

On the Death of Archbishop Romero and the First Anniversary of Three Mile Island

A bishop is dead
at the altar. a single bullet.
expert.
screams in the chapel.
the heart of the people pierced,
the hands, the feet.

Is it again expedient
that one man should die for the people?

“Get up and walk!”
he had said, “Do not be afraid,
yet do not have revenge in your heart.
You are the salt of the earth.
If the salt loses its flavor . . .”

A bishop is dead
at the altar

and we send telegrams

sit safe in America where death
to the middle class comes slowly
and stealthily
in small doses the NRC declares
pose absolutely no hazard to health,

except

that animals in Middletown are stillborn,
grass won't grow
and strange skin rashes appear

and we send telegrams.

A bishop is dead
at the altar. His last words:

“Soldiers, the law of God is higher

than the laws of men.”

**In the name of God,
stop this repression!**

Twelve peasants were shot
as they sat in a Bible study class
Reading aloud the Gospels.

A fire sweeps through the streets
Of San Salvador: “General Strike!”

“El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido!”

There will be no strike benefits
the union leaders are all dead.
No savings to fall back on;
in a country of day laborers
mothers will leave their portion
for the young,
praying it won't go rancid
In the stifling heat.

A sure martyrdom
defines the battle,
focuses vision

And we send telegrams,
sing hymns
and pray for the dead.

“Get up and walk! he said,
but our limbs are drugged:

“National Security”
“Two Sides to Every Question”
“Being Experts, They Must Know”

And we send telegrams
estimating the cost
of conversion.

~Sheila D. Collins