**A Saint Among Us**

Father Rother was shot to death late on the night of July 28, 1981 in the rectory at his church in Santiago, Atitlan Guatemala. The government of Guatemala was placing blame on the Catholic Church for unrest in the country. Many priests and religious lost their lives and thousands of civilians were kidnapped and killed during the years of state-sponsored oppression. Even though Father Rother knew his life was in danger, he chose to remain with the people he had grown to love during the more than a dozen years he lived there.

Vatican dwells on three prerequisites that must be met for a person to be named a martyr.

1) The person who committed the assassination must have had the motive of killing the victim only because of the victim’s faith.

2) The person who was killed must have accepted to die for the faith.

3) The death of the person must have been violent.

Father Rother was born on March 27, 1935, the son of Franz and Gertrude Rother. He was reared on a farm near Okarche as a member of Holy Trinity Parish. He attended Holy Trinity School. Deep down he was always an Oklahoma farm boy. When he told his dad after high school that he wanted to be a priest his dad said, "Why didn't you take Latin instead of working so hard as a Future Farmer of America?" But he was glad that Stanley wanted to be a priest, and their daughter, too, now Sister Marita, wanted to become a Sister, though she and Stanley had not discussed their vocations with each other. "Religion and God was so much a part of their home and central to their lives."

As a seminarian young Stanley was such a craftsman that in short order he was sacristan, groundskeeper, bookbinder, plumber, and gardener at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio. He was strong. He could do just about anything. He was an asset to the seminary. But he didn't have enough time for his studies, and he needed time. So after five and a half years he was told it would be better for him not to continue his studies for the priesthood.

That was a blow.

But Stanley and his father and Father Edmund Von Elm, the pastor at Okarche, went to see Bishop Victor Reed.

"Do you want to be a priest, Stanley?" Bishop Reed asked.

"Yes, but it's all over for me, isn't it?" Stanley said.

"No, it isn't," the bishop said. "It's not my smart priests that are my best priests, it's my good priests. We'll send you to another seminary."

Bishop Reed kept his word. He arranged for Stanley to go to Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Bishop Reed ordained him on May 25, 1963.

In 1968 Father Rother heard that a priest was needed at the Oklahoma mission with the Tzutuhil Indians in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. He immediately volunteered, and Bishop Reed chose him to go. Father Rother had always gravitated toward the poor, the Mexicans in San Antonio, the blacks at Corpus Christi, and now the Indians in Guatemala. He set to work to learn Spanish and then to learn the Tzutuhil language, an unwritten, language until Father Ramon Carlin had set about putting it into written form. Father Rother went to live with a native family for a while to get a better grasp of practical conversation. An Indian offered to tutor him.

Father Rother worked and mastered the difficult Tzutuhil language so that he could be in close touch with his people. After Father Carlin’s death he continued on with the translation of the gospels into that language and then the Mass prayers. He worked with the people to show them how to read and write. He supported the radio station located on the mission property, which transmitted daily lessons in language and mathematics.

Within the last year of his life, Father Rother saw the radio station smashed and the director killed. His catechists and parishioners disappeared and were found dead after having been beaten and tortured. Father Rother knew all this when he returned to Guatemala in May 1981. It didn't matter. He stayed with his people, supporting them in all their needs. He stayed until he was murdered.