

# Archdiocese celebrates milestone for Rother shrine project



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**Construction crews work on the \$40 million Blessed Stanley Rother shrine project on Thursday at SE 89 and Shields Boulevard in Oklahoma City. [Archdiocese of Oklahoma City]**

Efforts to build a shrine honoring an Oklahoma priest on the path to Catholic sainthood marked a milestone on Thursday.

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City's \$40 million project to build the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine at SE 89 and Shields Boulevard began in November 2019 and Thursday, construction crews poured the first concrete section for the building slab.

The shrine project will include a 2,000-seat Spanish colonial-style church, a chapel where Rother will be entombed, an education building, an event space and several areas for shrines and devotion. The church will be the largest Catholic church in Oklahoma, expected to host numerous large archdiocese events and help accommodate the Hispanic population whose parishes are currently overcrowded.

The shrine is expected to be completed in 2022.

Rother was a priest with the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City when he volunteered to serve the diocesan mission in Guatemala. The Central American country was in the midst of a civil war and Rother became a target due to his efforts to help the indigenous people he met and served with compassion and love.

The Okarche native was murdered by unknown assailants in his rectory at St. James the Apostle Catholic Church in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, on July 28, 1981. In September 2017, he was beatified during a much-anticipated Beatification Mass at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City. At that time, Rother became the first martyr from the United States and the first U.S.-born priest to be beatified.

Archdiocese leaders said an additional aspect of the shrine complex will be a museum and pilgrim center, which will cost an additional \$5 million. The center is expected to draw thousands of visitors each year.

An estimated crowd of 2,000 people gathered at the south Oklahoma City site in 2019 for an elaborate groundbreaking ceremony that included prayers, dancing and singing. The site is on SE 89 between Shields Boulevard and Interstate 35.