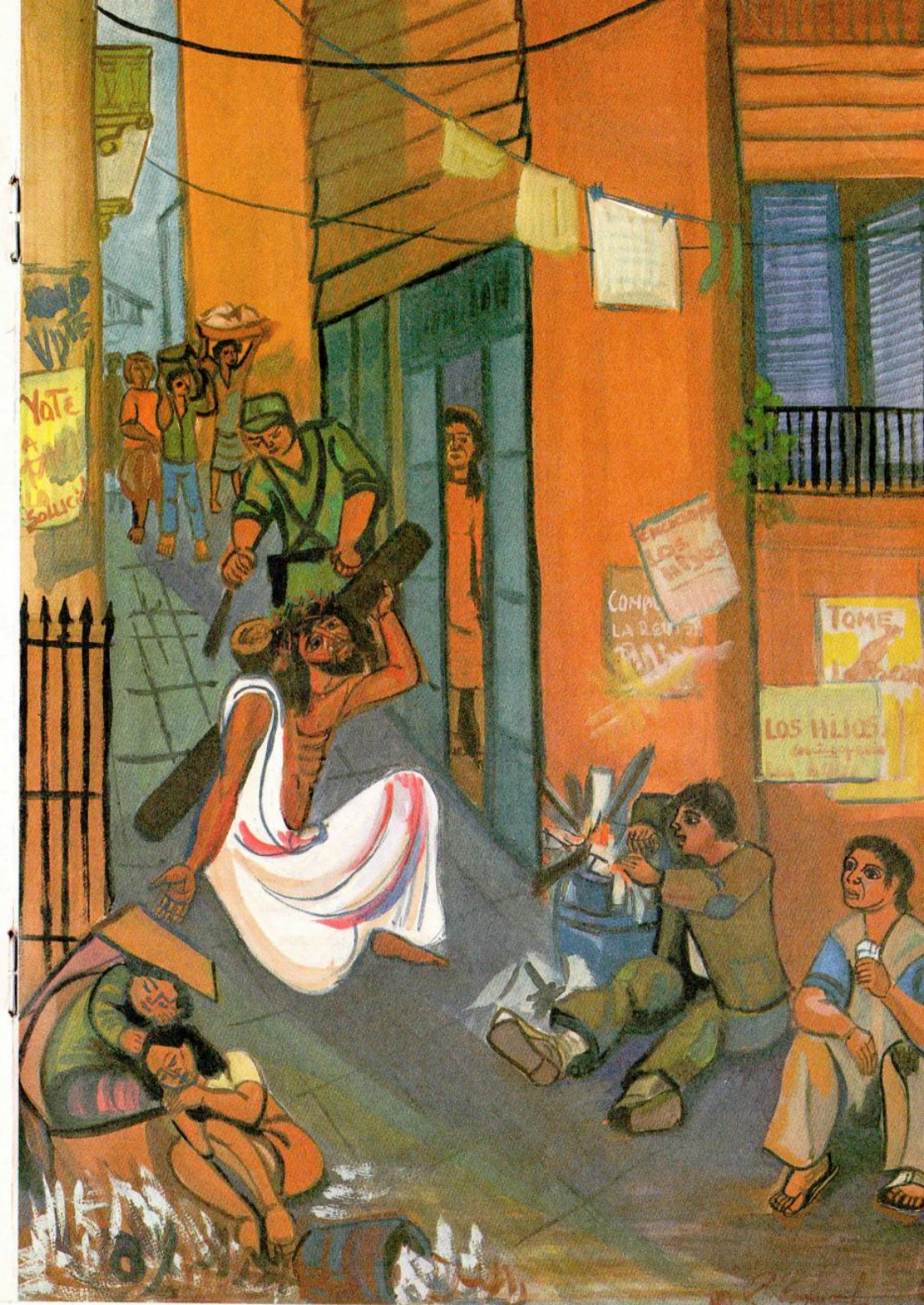
*All:* Jesus, the world which holds its children  
in contempt despises their future.  
Christ have mercy.

The death  
of street children

Destitute children live on the streets of many Latin American cities. It is estimated that there are some 50 million in all. Hunger and broken family relationships have driven them onto the streets. Many start their life on the streets at 8–11 years old, some even as young as five. They beg, collect rubbish, work for a pittance at this and that, trying to survive.



They are a thorn in the flesh of all businessmen. There are regular «clean-up» drives. In Rio de Janeiro alone in 1990, according to official statistics, 492 children and young people were murdered, more often than not the children are tortured and mutilated. According to the Investigation Department (Police) in Rio, officers in active military service and from the reserves belong to the death squads and in this way supplement their salary. They face no punishment: they can count on the justice system to ignore them. Even the Brazilian Minister of Health, Alceni Guerra admits there are «powerful business interests» at the root of these purges.



> *Pic:*  
Street children in a city.

«They divided his garments among them.»  
(Matthew 27, 35)

10th Station  
Robbed of his clothes

X

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

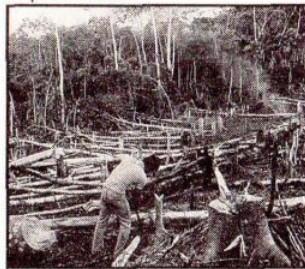
*Female Speaker:* Mercilessly they strip you. Your clothes, your last protection, they share out amongst themselves. There you are, naked, humiliated to the last, like a tree which is chopped down leaf by leaf, branch by branch; a tree whose trunk is wounded and slowly bleeds to death.

*Speaker:* In our time a terrible despoiling of Nature is being carried out. Mother earth, as the Indians tenderly refer to her, is being torn apart, tree by tree, with enormous machines. The destruction of the rain forests is threatening the survival of entire communities of Indians. Chico Mendes, Brazilian environmentalist, wanted to prevent this over-exploitation. He paid with his life.

