

Briefing document for St James the Great Parish Project 2022 to support needs of Hospital Divina Providencia, San Salvador

El Salvador

- 1 El Salvador is a small central American country bordering the Pacific Ocean and with land borders to Honduras and Guatemala. The population totals about 7 million or 2 million less than Greater London. Most of the population is Christian with the Catholic Church the largest denomination.
- 2 A key social issue for El Salvador is a huge gap between the wealth of a few ruling families and the rest of the population who are very poor. The Catholic church for a long time did little to support the cries of the poor for a fairer society. Things began to change after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s where much attention was paid to the relief of worldwide poverty and the needs of the poor, sometimes referred to as “the preferential option for the poor.”

Oscar Romero

- 3 Born on August 15th 1917, Oscar Romero was sent to study for the priesthood in Rome and was ordained in April 1942. He embraced a simple lifestyle; he was a popular preacher who responded with real compassion to the plight of the poor. He gave dedicated pastoral service to the diocese of San Miguel for 25 years – a greatly-admired workaholic in a cassock!
- 4 There followed seven years in the capital city, San Salvador, as an ecclesiastical bureaucrat. Ordained Auxiliary Bishop in 1970, he gained a reputation as a stubborn and reactionary prelate. Seemingly unsympathetic to the new social justice thrust of the Latin American Church, he was suspicious of the clergy and the Base Christian Communities of the archdiocese working alongside the exploited rural poor, promoting social organisations and land reform.
- 5 A brief spell back in the countryside as Bishop of Santiago de Maria opened Romero’s eyes as he reconnected to the semi-feudal misery and hardship of the campesinos and witnessed the murderous repression being suffered at the hands of the security forces. In February 1977 he was the surprising choice to be the new Archbishop of San Salvador.
- 6 Over the next three years the social and political conflict in El Salvador intensified with electoral fraud blocking change, and peaceful protest being met with massacres and death squad killings. From his Cathedral pulpit Archbishop Romero became the voice of the voiceless poor. There, in a society of cover-up and lies, he spoke the truth of what was happening in the countryside; he denounced the killings, the torture and the disappearances of community leaders; he demanded justice and recompense for the atrocities committed by the army and police and he set up legal aid projects and pastoral programmes to support the victims of the violence. With the emergence of armed guerrilla groups on the far left, civil war loomed. Archbishop Romero, rejecting the violence perpetrated by the left as well as the right, strained every nerve to promote peaceful solutions to his nation’s crisis. He was vilified in the press, attacked and denounced to Rome by Catholics of the wealthy classes, harassed by the security forces and publicly opposed by several episcopal colleagues.
- 7 The death threats multiplied; the atmosphere was charged. Archbishop Romero realised he was going to be killed. And he came to accept it. At 6.26pm on March 24th 1980, with a single marksman’s bullet, he fell at the foot of a huge crucifix in the Chapel attached to the Hospital Divina Providencia where he had lived since his appointment as Archbishop. He died a Eucharistic martyr, a martyr to the option for the poor, a martyr to the Magisterium of the Church – and now recognised as Saint Oscar Romero.

Hospital Divina Providencia

The religious congregation of Missionary Carmelites of Santa Teresa founded on March 8th 1903 in Mexico City by four brave women Teresa, Antonia, Soledad and Carmen. After 32 years of service, due to the situation of persecution in Mexico, seeking new horizons for 15 sisters arrived in El Salvador, Central America in the year 1935 at the Rosales National Hospital, at the request of the Archbishop at that time, Mgr Beloso.

Mother Luz Isabel Cueva Santana, a religious Carmelite Missionary of Santa Teresa, a Mexican citizen and resident in El Salvador, began with the idea of building a house to care, free of charge for patients suffering from the painful disease of Cancer who at that time spent the night in the sidewalks of the Cancer Institute to receive the Radiotherapy session the next day and did not have the resources to pay for a place to house them. These patients came from more distant places to San Salvador, all of them with limited economic resources. There were also patients from neighbouring countries. This harsh reality in which the patients lived impacted Mother Luz Isabel, who requested permission from her superior to carry out this idea, with the support of many supportive people and institutions.

On January 30th 1966, the Divina Providencia Hospital was founded. God allowed it to continue its work and experience different significant stages in its evolution.



BLOOMING STAGE

The new work was a novelty in Salvadoran society and wealthy people of the time pledged themselves and offered financial aid for the construction of the new hospital. Thanks to that enthusiasm, today there is a two-story building with 7 rooms for bedridden patients.

MARTYR STAGE AND CIVIL WAR

With the arrival of the newly appointed Archbishop of San Salvador, Mgr Oscar Romero, he asked this religious community for a place to live. He came from the diocese of Santiago de María, department of Usulután. Archbishop Romero said he felt more comfortable among the sick than the place that was offered to him among people alien to human pain, already being Archbishop.

