



Missionary Carmelite of St. Teresa Sr. Ruby Lemus Salguero arranges candles in front of an altar holding a relic of St. John of the Cross at the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital chapel Sept. 8, 2026 in San Salvador, El Salvador. The altar is close to a relic of St. Oscar Romero, a Salvadoran archbishop who lived among the sisters when he was assassinated in 1980 as he celebrated Mass in the chapel. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)



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The piece of bone fragment is so teeny tiny that Sr. Tránsito de la Cruz Valdez Crespín admitted she had a hard time seeing it.

"It's a micron ... it's so small, but my heart says it's there," she told a crowd of doctors, nurses and patients gathered Sept. 8 for a talk about St. John of the Cross. The event coincided with a visit from a relic of the 16th century Spanish mystic and poet to the Divine Providence Hospital chapel, where St. Óscar Romero was martyred in El Salvador in 1980.

Valdez said her community of [Carmelite Missionary Sisters of St. Teresa](#), administrators of the hospital, were able to host the relic's two-day visit because of their affiliation with the order, as Carmelites around the world celebrate the St. John of the Cross Jubilee Year to mark the 300th anniversary of his canonization and the 100th anniversary of his proclamation as doctor of the church. Relics of the mystic are visiting communities worldwide during the jubilee year, which started in December 2025, and one relic started making its pilgrimage through El Salvador in August.

"Where there's a Carmelite [in the world], that's where you'll find a relic of St. John of the Cross" passing through, Valdez said.

For her community, the visit of the relic was particularly meaningful because it made an unprecedented event possible: its placement near a relic of Romero, which remains permanently in the chapel, a few feet away from the altar where he was murdered as he celebrated Mass. Two sisters carried the visiting relic toward the chapel with a procession behind them, passing by the spot where the assassin fired the fatal shot.

"Yesterday, we were talking about what it means to have [the visiting relic] at Divine Providence Hospital. It's an encounter between two saints: a mystic and a prophet," Valdez told Global Sisters Report.

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Both gave their life for others, she said, and so do the doctors, nurses, sisters and volunteers who help the sick and dying at Divine Providence Hospital, which was home to Romero in his last days. Romero, as Archbishop of San Salvador, lived in the sacristy of the hospital's chapel, until the sisters built him a small house on the campus. They still care for the house, which they call a [shrine](#), and display some of his few known belongings.

"He wanted to be here near the patients and he'd often say: I want to be near those who suffer the most," Valdez said, adding that Romero exemplified what John of the Cross talked about: that it's important to empty oneself of everything to reach deep inside and give what's most important — Christ's love for others.

"The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me," she said quoting from John of the Cross' "Sayings of Light and Love."

A great friend of women religious, John of the Cross accompanied sisters as a spiritual companion and believed that men and women in the church should help one another mature in faith. St. Teresa of Avila enlisted his help as she led reforms that eventually led to the founding of the Discalced Carmelites in the 16th century.

Valdez, who credits John of the Cross with helping her discern her vocation, said there's a lot the church can learn from Teresa and John as religious leaders and as church partners in a sacred mission.

"As women religious, we have a voice that must be heard — not that we're seeking to take anything away — but rather a place that rightfully belongs to us as consecrated women," she said.



Missionary Carmelites of St. Teresa lead a procession Sept. 8, 2026 of the relics of St. John of the Cross into the chapel where St. Oscar Romero was martyred in El Salvador. The community hosted the relics on the grounds of the Divine Providence Hospital, which they administer, and where they serve low-income cancer patients. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)