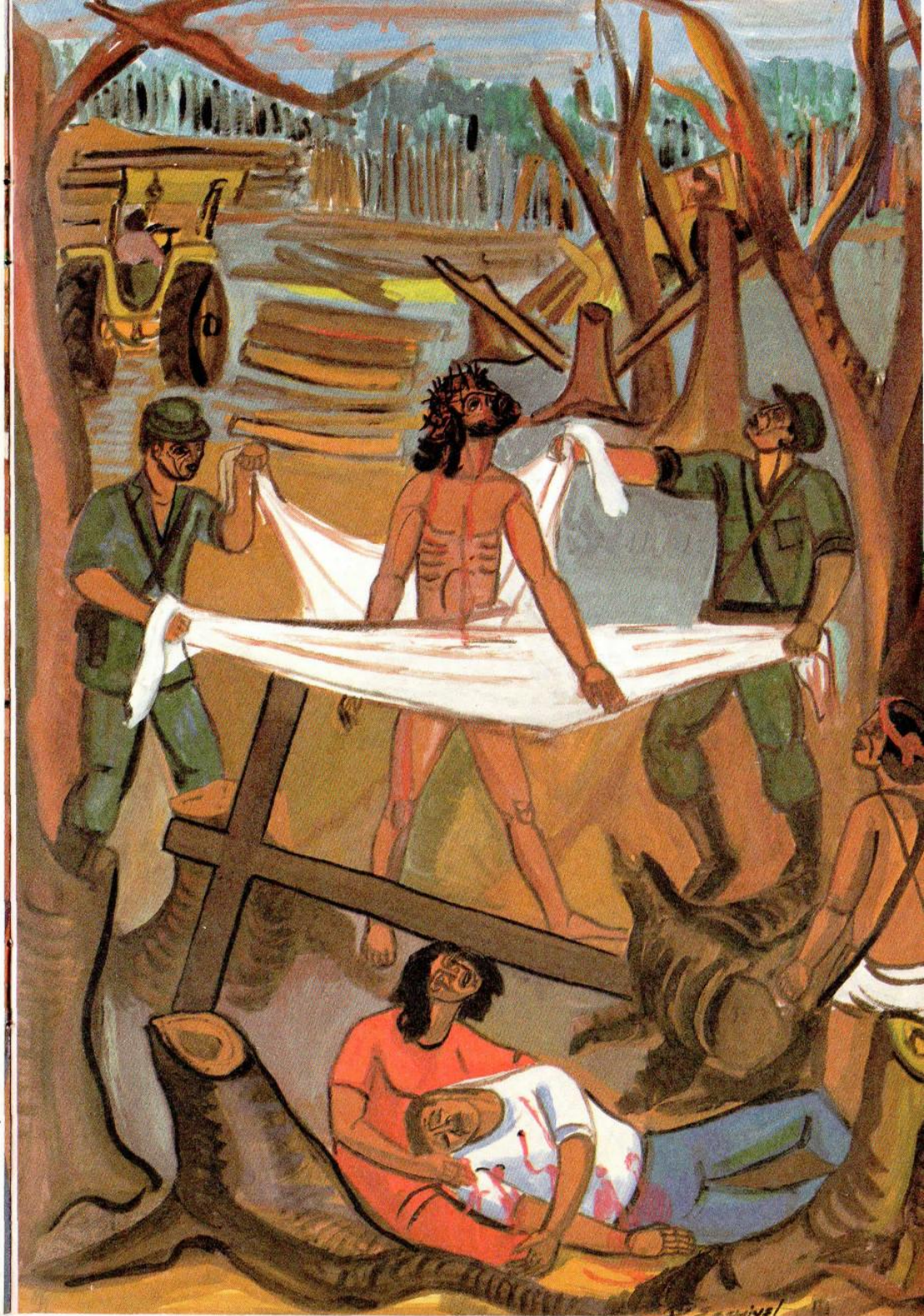
*All:* Jesus, human beings and Nature can only survive in harmony with each other. Let us protect creation. Christ have mercy.

### Destruction of the Rain Forest

At the beginning of this century 12% of the earth's surface was still covered with rain forest. Today the figure is only 7%. To date, 37% of the original forest land in Latin America has been destroyed. The tropical forests are the lungs of the earth. The forests in the Amazon area alone absorb 20% of the world's carbon dioxide. If the forests are hacked down, this unabsorbed «poison» could lead to a dangerous warming of the earth's atmosphere. Furthermore, the survival of entire Indian peoples is threatened. In Brazil the rain forest is destroyed mainly to provide pastureland. Local cattle barons and multi-national companies clear vast tracts of land. Chico Mendes, the courageous conservationist from Acre, spoke out for the preservation of the rain forest and was murdered for his efforts. Leonardo Boff, the famous Brazilian liberation theologian, said in May 1991 in Lucerne, that Chico Mendes had made him aware of the urgency of the environmental question. He added: «The same aggression which is used against the poor is used against nature.» For Boff creation is a mystical source in which God can be experienced.



> Pic:  
The murder of Chico Mendes.



«You cannot serve both God and money.»  
(Matthew 6, 24)



11th Station  
Nailed to the cross

XI

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* Powerfully, they hammer in the nails.

Now your life is at stake.

Do you give up?

No, you are true to your message even to the last drops of blood:

«God or Mammon, either or», you said.

You never sought power or money; you tirelessly announced life in its fullness.

God in his power desires life

for each person throughout creation.

Whoever works against this works against God, and nails you to the cross.

*Speaker:* The rich North; the poor South.

These terms are familiar to us.

The chasm between the two worlds is deepening every year.

Its enormous debt makes Latin America ever more dependent on the North.

«Tighten your belts and pay up!»

is the banks' solution.

Yet where poverty already reigns, this solution will bring death to children, women and the poorest people.

*All:* Jesus, a divided world was not part of God's plan.

Don't allow us to get used to it.

Christ have mercy.

