



Celebrating Young People Awards 2022 from Million Minutes

Introducing the Rutilio Grande & Companions Award

**For clergy and religious that are committed social action
transformation that is inclusive of young people**

Sponsored by the Jesuits in Britain



JESUITS
IN BRITAIN

WHAT IS THE AWARD?

The Rutilio Grande & Companions Award will seek nominations for clergy or religious committed to social action transformation that is inclusive of young people, as Grande did himself. Many of the clergy and religious who we are associated with do amazing work – but often receive little credit, remaining unrecognised and uncelebrated.



The award gives those inspiring members of the religious and clergy an avenue of celebration and representation, ensuring they know they are valued and recognised within Catholic spaces. The Award also gives communities and individuals who have been accompanied by clergy and religious a way in which to acknowledge their impact on their lives. We also hope that the Award will give the wider world tangible and positive examples of Catholic clergy and religious serving their communities.

The Award, in conjunction with the Jesuits in Britain, has been launched to coincide with the beatification of Rutilio Grande and his companions, which took place in January 2022. For more information about the celebrations surrounding this event, please go to [Jesuit priest murdered by death squad is beatified | Jesuits in Britain](https://www.jesuitsinbritain.org.uk/jesuit-priest-murdered-by-death-squad-is-beatified).

**"We're not going to wait for missionaries from the outside.
Rather, we must be our own missionaries"
Rutilio Grande**

CRITERIA

- **Must be clergy or religious**
- **Committed to social action transformation**
- **Inclusive of young people**

Do you know a member of clergy or religious who has gone above and beyond in including young people in social justice transformation? Has your parish priest set up a group for young people passionate about social justice? Or do you know a nun who has supported young people to amplify the voices of the people who aren't heard.

Deacon

Novice

Friar

Religious Brother

Religious Sister

Seminarian

Priest

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WHO WERE RUTILIO GRANDE AND HIS COMPANIONS?

Rutilio Grande was a Jesuit priest in El Salvador who was murdered on March 12th 1977 along with an elderly man Manuel Solórzano and a 15-year-old boy Nelson Lemus as they were driving to celebrate Mass in the village of El Paisnal.

Together Grande, Lemus and Solórzano represent the struggles of poor communities who are inspired by the gospels to secure a better life amidst great suffering and adversity. Manuel Solorzano was born and lived all his life under an oppressive regime where there was awful exploitation of the rural poor. Nelson Lemus was young and he, like Manuel, hoped that through their faith and the action of their communities, basic human rights would be respected, while recognition of the injustices they suffered would eventually bring change in their lives. Rutilio Grande came from the same background as the Christian communities who he accompanied. Across the parish he offered servant leadership with a team of other priests and lay folk. They all wanted the voices of oppressed people to be heard and the struggles of the poor endorsed and supported.

Grande and his companions were shot on their way from Aguilares to pray a novena for St Joseph, the patron of in El Paisnal, the village where Grande was born, by a right-wing death squad, working with the security forces of El Salvador. The murder of Grande and his companions began a wave of violence including priests, catechists and lay leaders in members of the Catholic Church in El Salvador, ultimately leading to a brutal civil war 3 years later.



"The Church cannot be absent in this struggle for liberation"

Pope Paul VI
Evangelií Nuntiandi, 1975

RUTILIO GRANDE



Rutilio Grande had a difficult childhood shaped by austerity and even hunger: growing up in the rural village of El Paisnal, the second of five children, he had personal experience of poverty. After his parents separated, his dad moved to Honduras and his mum is thought to have died a few years later. He went to live with his grandmother who was like a mother to him.

Grande's desire to become a priest started at a very young age. As a child he was extremely shy, but he loved to build altars in his house, and act out Mass with other children in the village. He entered seminary at 13. During his lengthy training for the priesthood, Grande struggled with his health, sometimes feeling overwhelmed by the workload. As a result of intense feelings of self-doubt he suffered two mental health crises and received treatment and was able to manage his mental health.

