



CURIA GENERALIZIA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI GESÙ

Beatification of Father Rutilio Grande, S.J.
Manuel Solórzano and Nelson Rutilio Lemus

2022/01

TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

Dear brothers:

On 22 January 2022 Father Rutilio Grande, S.J., and laymen Manuel Solórzano and Nelson Rutilio Lemus, martyrs, will be beatified in San Salvador, El Salvador. The eldest, Manuel Solórzano, was born in Suchitoto, El Salvador, in 1905. Beloved for his kindness and unfailing honesty, he became an inseparable companion on Father Rutilio's pastoral journeys. The youngest, Nelson Rutilio Lemus, was active, helpful, friendly, with a special sense of responsibility. Born in El Paisnal, El Salvador, on 11 November 1960, he had family ties with Father Grande but, even more, a friendship born of shared service to the mission of the Lord. They were killed for their faith in Las Tres Cruces, a few kilometers from San Salvador, on 12 March 1977.

Father Grande, born in the small town of El Paisnal on 5 January 1928, was a Jesuit of unsuspected religious and human depth. In his weakness he found his greatness. He lived much of his life in the silence and humility of those who are becoming, step by step, companions of Jesus. Those who dealt with him always found a good man, approachable and helpful. For seminarians he was an authentic formator and for the Salvadoran clergy a sensitive spiritual companion. Rutilio knew how to be a counselor, an understanding and kind companion, and at the same time firm and serious with regard to Christian life and the responsible exercise of presbyteral ministry. The peasant communities, to which he himself belonged and which he served with dedication as a pastor, found in him a warm, self-sacrificing and kind religious, ordained a priest to share life with the community of the followers of Jesus who bear witness to the Good News.

Seeking to serve his people, Rutilio Grande entered the minor seminary of San Salvador in January 1941. There he discovered the call and elected to join the Society of Jesus. In 1945 he entered the novitiate at Los Chorros, near Caracas, Venezuela, and he pronounced his vows as a religious in 1947. His long process of formation as a Jesuit took him to Quito, Ecuador, to Panama, and to Spain. There, in Oña, he was ordained a priest on 31 July 1959. After tertianship in Córdoba, Spain, he did pastoral studies at the *Lumen Vitae* Institute in Brussels, Belgium, where he professed his final vows as a Jesuit on 15 August 1964.

He then was sent to the San José de la Montaña Seminary in San Salvador as Prefect and Professor of Catechesis, Pastoral Work, and Civic Formation. Father Grande understood his religious and priestly vocation in the light of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. His way of life, his teaching, and his pastoral practice were imbued with the reading that the Conference of Latin American Bishops made of the orientations of Vatican II during their assembly in



Medellin, Colombia, in 1968. The renewal underway in the Church generated more than a few tensions also in the Archdiocese of El Salvador and within the Seminary itself.

Later, in 1971-1972, Father Rutilio was sent to Quito for the course of the *Instituto de Pastoral Latinoamericana*. On his return he was sent to the parish of “El Señor de las Misericordias” in the city of Aguilares. Within the territory of the parish was El Paisnal, his birthplace. Together with three Jesuits and a diocesan priest, he dedicated himself with passion and success to organizing the parish as a “community of communities.” The profound faith of the peasant population of the zone gave life to Christian base communities that were very active, prophetic, and formative for many lay pastoral agents. The appointment of Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero as Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977 opened the door to a new stage of ecclesial conversion.

The growing awareness of the need to promote a transformation of the inhuman circumstances of life of the peasant majority, a situation caused by the unjust structures of Salvadoran society, sparked the social and political struggles of this convulsive period in the history of this Central American country. Many members of the ecclesial communities participated actively in the social and political struggle. For Father Rutilio, his team, and his close collaborators, who were committed because of their faith to the struggle for the justice of the Gospel, there was a clear distinction between pastoral work and partisan political militancy. However, for the minorities who felt their power to be under threat, Rutilio was seen as an obstacle to be removed.

The Church, in recognizing the martyrdom of Rutilio, Manuel, and Nelson, judges that their lives were taken because of the faith that gave their lives meaning, the faith to which they gave witness by shedding their blood. Therefore, as the Society of Jesus, we give thanks to God for the gift of life of these three men. We unite ourselves through them with the faith of the people of El Salvador and with their efforts to promote the changes needed to make possible a just society with a worthy place for everyone.

May Our Lady Queen of Peace, patron of the Salvadoran people, be light for our way, following the example of the Blessed Martyrs of El Paisnal.

Arturo Sosa, S.J.
Superior General

Rome, 3 January 2022
Solemnity of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

(Original: Spanish)