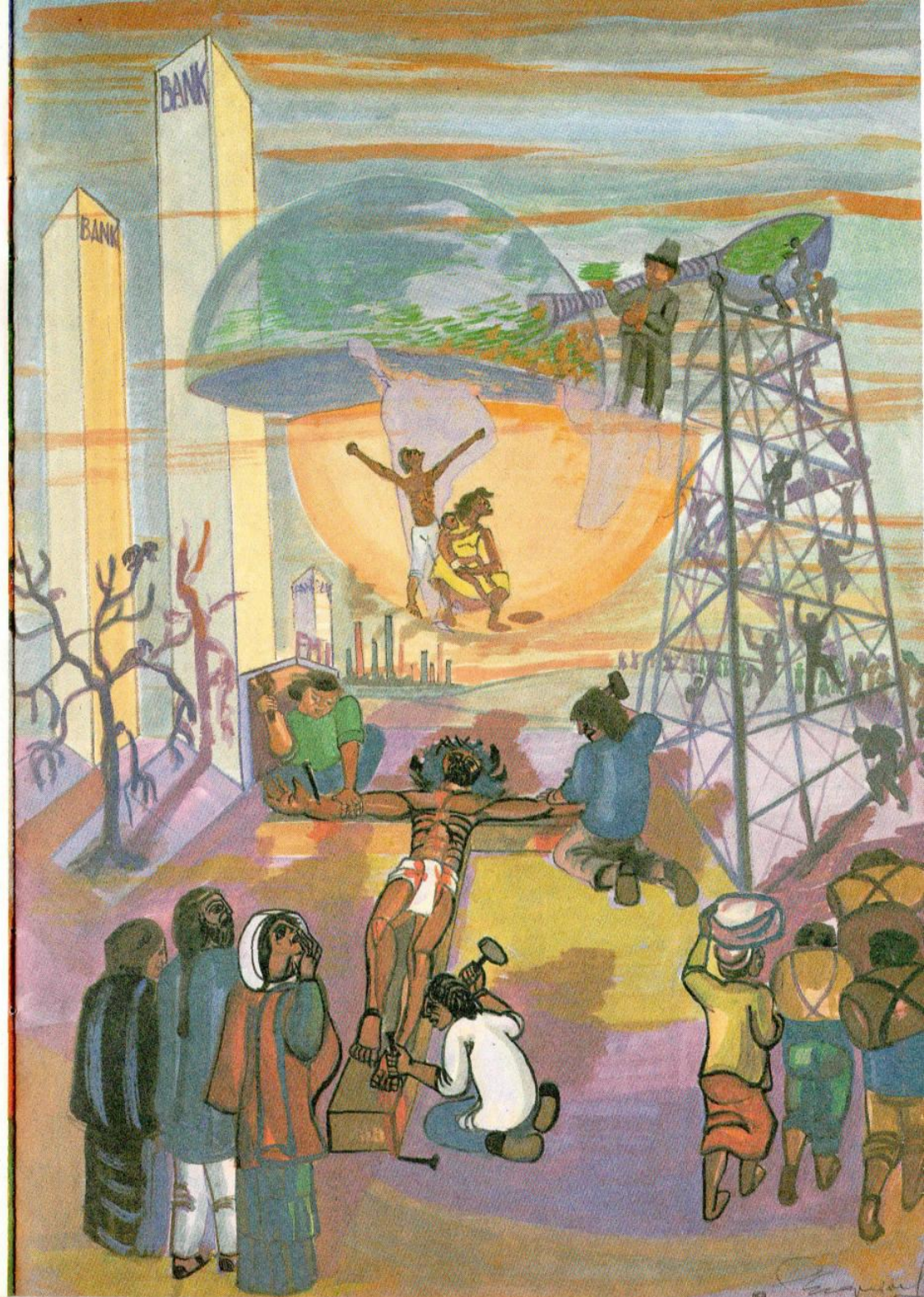
### Debt.

At the end of 1990 third world debt reached the enormous sum of 1300 billion US dollars, with Latin America owing the largest portion at 481 billion US dollars. Cardinal Arns of Brazil said:

«Our foreign debt is a dictatorial imposition on the whole nation. How, where and why the money was lent has never been explained.»

The people had no say in this matter. But the burden of repayment falls heavily on the most vulnerable members of society. The IMF proposes structural adjustment programmes on those debtor countries which are unable to meet repayments to release money. This means among other things that wage increases remain below the rate of inflation, and that subsidies for basic foodstuffs, schools and health-care are cut back. Such measures affect the poor and, above all, children.

Since 1983, the countries of the south have been paying more to the north in servicing debt than they have received in new loans. According to the World Bank, in 1989 50 billion US dollars went from the Third World to the industrialised countries. It is like suckling the blood of the peoples of the poor world!



> Pic: Left, the IMF and World Bank. Right, the debt sacrifice of the poor.

«But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.»  
(Mark 15, 37)

12th Station  
Death on the cross

XII

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* There you hang, defenceless, at their mercy, broken like the world. You breathe painfully. You are spared nothing. It is monstrous. You, the loving, the just, go to the limit. As the ultimate sign of solidarity with all who suffer, you suffer a horrible death on the cross.

*Speaker:* When we drown in dark pain, in the greatest guilt, when there no longer seems to be a way out, Jesus comes to us. He sank so low on the cross that there was no further to go. From there, he offered us love and hope. New life germinates for us and for the ruptured earth.

*All:* Jesus, in your greatest despair you gave a sign of solidarity. Christ have mercy.

