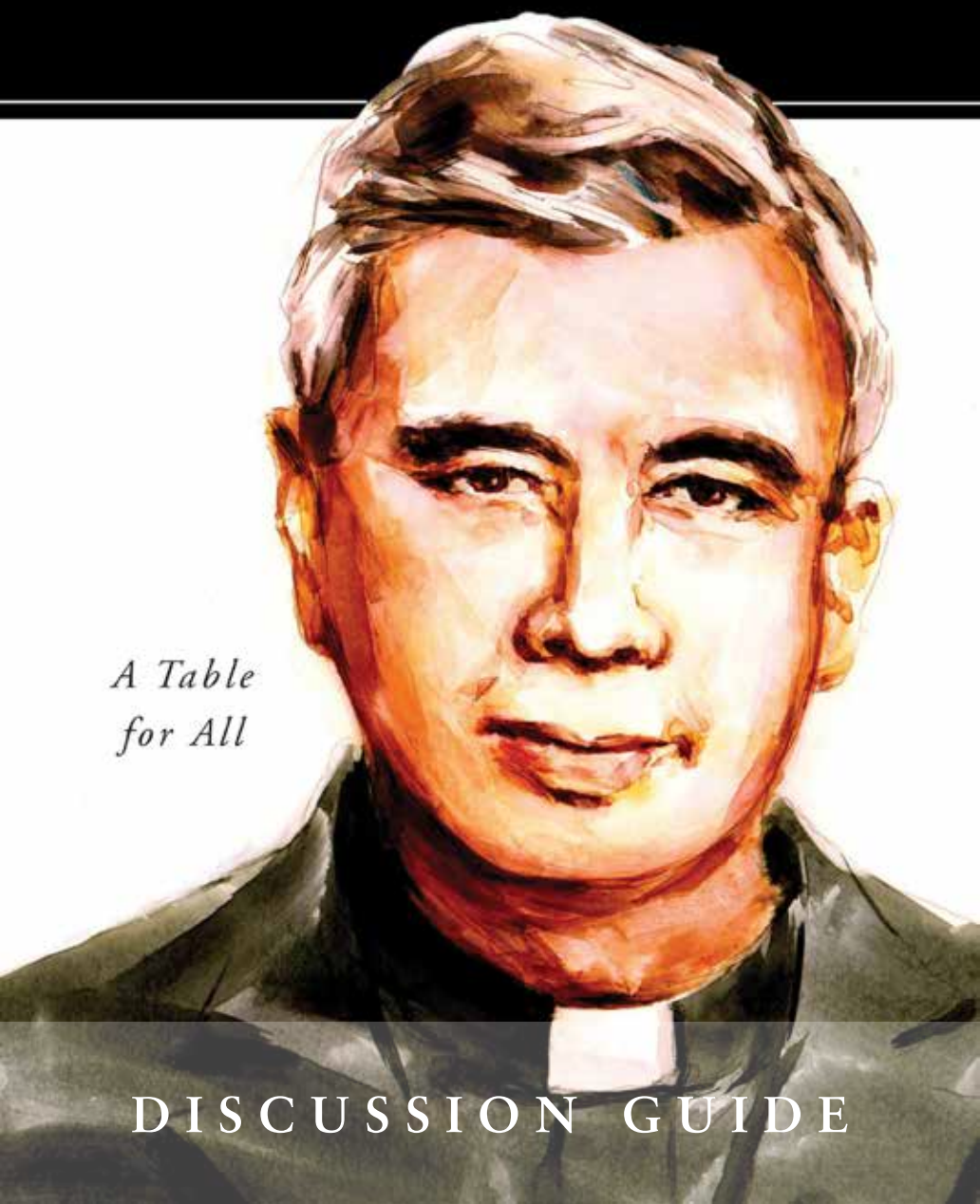


RHINA GUIDOS

RUTILIO GRANDE

*A Table
for All*



DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the Book

In *Rutilio Grande: A Table for All*, veteran journalist Rhina Guidos explores the inspiring life and ministry of the Salvadoran priest whose killing changed the church in El Salvador and the life of his close friend, the country's most prominent church member, Archbishop Oscar Romero. Born in a rural and poor hamlet surrounded by sugarcane fields in El Salvador, Grande went on to study in Europe and Latin America as a member of the Society of Jesus. Though he found himself in the comfort of academia, he gave it up to return to the periphery of the rural world and its people. Inspired by teachings of the Second Vatican Council and a major bishops' meeting in Medellin, Colombia, he and a team set out to teach the poor to read, to stand up for their rights, and to call out injustices perpetrated by the government.

Grande's brutal 1977 assassination in a shower of gunfire marked the first notorious killing of a Catholic Church member during El Salvador's civil conflict, but made him one in a long line of El Salvador's Catholic martyrs.

About the Author

Rhina Guidos is a reporter and editor at Catholic News Service. In that capacity, she covered the 2015 apostolic visit of Pope Francis to Cuba and the United States, as well as the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero in her native El Salvador. She is a former crime editor and has written about Latin America, crime and courts, immigration, minority issues, and politics at North American newspapers for twenty years.