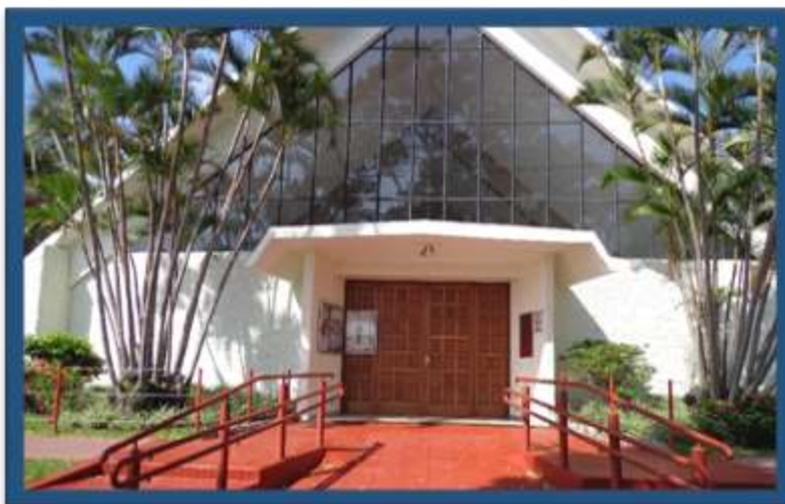
The country was experiencing a very delicate political situation. The community of sisters accepted that Bishop Romero live for a time in the sacristy. Later, together with the community of nuns, a small apartment was built as his home for a very short time before he was assassinated. This was in the chapel of the Hospital that was built for the sick, so that they could meet God and find comfort in suffering.

With the arrival of Archbishop Romero to this institution, many economic incomes for the support of the sick were no longer received.

It was a great test, God always provides and what is necessary for is never lacking.

SLEEP STAGE

After the martyrdom of Archbishop Romero, the country experienced a cruel civil war that left many people in mourning, pain and hatred. CMST lived through this stage in accompaniment and service to the people and not all the focus is given to the Divina Providencia Hospital.



Due to the nature of its foundation, Hospital Divina Providencia provides a free service to patients suffering from Cancer. The implementation of this new project of Palliative Care has been a real challenge. For God, nothing is impossible and our trust in provident God gives us the security that what is necessary to help these people will never be lacking. For 56 years we have been supporting in the relief of pain physical, social, moral and spiritual providing quality of life in its final stage, supporting families in the pain of their loved ones who suffer from this disease.

In 2021, by the Providence of God, 389 women and 235 men were treated, a total of 624 patients.

Many of our patients have exposed cancer lesions and it is necessary to perform daily dressings on them. For this, the material being prepared has to be sterilized as well as some of the instruments and equipment. The Autoclave that we currently have is already deteriorating more and more each day. There are some parts that do not work properly and according to consultations with technicians, they refer that there are spare parts that are no longer available due to the age of the equipment. One of our fears is that it will stop working and it is very expensive to buy sterilized material. Our older religious sisters who have difficulty getting around are the ones who support the preparation of the healing material.

Hospital Divina Providencia is the only charitable institution in El Salvador, whose commitment is to guarantee the population the availability and access to palliative care. Due to the fact that palliative care programs are still limited in the region and the few that exist they are private and for profit, which translates into unnecessary suffering of the people who go through this difficult situation, which is why the sustainability and permanence of this institution we consider to be of vital importance.

Purpose of the institution

Hospital Divina Providencia aims to remain over time as an institution that guarantees quality of life assistance for people with advanced chronic cancer disease. Accessible to the entire population, preferably to vulnerable segments of Salvadoran society.

Objectives

General objective

Develop sustainable and accessible care, educational and research programs in palliative care that complement and support the national health system.

Specific Objectives

1. Provide advanced control of pain and other symptoms to our patients.
2. Provide psycho-emotional, spiritual, and social care to patients and their families.
3. Facilitate the highest remaining quality of life for our patients.
4. Make our facilities a pleasant and comfortable place for patients and their families, also guaranteeing quality food and recreation and relaxation areas.
5. Manage solidarity sources of financing that allow this hospital to continue providing its services free of charge, as it has done for fifty years.
6. Promote palliative care at the healthcare and educational level in El Salvador, sharing our experience and knowledge with other institutions.

Recipients of institutional doing (care?)

Divina Providencia Hospital is dedicated to providing care to all people who suffer from an advanced and active disease, with little or no chance of cure, without distinction of race, creed, gender, ideology, or any other condition; allowing them to receive free hospital and/or outpatient care.



Justification for this request

Hospital Divina Providencia respectfully submits this document to friends in England to submit for their consideration their participation in this work of love for the donation of the Autoclave, initially quoted at \$9,000.00 (nine thousand dollars exactly) and through negotiations with the supplier it was possible to reach the special price of: \$7,482.69.

Without a doubt, your valuable contribution to this cause will benefit our population and will translate into a better quality of life for our patients.