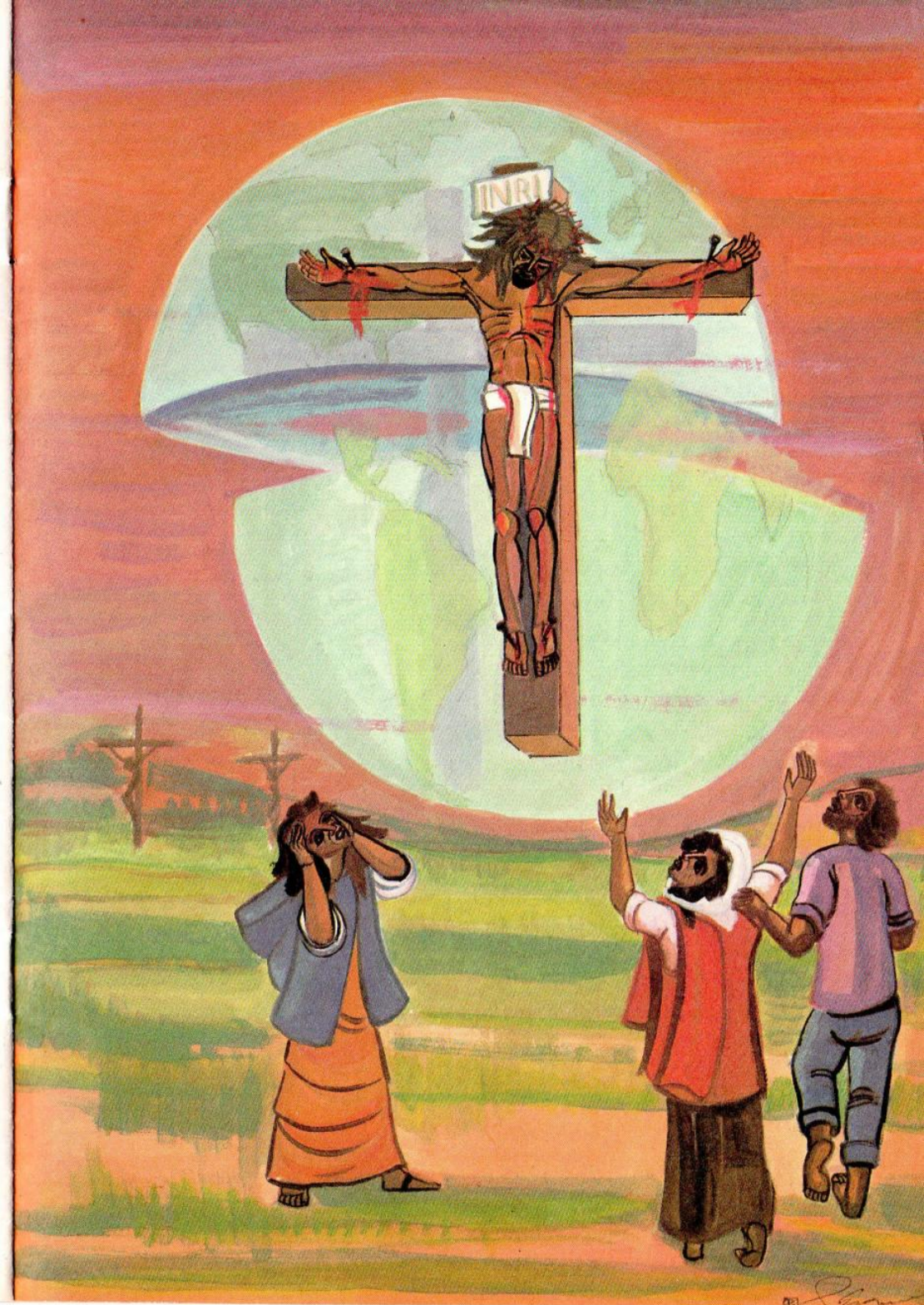
#### Premature Death

The issue is not the death of a person at the end of his days. Today we are challenged by the premature and unjust death of poor people, death caused by crime and structural exploitation.



«The experience of so many Latin Americans of unjust death helps us gain a better understanding of the injustice of the death of Jesus. The «Agony of the Cross» keeps alive our reality, though, and lets the contrast between the deaths and the gift of life in Christ emerge more strikingly.

> *Pic:* The split world nails Christ to the cross; yet He joins the world together with the cross.



«If a grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit.»  
(John 12, 24)

13th Station  
The seed of hope

XIII

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* Your mother is among the few who did not evade your death. As a child you played on her lap, now she holds your lifeless body in her arms. Her face shows silent pain. She looks back on your life, following each event. You brought the life of God's new world, even if it is still only a few who realise it.

*Speaker:* It takes courage and strength to confront pain and suffering, but this is the first step if we are looking for liberated life within us and around us. Base communities in Latin America have known this for some time. They talk about their needs, their joys; they can identify with God's word. And out of this grows commitment to a world like the one revealed by Jesus.

