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Salvadoran clergy hopeful for canonization of Archbishop Romero

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Salvadoran clergy are hopeful that the canonization of Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered while celebrating Mass March 24, 1980, during El Salvador?s civil war, will move forward under the church?s first Latin American pope.

?We are in the best of circumstances. The time is ripe for a final verdict,? Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chávez of San Salvador told Catholic News Service, referring to Pope Francis, who as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, until he was elected pope March 13.

?Everything is in place for canonization,? Rosa Chávez told *NCR* during a visit to Kansas City, Mo., March 8. ?Whoever is elected pope, the church is entering a new moment,? he said, and predicted a ?simpler, more attractive church that, like Romero, will walk with the people.?

The canonization process for Romero began in 1994. The case, being studied by the Vatican?s Congregation for the Causes of Saints, received public support from Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Msgr. Jesus Delgado Acevedo, the archdiocese?s vicar general, also told reporters that in 2007 he spoke with Bergoglio, who told him that if he were the pope, the beatification and canonization of the slain archbishop would be the first thing he would pursue.

In another meeting in 2010, Delgado said Bergoglio recalled what he said about Romero in 2007, but added that the problem was that he would never become pope.

When Bergoglio was elected pope, Delgado told local media it was ?a wonderful surprise,? and that he thought it was time that Romero became a saint.

Romero was a staunch defender of the poor and criticized the human rights violations of the military junta that ruled El Salvador beginning in October 1979. His outspokenness led to his assassination.

Rosa Chávez told *NCR* that he is confident that Romero will be declared a saint under the new pope, adding that he has already been canonized by the people throughout Latin America. ?This is the church we want; this is the church we need,? he said.

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