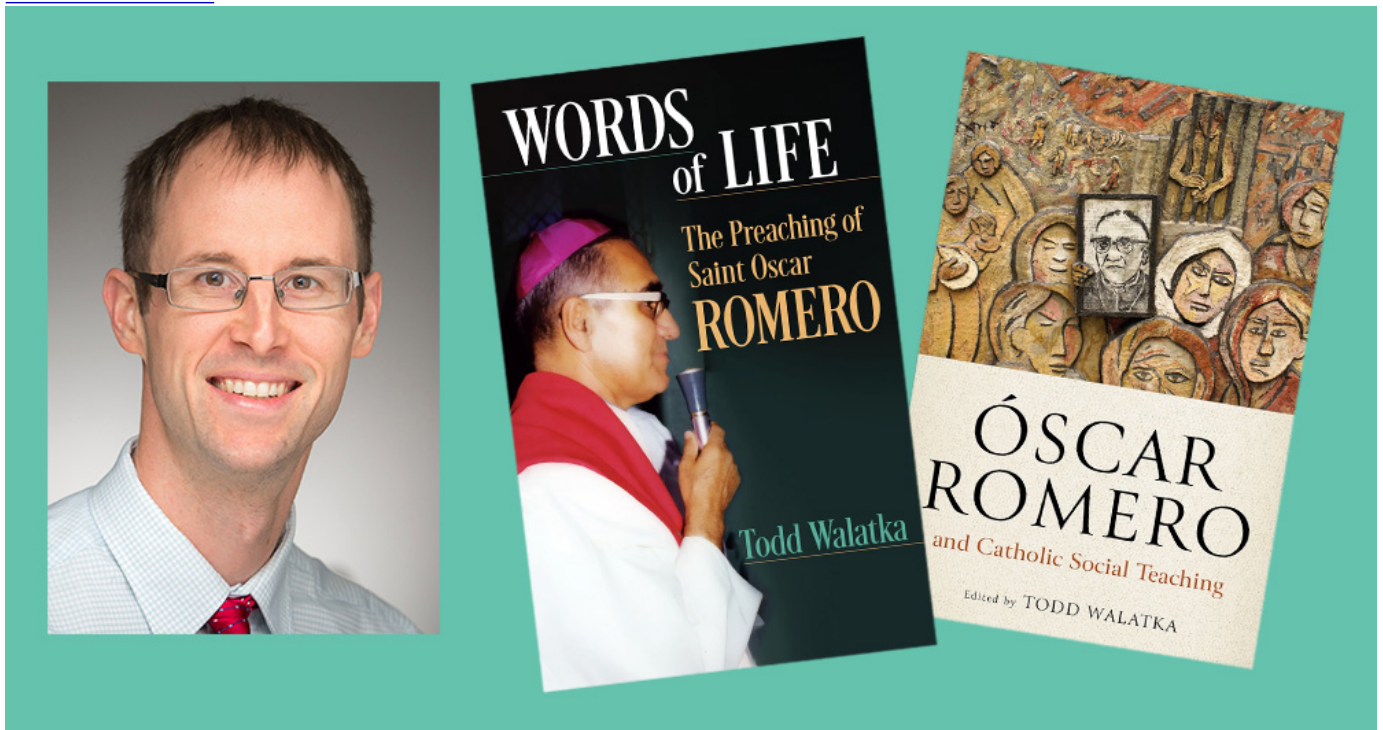


[Opinion](#)

[Guest Voices](#)



Theologian Todd Walatka and his recent books about St. Óscar Romero



by John Dear

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

August 31, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with University of Notre Dame professor [Todd Walatka](#), author of a new book on St. Óscar Romero,

Words of Life: The Preaching of Saint Oscar Romero.

Archbishop Romero is one of our greatest prophets and saints. He was [assassinated](#) while saying Mass in San Salvador, El Salvador, on March 24, 1980, because he had been speaking out boldly against U.S.-backed killings, injustice and war.

I remember hearing the news in my fraternity room at Duke University, and it moved me deeply. After I joined the Jesuits, I got involved with the movement to end the U.S. war in El Salvador and organized a tutoring service program at Georgetown University for Salvadoran refugee kids in the schools of Washington, D.C.

In 1985, I lived in El Salvador and worked in a refugee camp under the direction of the Jesuits who were Romero's friends and were later [assassinated](#) themselves. I went back to El Salvador nearly 20 times, most recently for Romero's [beatification](#).

Advertisement

For many of us, Romero is the epitome of the modern-day prophet who denounces war, poverty and killing, calls people to be converted to the nonviolent Jesus, and announces the coming of God's reign of justice, disarmament and peace.

Walatka teaches about Catholic theology after the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council, Latin American theology, Catholic social teaching and Christian spirituality. He is also the editor of *Óscar Romero and Catholic Social Teaching*, which examines the life of Romero in light of contemporary work for justice and human development.

"If you hear Romero's words or know anything about his life, you immediately think, 'This is the Gospel!' " Walatka said. "Romero asked us: 'What is the good news today? What does it demand of our very lives?' Romero truly believed that the word of God can change our lives."

[Listen to the full episode here.](#)

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. [View the full series.](#)