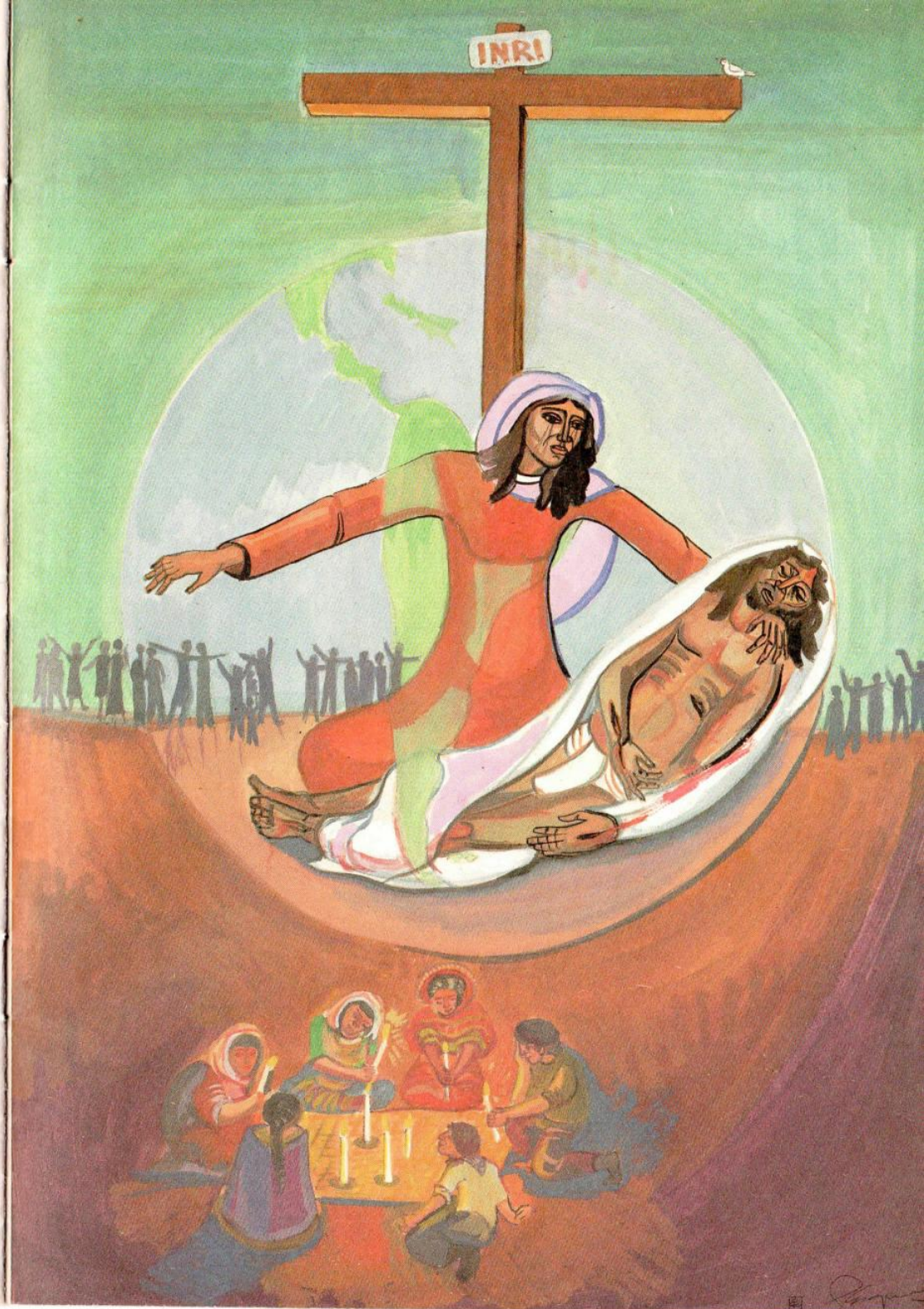
*All:* Jesus, open us to the experience of hope of our sisters and brothers in Latin America. Christ have mercy.

#### Base communities

Hundreds, even thousands, of base communities have been established in Latin America in the last 25 years. The Franciscan, Leonardo Boff says: «Base communities are, in the end, nothing other than the Church at grass roots level. The true church of the poor involves the unemployed and marginalised from the poor quarters. They meet and read the Bible together and draw parallels between the Word of God and their daily lives. This dialogue between life and faith was precisely the thing that gave rise to the liberation initiative. The base community is a symbol of a new Church which has really taken on board the option for the poor. These base communities are set up precisely because there are only a few priests. In my view they are the most valuable contribution the South American church could have made to the universal church.»



> *Pic:*  
A base community  
which does not abandon hope.



«Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in his own tomb.» (Matthew 27, 59)

14th Station Darkness  
and the shadow of death

XIV

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

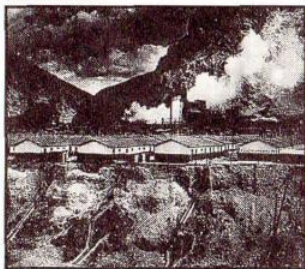
*Female Speaker:* They lay your body in a cloth to commit it to the earth. There is the smell of death. Overcome by grief they cry out in pain. But isn't their protest too late? Why didn't they raise their voices days ago when you were being treated worse and worse. Now even they feel responsible for your death.

*Speaker:* Nuclear waste, hole in the ozone layer, acid rain, summer smog! There are environmental experts who predict darkness and the shadow of death for our earth. «Science will solve the problems» is the argument used against them. Many feel that our wasteful way of life threatens nature. Too many, though, keep quiet.

*All:* Jesus, give us the grace to make drastic changes. Christ have mercy.

