

Volume 8

Number 064

Leadership: Juan Romagoza

Lead: Often social progress requires a leader forfeit personal safety and affluence, even place him or herself in harms way. Such was not the first choice of Juan Romagoza.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Usulu ‘tan a city of about 75,000 lies 55 miles east southeast of

San Salvador, the capital of the central American nation of El Salvador. There Juan Romagoza grew to manhood in a family so spiritually rich that later he said that he only rarely noticed that he lived in abject poverty. There he fell under the influence of Father and then Bishop Oscar Romero. For a time, Romagoza considered the priesthood,

but dropped out of seminary bitter at a God who would allow his nation to be racked with so much poverty and corruption, a place where right wing paramilitaries preserved the government and the rule of the landed aristocracy with torture and death.

Romagoza moved to San Salvador to attend medical school and that

brought him back into contact with now Archbishop Romero. The killing of a fellow priest had transformed the prelate into open defiance of the military government. When Romero was martyred while saying evening mass in early spring 1980, Romagoza underwent a spiritual reawakening. Romero's example compelled the new physician into service to the poor. He

worked in free clinics out in the countryside until this service attracted official suspicion. Arrested, Romagoza was tortured for twenty-three days as a suspected guerilla leader. His fingers were intentionally cut to prevent future service as a surgeon. Released through the intervention of a relative and still bearing the untreated wounds of his

torture, he was smuggled to Guatemala, then Mexico and then, through the efforts of the 1980s sanctuary movement, as a political refugee into the United States. He continues today an advocate for health care for the poor in Washington, D.C. Essayist Richard Couto offers Romagoza as an example of a democratic leader willing to

**endure personal reprisal so as to
effect social change.**

**At the University of Richmond this
is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

Couto, Richard and Stephanie C. Eken. *To Give their Gifts: Health, Community, and Democracy*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002.

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Loeb, Paul Rogat. *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in A Cynical Time*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999.

Williamson, Marianne, Ed. *Imagine: What America Could Be in the 21st Century, Visions of A Better Future from Leading American Thinkers*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

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