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Eleven children of parents who are in the United States under Temporary Protected Status traveled to Rome to meet Pope Francis ahead of the canonization of St. Oscar Romero.

The delegation gained the pope's support for their parents' immigration status after briefly meeting with him Oct. 10.

For the teens and young adults, Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador, when he was assassinated in 1980, had defended people like their parents during his ministry.

Temporary Protected Status, known as TPS, allows people who are affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts or other extraordinary conditions in their home countries to live and work in the U.S. It was set to expire for most beneficiary countries over the next several months.

U.S. District Court Judge Edward Chen Oct. 3 issued a ruling that temporarily suspended the cancellation of TPS for four countries, including El Salvador. The decision affects about 260,000 Salvadorans and tens of thousands of others from Nicaragua, Haiti and Sudan.

Crista Ramos, 14, is the lead plaintiff behind the lawsuit from which Chen's decision stemmed.

"It's very important for me and for my family to be able to be here and present my case," Ramos told Catholic News Service. "I'm not only here to represent my family, but also the rest of the kids whose parents have TPS."

Ramos and the other young people were able to briefly speak with Francis, who gave them words of encouragement.

"None of us was really expecting to actually meet the pope, that was crazy" said David Giron, 16, and whose parents are Honduran TPS holders.

"We come from families that did believe it because they see all things really possible, but we thought we were being more realistic by not really believing it," added Andrew Romero, 17, another member of the delegation.

The group had carefully prepared their attendance at the pope's general audience Oct. 10, during which they would see the pope. "The night before, we had elaborated a master plan to be able to hand him our gifts," Erik Villalobos, 21, told CNS.

However, their complex strategy was not needed; the group was able to swiftly move to the front of the cheering crowds and exchange a few words and photos with the pope.

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Members gave the pope a letter from the TPS Alliance, an organization supporting TPS holders, a T-shirt supporting TPS, a canvas portraying Romero and documentation on TPS. "He even took the T-shirt out and showed it to everyone," Andrew Romero said.

After pleading with Francis to "help protect their families' immigration status," the pope responded that "migration is a human right, don't forget. May St. Romero help you."

The children of TPS holders hope that El Salvador's international reputation of violence may change now that Romero was declared a saint in ceremonies in St. Peter's Square Oct. 14. "Now we have an international figure, if he would become the image of us, that would be amazing," Villalobos said.

For the delegation, Romero represents the true meaning of social justice. As children, they heard about the future saint -- and his calls to end the long Salvadoran civil war -- from their grandparents.

"I couldn't understand that someone had shot a priest," Villalobos said. He explained that he connected Romero, the civil war and the economic crisis that ensued in El Salvador and forced many of his family members to leave their homeland. Now, his family is in the U.S. and he fears that his parents may be forced to leave their adopted country if TPS expires.

"The people who moved to the U.S. are the same that Romero fought for," Villalobos said. "They are the people who worked in the fields, who fled, and now the children of 'campesinos' [farmers] have TPS and are under threat in the U.S."