#### Environmental Pollution

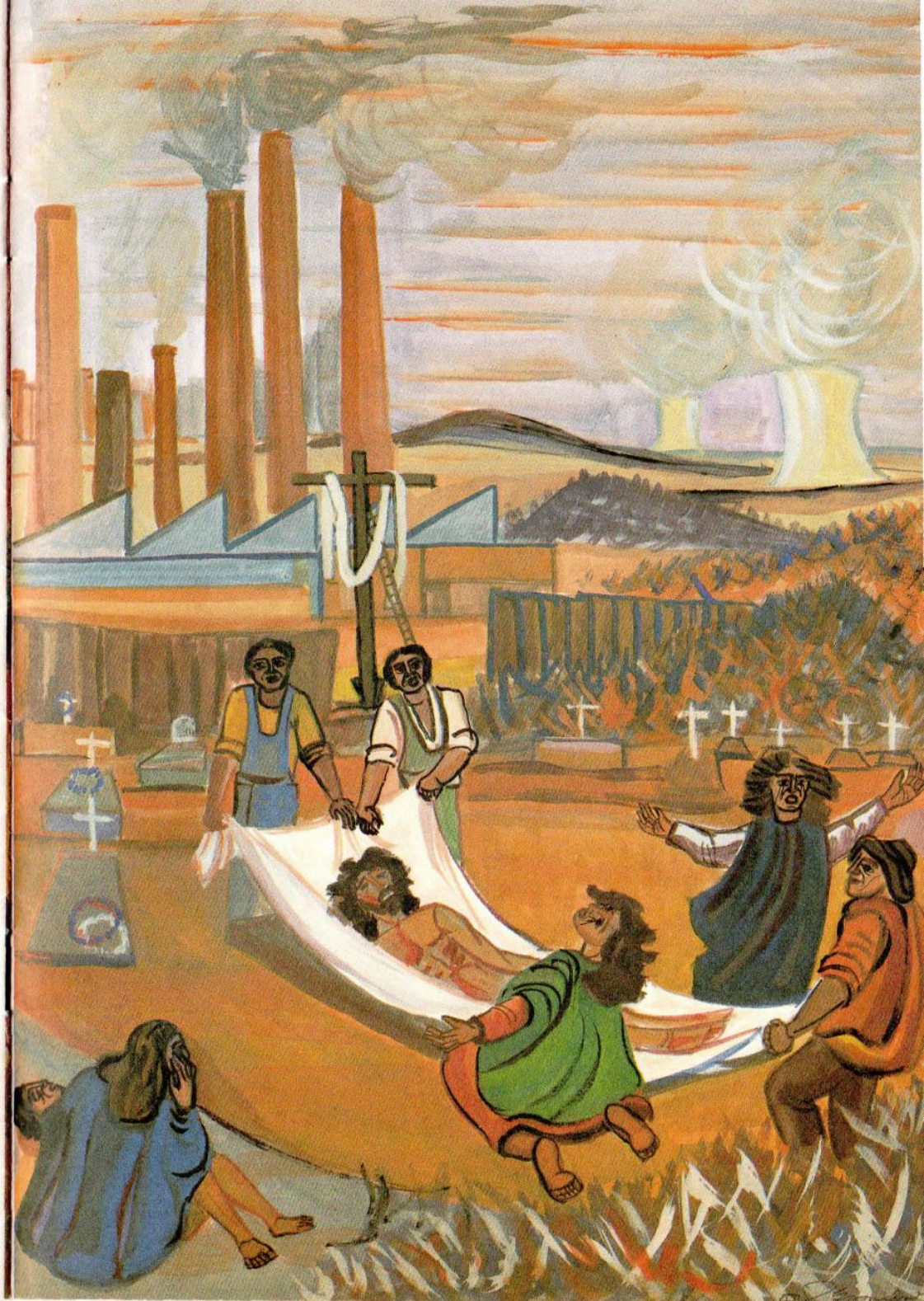
The cities most affected by environmental pollution and the build-up of smog are not in the industrialised countries of the north. They are cities like Mexico or Sao Paulo, which are situated in the south, where clouds of unfiltered poisons are belched into the air and pumped into the water. Industry produces environmental pollution with little in the way of constraints. There are scarcely any controlling bodies. The large-scale use of agro-chemicals is horrific. Nowadays in Brazil 500% more pesticides are used than 15 years ago. Multinationals continue to sell products to developing countries which have been banned in their home countries.



«Industrialised countries in the East and West have a special responsibility for global environmental problems because they are involved in 80% of the poisoning of the earth's atmosphere and are jointly responsible for many instances of environmental damage in the third world.»

These are the words of the German Political scientist, Franz Nuscheler.

> *Pic:* A rubbish tip in the industrialised countries is turned into a graveyard.





«Why do you seek the living among the dead?  
He is not here but has risen.» (Luke 24, 5)

✱

15th Station  
Triumph of life

XV

*Speaker:* Jesus Christ, you endure suffering and death because you believe in life.

*All:* Let us share in your resurrection.

*Female Speaker:* There you are among your own. You go a little of the way with them. You break the bread for them. You say: «I bring you peace!» You answer the power of death with new life which reaches all who follow you. You let them experience the truth of your words: «I am always with you, every day, to the end of the world.»

*Speaker:* And He is here now and with Him are all those who lived and loved like Him, even to the point of giving their lives. Bishop Romero stands next to Chico Mendes. All the exploited of Latin America – Indians, black people, peasants, men and women – they all announce with Him the rising sun. The truth: «God wants your life» applies to us as well. If we have confidence in it we will see the possibility of sharing, we will take steps towards each other, we will protect the plants as we would our sisters and brothers.

*All:* Jesus, fill us with your freedom, power and love. Christ have mercy.

### Resurrection today

Mystical experience is of central importance in Liberation Theology: Jesus can be experienced in and with those who suffer. For those who have faith, the act of turning to the oppressed, of serving the poor, of searching for freedom from exploitative structures, is also an act of love for the suffering Christ. By the same token, the resurrection will be experienced wherever life is defended. Furthermore, all life which is oppressed and extinguished by power is included in the resurrection. This concept is expressed by Adolfo Perez Esquivel in his Easter picture: Christ among the martyrs of Latin America. They are leading a protest march of landless Campesino men and women. In the background the stations of the cross are indicated: on the right the dreadful extermination of indigenous peoples which started 500 years ago; on the left the misery of the people today.

And yet, above it all is the sun, which, like Jesus Christ, symbolises the triumph of life.



**«They died for their beliefs in the service of the poor»**

*From the book of martyrs of the Latin American Church.*

*The central figure on the Latin American Hunger Cloth (also the 15th station in this book) is the risen Christ, who accompanies the people of Latin America on their journey through history. He is surrounded by Latin American martyrs who worked devotedly with faith in God's love and justice for the poor and were killed for their efforts. Their's is the promise of holy scripture «When the corn dies it brings forth great fruits» (Job 12, 24).*

*In their life and faith through their resistance and death the martyrs of Latin America – women, men, children – become guarantors of hope and of the source of life. Their pictures and names are recorded in the «Book of Martyrs of the Latin American Church».*



**Alice Dumont, Argentina**

*Nun, murdered 8 December 1977*

She was the first nun to move into a slum area of Buenos Aires to live and work. She dedicated her life to the poorest of the poor, first in the country, later in the urban slums of Buenos Aires.

She accompanied the mothers of the «disappeared» on their demonstrations and protest marches. She had a very special concern for the families of those who had disappeared and for those who were political prisoners.

On one occasion she was held for 24 hours by the police without being charged.