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Traditionally, much of the leadership of the Catholic Church in El Salvador stood by the government and the wealthy: however, following Vatican II the Latin American Bishops organized a conference in Medellín, Colombia, to discuss how to implement the Church's new approach in the context of the poverty and state oppression that existed across the continent. At the time there was growing tension in El Salvador with a military government in power following fraudulent elections, as well as continuing exploitation and oppression by the wealthy rural elites with their coffee, cotton and sugar cane plantations.

After being inspired by Vatican II, Rutilio Grande and a team of young Jesuits went to Aguilares in 1972, where he took charge of the village parish. There was increasing conflict between landless peasant farmers (campesinos), the landowners of the colossal sugar estates and the huge processing mills. Grande believed in the importance of understanding the reality of the community and emphasized the significance of listening. He preached about the injustices suffered by the poor and advocated for land reform and social development. He also wanted his community's poorest to view their pastors, by their life-styles and by their actions, as their peers and servant leaders.

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"The Gospel has to grow little feet"

Rutilio Grande



Grande was very proud of his community, and travelled everywhere with a map of El Salvador and another of Central America.



Rutilio Grande's strong social justice sermons and teachings were seen as a threat by the military government and the wealthy families. Grande began to receive death threats and asked that people did not accompany him on his journeys as he believed he might be a target.

Rutilio Grande was good friends with Oscar Romero: he was working at the seminary when Oscar Romero first moved to San Salvador. Grande was killed three weeks after Romero was named the Archbishop of San Salvador. It was a pivotal point in Romero's life, providing him with the courage to become clearer and more outspoken, and speak on behalf of the voiceless poor. The following Sunday after Grande's martyrdom, Oscar Romero only allowed one Mass to take place in the Diocese, in front of the cathedral. There he denounced the murders and called on the assassins to repent. Like Grande, Oscar Romero committed himself to the poor and oppressed. Three years after Grande's death, Romero was also murdered whilst saying Mass in San Salvador.

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Reflecting on Grande's impact after his death, his friend Fr Jaime Vera-Fajardo said of him: 'As far as I can see, Grande died for preaching the true Gospel valiantly. He did not get mixed up in politics. He had no enemies except those one has whenever one preaches the Gospel. He was balanced, an enemy of violence, dedicated to others, excellent in his religious observance, and concerned about evangelization...'

Grande's legacy continues to this day in El Salvador and beyond, where clergy and religious continue to practice the devotion to the poor that he preached. Grande was approved as a martyr by Pope Francis on 2020 and was beatified on 22 January 2022.



"The liberation that Fr Grande preached is inspired by faith ... A priest was with his campesinos, on his way to meet his people, to identify himself with them, to live with them - this was an inspiration of love"

