Sorrowful Mysteries
Rosary Reflections on Bl. Stanley Rother
First Recognized Martyr from the United States

1. Agony in the Garden
   Blessed Stanley Francis Rother was ordained a priest for the then-Diocese of Oklahoma City and
   Tulsa in 1963, and in 1968 volunteered to serve in the Oklahoma Catholic mission in Guatemala.
   He served the people of Guatemala as pastor of Saint James Catholic Church in Santiago Atitlan
   and San Martin de Tours Catholic Church in Cerro de Oro. During his time in Guatemala, a civil
   war broke out. Many of the churches’ parishioners, leaders and catechists were kidnapped,
   tortured and killed because of their Catholic faith.

2. The Scourging at the Pillar
   Blessed Stanley shared meals with the poorest of the poor, formed catechists through the
   airwaves of a radio station he started, shared farming techniques and created a co-op for local
   farmers and artisans to receive a just return for their crops and crafts. He became one with his
   poverty-stricken people, and thus was deemed a subversive. “My life is for my people. I am not
   afraid.”

3. The Crowning with Thorns
   Blessed Stanley’s parishioners were so terrified of the “death squads” roaming the hillsides
   surrounding serene Lake Atitlan they were afraid to claim the bodies of their “disappeared”
   family members for fear they too would be killed. Blessed Stanley stepped up for them,
   identifying their slain relatives, providing proper burials and caring for widows and their children.
   Because of these efforts and the vocal defense of his people against the violence surrounding
   them, Blessed Stanley’s name was added to a “death list.”

4. The Carrying of the Cross
   Blessed Stanley returned home to Okarche, Okla., in January 1981 to seek safety and to visit his
   family at the farmhouse where he was born. He soon missed his parishioners and the people of
   Guatemala whom he loved and stated, “The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger.” He
   returned to his parishioners for Palm Sunday and Holy Week in 1981. His family, friends and
   fellow priests were frightened for him, but they understood why he needed to return to his flock
   who were threatened daily by violent persecution.

5. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus
   In the early morning hours of July 28, 1981, three gunmen entered the rectory at Saint James
   Catholic Church in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, in the Diocese of Sololá. The intruders
   confronted Blessed Stanley, who resisted them with his fists, hoping to distract them long enough
   for others at the compound to escape harm. His sacrifice saved many lives, but he could not save
   his own. The criminals shot Blessed Stanley twice, killing him. When the religious sisters who
   were staying at the compound found him, they recognized instantly he had died a martyr for his
   faith. They gathered his spilled blood into jars. Blessed Stanley’s heart remains enshrined in
   Guatemala with the people he loved and for whom he died. The Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in
   Oklahoma City will be his final resting place.