As she was leaving the church of St Cruz in Buenos Aires on 8 December 1977, she was abducted by the police. Since

then there has been no official news about her.

However it is now known that she died under torture and that her corpse has «disappeared».



**Santo Dias da Silva, Brazil**

*Lay worker with Basic Christian Communities Murdered 30 October 1979*

Until his 20th birthday, Santo Dias da Silva lived in the country, in Terra Roxa, in the state of Sao Paulo. There he made his way as an itinerant worker and was a member of the peasant association. Later he moved to Sao Paulo where he was taken on as a worker in a metal factory and became actively involved in the people's movement.

He was a pillar of strength in the formation of basic Christian communities.

He was a victim of police repression on 30 October 1979 when he joined his workmates in a gathering outside the Sylvania factory in Sao Paulo. He felt as obliged as Christ did to stand beside his workmates.



**Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Gadamez**

*Archbishop of San Salvador Murdered 24 March 1980*

The Archbishop was murdered on 24 March 1980, as he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence in the capital of El Salvador.

Bishop Romero came from humble origins. His father Santo Romero, was employed at the telegraph office; his mother Quadalupe de Jesus, was a very devout woman.

When he had a problem he would often shut himself up in his room to think, to pray, to search for a solution. An honest man with an incredible work-drive, he was self-disciplined, systematic and logical in his thinking and filled with an extraordinary thirst for knowledge.

For him, the Sunday sermons he delivered in the cathedral were central to the execution of his duties as priest and bishop. They pointed the way for the whole country. He always started with a concrete situation, drawing in the suffering of the people while putting it in the context of the Gospel. He never doubted his clear option for the poor. His solidarity with the people was legendary.

Therefore his words became signs and power for the people.



**Chico Mendes, Brazil**

*Rubber tapper murdered 22 December 1988*

It all began with the rubber boom in the Amazon at the end of the last century. As a result of their rapid industrialisation, the countries of Europe and North America needed vast quantities of rubber. This was provided by the rubber tappers who tap the rubber trees before nightfall and the following evening collect the latex which seeps out.

The salary of a rubber tapper barely reaches subsistence level; the wealth of the rubber barons around Manaus is proverbial. Chico Mendes was born in 1944 into a family which had earned its bread for generations from rubber tapping. As a child he learnt to read and write and early on began awareness-raising work within the local union. The rubber tappers wanted to be personally responsible for selling their products in order to secure higher prices and thereby, to become independent of the rubber barons. Their struggle for better living and working conditions threatened the privileges of the large landowners. Despite persecution, Chico Mendes allowed himself to be elected General Secretary of the Land Workers' Union. Later he was also involved in the foundation of the Brazilian Trade Union Association and the National Rubber Tappers Council.

From the 70's onwards Chico Mendes' work took on a new dimension. Vast areas of the Amazon are being, and have been, chopped down to make room for cattle farms (e. g. Grande Carajas) or iron ore mines. Moreover to smelt the iron ore, areas of woodland are converted into charcoal. In union with UNI, the association of Indian peoples, the rubber tappers opposed the accelerating destruction of the ecosystem and of their own living environment.

On 22 December 1988, Chico Mendes was murdered by Darcil Alvez da Silva. Chico had taken legal steps to prevent his father chopping down a few hundred hectares more of the forest.



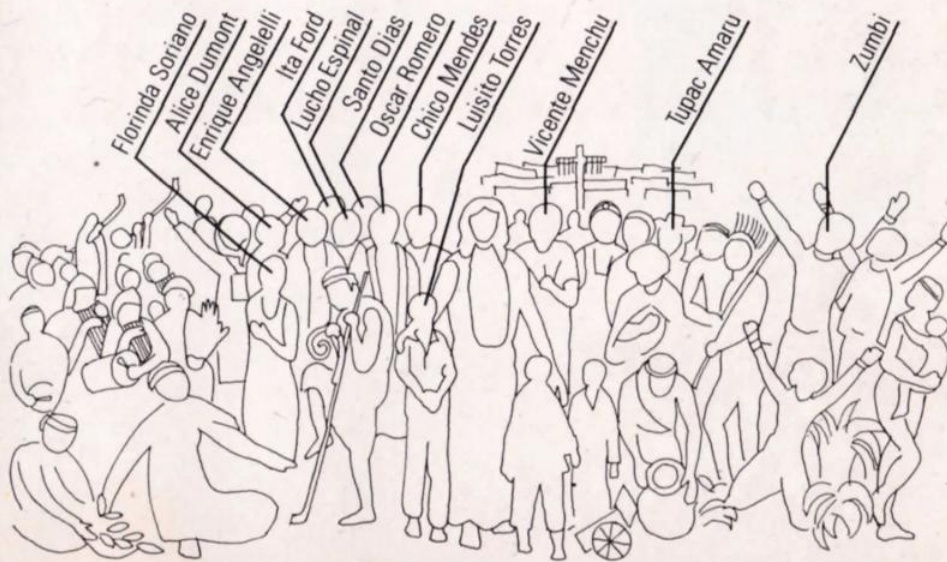
**Ita Ford, El Salvador**

*Murdered 2 December 1980*

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Ita Ford worked at «Saddlers» for several years. In 1971 she returned to Maryknoll where she had lived previously, but from where she had moved for medical treatment.

As a missionary she went to Chile and then to El Salvador. She wrote to her friends:

«I don't know whether it's in spite of or because of the atrocities, the confusion, the brutality and the lawlessness, but I know that I have to stay here... I believe God's mercy will descend on El Salvador... we have to press on in faith, taking a day at a time, walking this road full of obstacles, full of pitfalls and blind alleys.»



Once, as she was accompanying her colleague Carol, who was involved with helping migrant farmworkers, the boat she was in overturned as they were crossing the river. She thought she was about to die and later recounted how she prayed at the time: «I am here Father, take my life in your hands.»

Sister Mary survived this accident and on 2 December 1980 she died at the hands of the police who had abducted her and three other missionaries.



