

Priest martyred in Guatemala to be beatified by Catholic Church

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On September 23, the Catholic Church will beatify Stanley Rother, a priest from Oklahoma serving in Guatemala who was murdered in 1981, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City announced recently.

In December, Pope Francis recognized Rother as a martyr. He is the first person born in the United States to be given that status by the Vatican.

Rother, who was 46 when he was killed, served a parish of mostly indigenous people in Santiago Atitlán, a poor rural community, for 13 years. He completed a translation of the New Testament into the language of the Tzutuhil people, in which he also celebrated mass, according to his biography from the archdiocese.

As the Guatemalan civil war escalated, Rother's parishioners disappeared or were tortured and killed, and Rother's name appeared on a death list.

"The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger," he wrote in a letter home several months before he was killed. "I don't want to desert these people, and that is what will be said, even after all these years."

Rother was murdered in his rectory by gunmen likely connected to right-wing extremists. He was one of ten priests slain in Guatemala that year.