

FATHER STANLEY ROTHER
BELOVED PRIEST OF OKLAHOMA
DECLARED A MARTYR FOR THE CHURCH

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Resurrection Memorial Cemetery
Oklahoma City, OK

On December 2, 2016, Pope Francis declared the martyrdom of Father Stanley Rother of Okarche, Oklahoma. A martyr for the Church is one who has truly been killed out of hatred for the faith (In Odium Fidei). With this announcement of his martyrdom, Father Stanley Rother is "the first U.S. born priest to be approved for beatification" stated The Sooner Catholic on December 11th, 2016.

More recently, The Catholic News Agency stated the "The Venerable Stanley Rother was exhumed May 10th and moved to a chapel in Oklahoma City. Taken from the Holy Trinity Cemetery in Okarche, to the chapel at Resurrection Cemetery in Oklahoma City, he was examined by medical professionals and verified as required by the process of beatification, was placed in a new casket, adorned with golden vestments; the casket was then sealed with the Archdiocesan seal in wax." With approximately twenty persons present, Father Rother was laid to rest once more in a sanctuary floor of the Resurrection Memorial Chapel, along with fellow priests and with the five Bishop/Archbishops of Oklahoma City, who look down from their wall crypts at this amazing event. Singing the song "Salve Regina" we all felt the presence of this declared Servant of God and felt blessed to be part of his foreseeable journey. The blessing of holy water and a simple prayer was spoken by our Most Reverend Archbishop Paul Coakley, as a beautiful white spray of flowers was placed on his crypt.

Father Stanley Rother's story begins with his desire in 1968 to join the Diocese Mission In Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. As it turns out, this small village became his mission for the church in that he learned both Spanish and Tzutuhil languages, in order to help its impoverished citizens. Remarkable in itself is the fact that he celebrated Mass mostly in Tzutuhil (the language of the ancient Mayans). Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, an American Christian writer and journalist, who has worked for the cause for his canonization, said of him "He fed the hungry, sheltered the homeless, visited the sick, comforted the afflicted, bore wrongs patiently, buried the dead- he did all of it."

At the same time, civil war was raging in Guatemala between the Militarist government forces and the guerillas. The Catholic Church was in the middle of this war and was blamed by the Government in many instances. Many citizens came to the church for shelter during the war. Hundreds and even thousands of Catholics were killed. While war was mostly present in the cities, it overflowed to villages around of which Santiago Atitlan was one, the village where Father Stanley served, endeared to him; his people called him "Padre Francisco". Here, Father built a small hospital, schools and even heralded the first Catholic radio station. It was here, in front of his church that bodies of deacons and parishioners began to be left at the doors of the church. Death lists also began to circulate- Father Rother's name was listed. He was called back to Oklahoma because of the severity of the situation. However, after a few months, he made

Thus, it comes to pass, so to speak, that Father Stanley Rother, a true Shepherd, became a Servant of God, in the true sense of the word, through his commitment to his parish in Guatemala, his very spirit to lead them, his endeared flock, if not through green pastures, he devoted his life to leading them through their suffering to the promised land of the Father, and the son, through the Holy Spirit, our God, our Lord. Let us pray for him, cherishing and venerating his very persona and spirit.