Discussion Guide

Introduction

1. As you begin reading this book, how familiar are you with the story of Fr. Rutilio Grande? What do you know about him, and how did you first hear of him?
2. What is the worldview in which the social and economic conditions were simply facts to be accepted? How was Grande's view different?
3. What did Fr. Rutilio mean when he said that Jesus wasn't in the sky sleeping in a hammock?
4. In what ways does the description of Salvadoran society of the mid-twentieth century sound similar to the society you live in today? How is it different?

Chapter One

1. In which way was Fr. Rutilio's favorite metaphor—the long table full of food, with plenty of room for all—an apt way of illustrating his vision?
2. How does metaphor serve as a critique of our society today?
3. How are Fr. Rutilio's childhood experiences similar to those of many children today, and how are they different?
4. Consider the statistics related to land use in El Salvador when Rutilio was a young man. What impressions do you have?

Chapter Two

1. In what way was Rutilio, as Guidos quotes one peasant saying, “a prophet”?
2. How does Vatican II’s teaching on the church as “the people of God” impact the way you think about the church and what it means to be Catholic? How did this teaching impact Rutilio?
3. How familiar are you with the 1968 meeting of Latin American bishops at Medellín? What have you learned about this meeting in the past?
4. Fr. Carranza comments that the conclusions of the bishops’ meeting at Medellín “drove us crazy” with excitement. Why would he and his colleagues have been so excited? Have you ever found yourself reacting this way when you learned about some element of Catholic teaching or some event within the church?

Chapter Three

1. Which people and occasions seem to have been, in hindsight, most providential in Rutilio's life, nudging him in the direction God was calling him? How about your own life—looking back, are there people or events through which God seems to have been working, though you could not see it at the time?
2. How does reading about Rutilio's mental and emotional crises impact your understanding of him?
3. Have you seen or personally experienced the way that mental illness or scrupulosity can impact a person's life?
4. Might it be better, when telling his story publicly today, to leave out the details about Rutilio's weaknesses and limitations? Why might these details be important to include?

Chapter Four

1. Have you had the experience of sharing a friendship with someone who sees important things differently than you do? In what ways does this challenge your relationship? In what ways is it a gift?
2. How might one's personality play a role in the way one thinks about reform or changes in the church?
3. What do Rutilio's homiletic choices at the August 1970 Transfiguration Mass at the cathedral say about how others in the church in San Salvador viewed him?
4. What do the contents of Rutilio's Transfiguration Mass homily say about him?
5. What circumstances and events prior to Rutilio's murder began to prepare the ground for the change in Romero's approach to the challenges of the church in El Salvador?

Chapter Five

1. Have you ever joined a public protest? When? What cause were you championing? If you have not participated in such an event, which circumstances do you feel strongly called to promote in this way?
2. Who are the “Cains” and the “Abels” today?
3. Why would the Bible, including the Gospels, be considered somehow “subversive”?
4. What do you suppose Romero meant by saying that the church “walks serenely because it carries the power of love”? How have you seen this power bring serenity to a distressing or threatening situation?

Chapter Six

1. Have you kept personal items of loved ones who have died? Why are these items important? Does your parish, or even you personally, have any actual relics of saints? Why would it be important to preserve and display the personal items that are in the Memorial Hall of Martyrs?
2. What are your reactions to the stories of people like Fr. Alfonso Navarro Oviedo and Marianella Garcia Villas?
3. Why were the deaths of the Salvadoran laypeople killed during this time period more “anonymous” and perhaps less likely to be understood as martyrdoms? In what way is the church “clerical” in its approach to recognizing martyrdom?
4. What is the most significant way you recall having to suffer for living out your faith? Has it ever been dangerous for you to pray a rosary publicly or to attend Mass? Are you aware of other Christians in the world today who suffer and even die for their faith?
5. Why would praying a rosary or going to Mass been considered “subversive”? And why were the wealthier Catholics of El Salvador free to do these things without danger?

Chapter Seven

1. What is your reaction to learning that the bishops of El Salvador were largely silent about the crimes against the church for many years?
2. What do you imagine it would be like to be Catholic in El Salvador today, knowing the events of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s?
3. Archbishop Escobar wrote, “Feasts and celebrations in memory of them [the martyrs of El Salvador] are not enough if we choose to ignore and not imitate their mission.” How might you and other Catholics in your family or faith community honor their memory and imitate their mission in your very different time and place?
4. Are you familiar with the martyrs and saints of your own nation?

Chapter Eight

1. How might you help bring greater awareness to the story of Fr. Rutilio Grande? Why might this be an important mission to undertake?
2. Besides Rutilio Grande's courage in the face of persecution, what *other* elements of his life, ministry, or personality are worthy of imitation by today's Catholics? How might we imitate them in our own circumstances?
3. What did Archbishop Romero mean when he preached that "true human development does not consist in *having* more but in *being* more"? What does this mean to you?