

Reverend Stanley Rother Fact Sheet

Born: March 27, 1935 at Rother farmhouse near Okarche, OK

- **Parents:** Franz Rother; Gertrude Smith Rother
- **Siblings:** Elizabeth Mary (Sister Marita); James Henry (dec); Caroline Ann (dec.) 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, Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City by Bishop Victor 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, Saint William Church, Durant, Oklahoma (1963 – 1965)

Assistant Pastor, Saint 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 was also 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 now reopened.

Death threat and murder:

The political turmoil and violence in Guatemala escalated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By December 2, 1980, Father Rother reported that a total of ten 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. Although he was warned not to return to Santiago Atitlan, 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, Reverend Don Wolf, but quickly returned to Guatemala. He was repeatedly warned to leave, but refused. On July 28, 1981 he was shot and killed. 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 twenty-five 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 thirty-five 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 beneath the floor of the parish church in Santiago Atitlán.

A memorial Mass was celebrated at Okarche Holy Trinity Church 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. Father Rother’s body was buried in the family plot at Holy Trinity Cemetery, Okarche, Oklahoma, on August 3, 1981. The burial was indeed a final homecoming for Francis Stanley Rother.