

Venerable Servant of God Stanley Francis Rother Fact Sheet

Born: March 27, 1935, at Rother farmhouse near Okarche, Okla.

- **Parents:** Franz Rother; Gertrude Smith Rother
- **Siblings:** Elizabeth Mary (Sr. Marita); James Henry (deceased); Caroline Ann (deceased) and Thomas Joseph

Baptized: March 29, 1935, at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Okarche, by Msgr. Zenon Steber

First Communion: April 22, 1942

Confirmation: April 4, 1948

Ordained subdeacon: June 2, 1962, by Archbishop Lawrence Joseph Shehan (elevated to Cardinal 1965)

Ordained deacon: September 15, 1962, by Bishop Thomas Austin Murphy

Ordained priest: May 25, 1963, The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City, by Bishop Victor J. Reed (Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa)

Death: July 28, 1981, Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala

Education:

Holy Trinity Catholic School, Okarche (1941 - 05/53)

St. John's Seminary, San Antonio, Texas (09/53 – 05/55)

Assumption Seminary, San Antonio, Texas (09/56 – 01/58)

Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland (09/59 – 05/63)

Southeastern State College, Durant, Oklahoma, B.S. (1965 - history)

Assignments:

Assistant Pastor, St. William Church, Durant, Oklahoma (1963 – 1965)

Assistant Pastor, St. Francis Xavier Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1965 – 1966)

Assistant Pastor, Holy Family Cathedral, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1966)

Assistant Pastor, Corpus Christi Church, Oklahoma City (September 1966 – 1968)

Catholic Mission of Oklahoma, Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala (1968 – 1981),
Diocese of Solola

- Pastor, Cerro de Oro (1969 – approx. 1976)
- Pastor, St. James the Apostle Church, Santiago Atitlan (1975– 07/28/1981)

Mission work in Guatemala:

Father Rother served in Santiago Atitlán for 13 years. During that time, in addition to his pastoral duties, he assisted in the translation of the New Testament into the Tzutuhil language, and in 1973 began to celebrate the Mass in that language. Father Rother continued his life of hard physical work, repairing the rectory, digging a well and installing its pump, repairing the church, building a parish hall and working to improve the productivity of the fincas (farms). Father Rother also was instrumental in the building of a hospital located in a neighboring canton of Panabaj between 1968 and 1970. Unfortunately, the "Hospitalito" and much of Panabaj was buried in the mudslides resulted from a hurricane with torrential rains which hit the region in October 2005. Ironically, the hurricane was named "Stan." The hospital has reopened.

Death threat and murder:

The political turmoil and violence in Guatemala escalated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By Dec. 2, 1980, Father Rother reported that a total of 10 men had been taken from the area. In mid-December 1980, a catechist and leader began sleeping in the rectory after his name appeared on the death list. In his December 1980 letter to the people of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa, Father Rother stated: "This is one of the reasons I have for staying in the face of physical harm. The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger."

In early 1981, Father Rother learned that his name was on a death list. It was determined that he should leave Guatemala and he returned to Oklahoma in January 1981. However, he remained in Guatemala until he could secure a visa for his friend and fellow priest, Father Pedro Bocel. In April 1981, Father Rother returned to Guatemala for Holy Week. He was determined to return to continue to serve his parish. In May, Father Rother journeyed to Oklahoma to attend the ordination of his cousin, Father Don Wolf, but quickly returned to Guatemala. On July 28, 1981, he was shot and killed in the rectory. He was one of 10 priests murdered in Guatemala that year.

Burial:

The first funeral Mass for Father Rother was held at the church at Santiago Atitlan at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28, 1981. At least 25 priests concelebrated the Mass, with Father Eduardo Aguirre presiding. A second Mass was celebrated at Santiago Atitlan at 9 p.m. on July 28, 1981. On Wednesday, July 29, 1981, yet another Mass was celebrated at Santiago Atitlan. Bishop Mario Rios Montt, a second bishop, and 35 priests concelebrated. Fr. Rother's body was flown back to Oklahoma City and buried in his home town of Okarche. At the request of his Guatemalan parishioners, however, his heart and blood was interred at the parish church in Santiago Atitlán. As part of the beatification process, Fr. Rother's body was moved to Resurrection Cemetery in Oklahoma City where he will remain until a new shrine is built.

A memorial Mass was celebrated at Holy Trinity in Okarche on Sunday, August 2, 1981. A standing room only congregation participated in the funeral Mass at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City on August 3, 1981. Archbishop Charles Salatka presided. Fr. Rother's body was buried in the family plot at Holy Trinity Cemetery, Okarche, Oklahoma, on August 3, 1981.