**Zumbi, Brazil**

*Black leader from Los Palmares murdered 22 November 1695*

Zumbi lived with his parents and family in Los Palmares (now in the state of Pernambuco). In that time, Palmares was one of the most important «Quilombos», a name for communities of blacks who had escaped from slavery.

The life of the black slaves at that time was unbearable as much because of the inhuman working conditions on the sugar plantations, as of the draconian punishments imposed by the plantation owners. It was no surprise, then, that many slaves fled to Palmares. There, they formed themselves into communities organised along Christian lines, owning the land jointly, producing handmade artefacts, agreeing sensible rules and arranging communal protection.

The one-hundred year-long «Quilombo» experiment came

to an abrupt end when the large landowners and authorities of the country attacked the communist settlement of Palmares with cannon and some 1000 men. The bloodbath lasted for 22 days. As leader of the black community, Zumbi was murdered on 22 November 1695. His corpse was quartered and dragged through the streets as a warning to all surviving black people.



**Florinda Soriano called «Dana Tingo» Dominican Republic**

*Peasant Murdered 1 November 1974*

The 58 year-old farmer and mother of 9 children was unable to read or write. As leader of the «Federacion de Ligas Agrarias Cristianas» she was murdered by the foreman of a landowner in Hato Viejo, Yamaza (Dominican Republic). This landowner wanted to occupy the land of the campesinos unlawfully.

Dana Tingo was a most religious woman and every year she made a pilgrimage to the national shrine to Mary, called the «Holy Mountain». She sang songs to the Virgin all the way up.

Regarded with respect and affection within the Association she refused to agree to the sale of land or the handing over of it to third parties:

«If they want to take my land they'll have to take my life too.» She was taken prisoner, beaten and finally killed by several bullet wounds.



**Luisito Torres, El Salvador**

*Lay Worker Murdered 12 May 1977*

A youth from the parish in San Salvador where Father Alfonso Navarro Oviedo worked, Luisito Torres was an active member of the youth movement and often visited the priest's house with friends. There they would discuss the problems of the country or take part in meditations about the Gospel.

On 12 May, the priests house was attacked by the security forces while some of his friends popped into a local bar for a drink. Father Alfonso Navarro Oviedo was killed with several shots. Before leaving, the person who had been holding Luisito during the attack shot him in the face. Luisito died in hospital the next day.



**Tupac Amaru**

*Leader of the Incas from Tungasuca, Peru Beheaded 19 July 1781*

Tupac Amaru rose up against Spanish oppression and demanded equal rights for his Indian brothers and sisters. He was taken captive and beheaded and quartered in the Plaza of Huacaypata/Cuzco. His wife Micaela Bastidas, was also beheaded.

From this point on, there was a public order forbidding the wearing of typical Indian dress anywhere in Cuzco. Paintings or representations of Inca ancestors were banned; Spanish was the only permissible language; «Putotos» (cow horns used by Indians as musical instruments) could no longer be played.

All this because of the rebel Tupac Amaru.



**Enrique Angel Angelelli, Argentina**

*Bishop of La Rioja Murdered 4 August 1976*

Bishop Angelelli was the last bastion of protection for the weak and the poor; his was the only voice which was heard throughout the periods of political repression in Argentina. In the end, he and his fellow priests received so many death threats they had to prepare themselves for the possibility that the ultimate sacrifice would be demanded of them.

And in the end the worst happened. First, the lay worker Wenceslau was murdered, then fathers Gabriel and Carlos de Dios from Charrical, and finally the bishop himself.

Enrique Angel Angelelli proved himself to be a bishop of extreme sensitivity to the suffering and the hopes of his people. He often said that in order to be capable of preaching the Gospel one had to have one ear to God and one ear to the people.

He was murdered on 4 August 1976.



**Luis Espinal, Bolivia**

*Murdered 22 March 1980*

Luis Espinal was a first-rate film critic, journalist and television expert, who was awarded the Eurovision Prize in Spain for the quality and originality of his work.

As a missionary in Bolivia, he identified with the people, especially those whose rights had been crushed underfoot. He chaired the Human Rights Commission, exposed abuses of rights on numerous occasions and took part with workers on hunger strikes.

Luis Espinal was a contemplative; he left behind a number of poem-prayers which have been collected in a valuable book by his friends.

During the night of 21 March 1980 he was abducted, taken to the La Paz abattoir and tortured there for several hours and was finally murdered.



**Vicente Menchu, Guatemala**

*Catechist Murdered 31 January 1990*

Indian farmer and catechist Vicente Menchu was a person who always put himself on the line for his community. With the help of his son, Patrocinio he managed to equip a school and carried through other local

improvements. Those people with power who wanted to take the land away from the Indians, saw an enemy in Vicente. They denounced him as a communist and a guerrilla. Little by little they struck down members of his family, his son Patrocinio was tortured and killed by soldiers, his body thrown down in the village square. Vicente's wife, Juana Turri de Menchu, was also tortured and with severe injuries, was left under a tree. She died there without anyone being allowed to come near her. Her body was eaten by dogs and wild animals.

Vicente himself was killed when the Indians occupied the Spanish embassy in a peaceful action, the aim of which was to bring what was happening in Guatemala to the attention of the world.

Da nos un corazón

1. a E 2. a E a

Da nos un co - ra - zón gran - de para a - mar.

a E a a E a

Da nos un co - ra - zón fuer - te pa - ra lu - char.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Da nos un corazón'. It consists of two staves of music in a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a simple, accessible style. The first staff has two endings: '1. a' and '2. a'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first ending leads to the first line of lyrics, and the second ending leads to the second line of lyrics. The notes are: Staff 1: A4, A4, B4, A4, B4, C5, C5, C5, B4, A4, C5, A4. Staff 2: A4, A4, B4, A4, B4, C5, C5, C5, B4, A4, C5, A4.

Give us a heart which is big to love with  
Give us a heart which is strong for the struggle