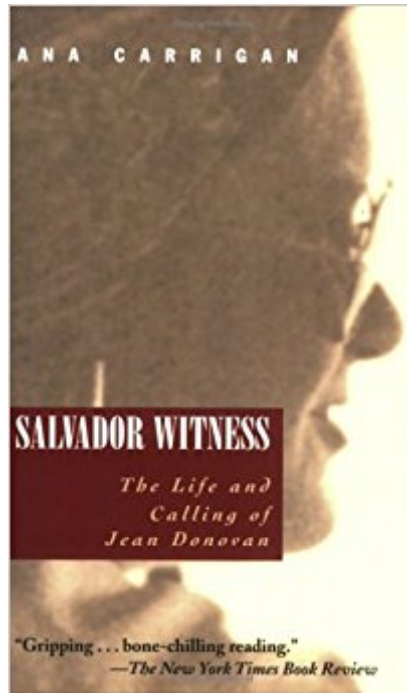




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# Salvador Witness: The Life And Calling Of Jean Donovan



## Synopsis

"Salvador Witness" recounts a remarkable journey from the affluent suburbs of Connecticut to the jungles and refugee camps of El Salvador. The murder of Jean Donovan and her fellow churchwomen by Salvadoran troops in 1980 made headlines around the world. This book tells the story behind that event, but also the story of a young woman, her growth, bravery, and humanity - and the price she was willing to pay for them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A fine and sensitive book. It brings home to the reader the gravity of the issues in Central America..."

Ana Carrigan, who grew up in Ireland and South America, has had a distinguished career in film and television. She co-produced "Roses in December" which received an Emmy nomination and a Christopher Award, and was the associate producer of a film about Jean Donovan, "Choices of the Heart."

The story of a lay missionary who was raped and killed with 3 nuns in El Salvador in 1980. The book gives the background of the horrendous violence of Salvadorians against each other..... Rich land owners vs. poor

A truly remarkable person. Jean Donovan gave love, commitment, and in the end, her life so that

the poor of El Salvador could have a chance. *Salvador Witness* looks at the life of Jean Donovan and her journey to life as a missionary in war-torn El Salvador. Anyone who wants to be inspired by a truly great 'saint', then read this book.

Moving and realistic portrayal of this brave woman and the terrible suffering of the people of El Salvador during that time.

For an oral history project, I had the fortunate opportunity to interview a former grassroots committee member who was investigating the goings-on in El Salvador via the political influence of Joseph Moakley; it was through this interview that I first heard of Jean Donovan and the three nuns (Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and Dorothy Kazel) who were murdered by Salvadoran government troops. Though the interview and project that I was working on wasn't specifically directed at the lives of these heroic missionaries, their lives and choices deeply fascinated me, especially the life of Jean Donovan. It really made me stop and pause as to why someone who was on the corporate up-and-up in middle America would want to chuck it all away to work in a hotbed of political strife and terror that was El Salvador, a country in which she had no emotional or physical connection to whatsoever. It is in Ana Carrigan's crisp and terse biography, *Salvador Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan*, that her life and choices are expertly and eloquently explored. Using personal letters and interviews by those who knew her best, an overall profile is created of a woman who sensed that she had more to offer than being a corporate executive on the fast track to affluence and living in "lollipop acres." But on a deeper plain, she felt compelled, as Catholics would say, a calling to be a helper, which, in reality, is a universal vocation. But it is illustrated in her Maryknoll Missionary application, where she wrote, "The family experience which has most affected my life was when my brother got Hodgkins disease...at the time, it made me realize how unsure our existence is, and how precious life is to each of us. Many of the valuse people exalt are not so important after all." Page 67. Yet, she concludes her application with a more intimate religious experience as the core cause for her actions, "I have been thinking about this vocation for many years. Actually I think, that for a number of years, Christ has been sending various people into my life, that through their example and actions I saw a calling to missionary work. I have a gut feeling that my main motivation to be a missionary is a true calling from God." Page 67. It was a compulsion that aroused her to action, even onto death, and the various happenings that lead up to that horrific moment make bone-chilling reading but evoke the highest sense of admiration. The book, which is a derivative or offshoot of the award-winning documentary on Jean Donovan-Roses in

December-will make readers question their priorities in life, as it should; it will jar the consciousness of what is and isn't acceptable when it comes to human suffering. Though the women who were killed were apolitical at best and were merely trying to live out the Gospel message the way they knew how, their example speaks volumes. Ana Carrigan's Salvador Witness is quite successful as a biography which tries to explore all the human complexities that are attached to a single life. It is almost reminiscent to Thomas Hauser's fantastic nonfiction book, Missing, about the abduction and murder of journalist Charles Horman-an American-during the coup of Marxist president Salvadore Allende.

This is an amazing book. It puts such a personal take on the happenings leading up to the ES Civil War, that it gave me a much better understanding of the context and the horrors faced during the time. While the book is essentially about the life and calling of Jean, it is so much more. I was truly fascinated and feel that I have a much better understanding of the entire atmosphere that allowed for such crimes to occur. Even knowing "how the story ends," I still found myself not turning off the light at night, continuing to read. Her life, not just her death, was the story. I highly recommend this book.

This book gives a good picture of El Salvador during the civil war. It tells the story of Jean Donovan who at some point of her life decided to throw away her career and to help the people who were suffering in El Salvador. She describes her struggle trying to help the poor to survive while being attacked (verbally and physically) by land owners, officials, military, death squads, and American intelligence. While her being an American citizen usually kept her out of the worst trouble, the locals were usually not so lucky and often killed rather arbitrarily. What makes the book so interesting is that it is not written from a global political viewpoint, but from the very personal viewpoint of Joan Donovan.

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