

*This Reflection is taken from Fr Tommy Greenan's recently published book, **The Song of the Poor**, one of several launches of which will take place next week-end at all our Masses. Fr Tommy, along with Fr Henry McLaughlin and several priests of our diocese, worked in El Salvador during the Civil War in the territory held at that time by the FMLN Rebels. Tommy wrote this reflection on 12 November 1986. It is all too topical, given what is going on today in Gaza, Lebanon and Ukraine – and given that today is Remembrance Sunday....*

Sumpul de Avelares (a village in the region of Chalatenango)

This morning I rose at about 6.30am and went outside into the daylight. A bullet had chipped the lintel, about two yards from us outside. I was questioned by one soldier, then on leaving the village, a group of them stopped me and took me behind the church, out of sight of the villagers.

They were quite gruff and one of them accused me of lying when I said I was the priest. He then helped himself to the contents of my belt-pouch after getting a mate to cover me with his rifle. He scrutinised my documentation and took note of my name and number of residence card.

They found my detailed map with the markings of the places I was to visit and confiscated it. They radioed the High Command for them to check out with the Archbishop my possession of this map which interested and irked them.

Then, following the Jeff and Mutt routine, their leader apologised for the inconvenience and dismissed me with a veiled intimidation that they would come for me later on if they found it necessary to do so. I feel uneasy with my vulnerability. But if I'm killed it'll be because I've sided with the downtrodden, and I will have died for the sake of the downtrodden. Not, primarily, for the sake of Christ.

Only, secondarily, for the sake of Christ, because he identified so completely with the downtrodden.

As I write, the hills continue to be bombed and machine-gunned from helicopters, and the people are 'afflicted' (as one woman put it) and the little children are frightened. I wish the United States government would stop providing weapons and machines for war. I wish the money allocated for this barbarity were given to save the lives of children suffering and dying from diseases which aren't fatal in the first world.

This evening, in the Eucharist, we read from Mark, chapter 4, where Jesus calms the storm and saves the lives of his frightened followers. The people of El Salvador are in the same situation, except it's not the waves of the sea, but the bombs of the air which menace.