

## Venerable Stanley Rother's remains exhumed, verified in next step before beatification



**OKARCHE (May 16, 2017)** Early on the morning of May 10, the mortal remains of Venerable Servant of God Stanley Francis Rother were exhumed from Holy Trinity Cemetery in Okarche, Okla., and transported to Oklahoma City. As required by the Church for the beatification process, his remains were examined by medical professionals and re-interred in the chapel at Resurrection Cemetery in northwest Oklahoma City.

Father Rother, who served as a priest in an Oklahoma mission in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, is the first recognized martyr from the United States and will be the first U.S. born male and U.S. priest to be beatified during a ceremony this fall in downtown Oklahoma City. Beatification is the last step before sainthood in the Catholic Church.

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City opened Father Rother's cause for beatification in 2007 – 26 years after he was murdered in his rectory by unknown assailants believed to be government soldiers. By early 1981, Father Rother had been placed on a hit list along with several members of his parish staff and catechists for their continued aid, education and preaching of the Gospel to the poor population of Tz'utujil Indians.

At the request of his parishioners in Guatemala, Father Rother's heart is enshrined inside the Guatemalan church.

In December, Pope Francis declared Father Rother a martyr for the faith, which cleared the way for his beatification. Cardinal Angelo Amato, S.D.B., who serves as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome, will celebrate the beatification Mass on Sept. 23 along with the Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, and thousands of cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons and other faithful from across the United States. There is no charge and no tickets are required to attend the Mass.

"The witness of Father Rother's life and death has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to me as a seminarian, priest and now as a bishop. I consider it a great gift to be entrusted with overseeing the continuation of his cause for beatification and canonization begun by Archbishop Beltran," Archbishop Coakley said. "His beatification is an unexpected blessing for Oklahoma and for the United States as we celebrate this ordinary man from humble beginnings who answered the call to serve an extraordinary life. His witness will continue to inspire us for generations."

Before the exhumation of Father Rother's remains in Okarche, his family led a procession to the gravesite and participated in a prayer.

Once the vault was removed from the gravesite, it was transported to Oklahoma City where his remains were removed, examined and verified. He was placed in a new casket with golden vestments alongside a document signed by those in attendance. A red ribbon was wrapped around the casket and sealed with a wax seal of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Archbishop Coakley, Archbishop Beltran led the priests in the singing of "Salve Regina," a Gregorian chant hymn, before the casket was lowered into a crypt at Resurrection Cemetery.

A closing prayer service wrapped up the solemn process.

"It was a holy day. Father Rother's presence was felt by many, and we are blessed as the Catholic Church in Oklahoma to present Father Rother's life to the world," Archbishop Coakley said.

A temporary sign now marks the gravesite at Holy Trinity Cemetery in Okarche where the original vault and casket are reburied. A permanent memorial marker will be placed. The chapel at Resurrection Cemetery where Father Rother will remain until his shrine is completed, is locked for security, but visitors are welcome. Call (405) 721-4191.

For information about Father Rother's life, his cause, the process of canonization and details about the beatification Mass, go online to [stanleyrother.org](http://stanleyrother.org).