Oscar Romero

Homily after the martyrdom of Grande, March 14, 1977



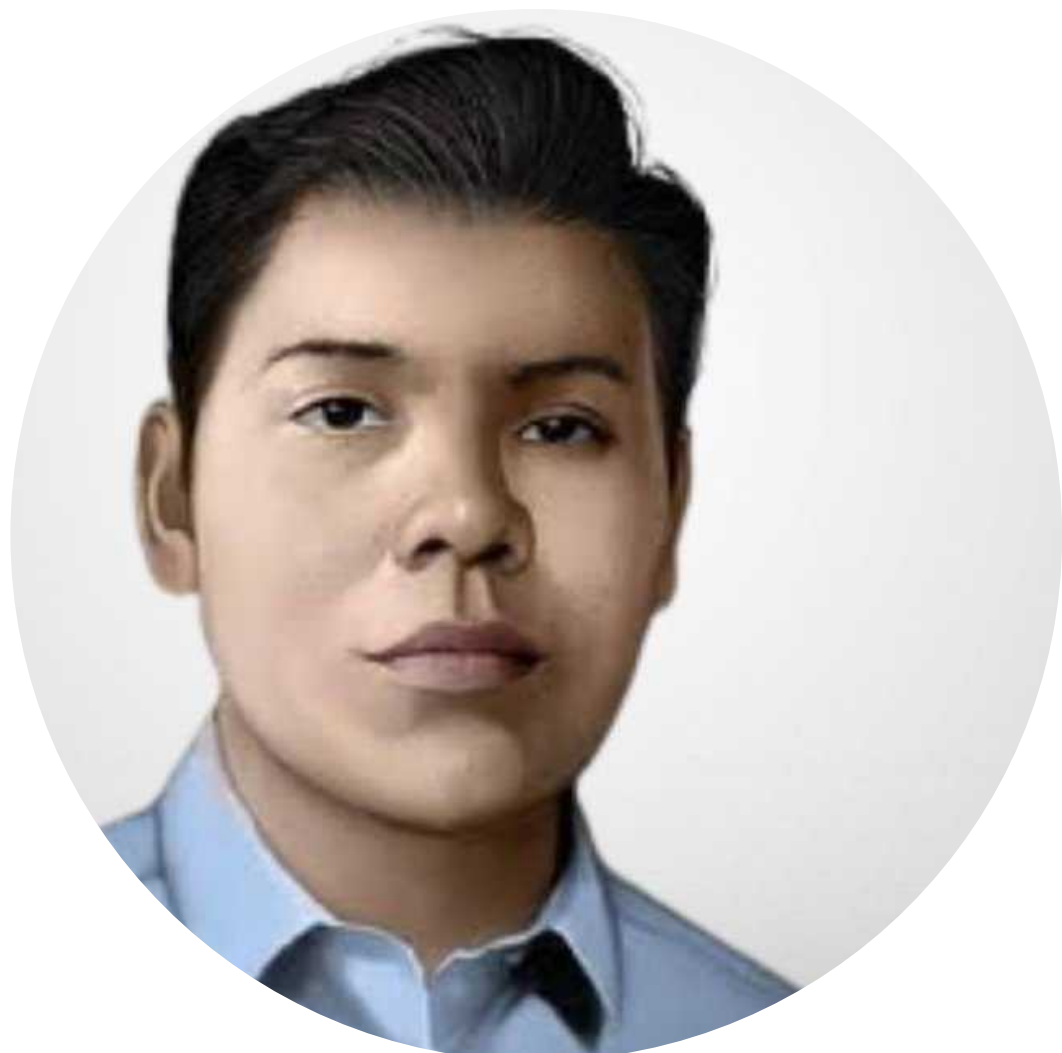
NELSON LEMUS

Nelson Lemus, who was killed together with Grande that day in 1977, was a 15 year-old boy, and at that time combining school studies while working part time to help out his parents, being the eldest of his five siblings. He was related to Grande by his cousin's marriage to Grande's brother, Flavio, and was a faithful companion of Grande's.

Nelson came from a poor family in El Paisnal where things were very scarce, but he was an enthusiastic and playful young man. He found great comfort and guidance in his faith, and was very much involved in Church life, his task being to ring the church bells when the priest arrived in town.

NLemus had suffered from epilepsy since infancy and lived with the illness throughout his life. He struggled to manage his anger and had a difficult relationship with his mother, who was very strict. Lemus was often bullied by students at school who did not understand his illness. His family and friends described Lemus as affectionate, generous, hardworking and obedient, always ready to help those in need. After his death his aunt said of him: 'he was busy with things of God whenever he could be'.

On the day he was murdered, Lemus had gone to Aguilares to deliver some firewood to his godmother, which he often did, and Rutilio had given him a lift so that he could sell some of the firewood around town to get a little extra money for his family.



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MANUEL SOLÓRZANO

Like Lemus and Grande, Manuel Solórzano came from a very poor family and was originally from Chalatenango, where he was born and raised on a banana plantation. His friends and family described him as being a 'man of the people' and humble, modest and courteous.

Solórzano remained poor throughout his life, and worked long hours earning next to nothing; however he never complained and found great comfort and guidance through his faith. According to his daughter, he always carried a Bible, and he used to say that the best breakfast was going to Church early on in the day.

Grande and Solorzano had a strong bond; he was aware of the risk involved in travelling with Grande as the situation in El Salvador became more intense, but he did not want to leave his friend to travel alone.

It appears that at the time of the attack, Solorzano had attempted to throw himself in front of Grande to shield him from the shower of bullets.



Nominate TODAY!

<https://millionminutes.org/rutilio-grande-award>

Deadline is 8pm on Sunday 1st May 2022

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