

Modern Martyrs Resource.

**First U.S. woman to be included in memorial for modern martyrs - Vatican News.**

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Ohio native Sr. Dorothy Stang joins other modern Christian martyrs around the world in a permanent memorial in a ceremony hosted by the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome.

By Kielce Gussie and Guglielmo Gallone

A religious sister murdered for her work in Brazil almost 20 years ago will be the first American woman to be included in a memorial for modern martyrs in Rome.

In an interview with Vatican News, Dr. Laurie Johnston, Professor of Theology at Emmanuel College in Boston, recalls the figure of Sr. Dorothy and explains her legacy 2 decades after her death.

**Who was Sr. Dorothy Stang?**

Born in 1931, Sr. Dorothy Stang joined the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Ohio at the age of 17. In 1966, she became a missionary in Brazil and fought for the rights of poor settlers and the protection of the rainforest against loggers and landowners who wanted to exploit its resources.

**Sr. Dorothy Stang's legacy 20 years after her martyrdom.**

She partnered with the Pastoral Land Commission--an organization of the Catholic Church that works to defend the rights of rural labourers and peasants. As a result of her efforts, the Brazilian state of Para named Sr. Dorothy "Woman of the Year", and she had received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Brazilian Bar Association.

But her work was not well-received by everyone. On February 12, 2005, hired gunmen shot Sr. Dorothy and left her to die. She was 73 years old.

**A modern-day martyr.**

Just a month shy of the 20th anniversary of her martyrdom, Sr. Dorothy will be honoured at a ceremony hosted by the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome. A small container of blood-soaked soil from the place of her murder and one of her sweaters will be added to a permanent memorial at the Basilica of St. Bartholomew on the Island—a church

dedicated to the thousands of Christian men and women killed for the faith in modern times.

More than 25 of Sr. Dorothy's relatives will be present to see her memorialized as the first woman from the United States to be added to the memorial at the Basilica of St. Bartholomew.

### **Words from Sr. Dorothy Stang.**

Before her death, Sr. Dorothy had received numerous death threats as a result of her work to defend the rain forest and poor labourers. Yet, recognizing the risk, she continued her ministry.

She said:

“Our Gospel response calls us to take risks for our people. They don't have this privilege; they would be killed if they resist openly - indeed they are killed.”

### **The Church of martyrs.**

In light of the Jubilee of 2000, Pope St. John Paul II established the “Commission of New Martyrs” in 1999 to research and identify Christian martyrs of the 20th century. The Commission was based at the Basilica of St. Bartholomew on the Island in Rome.

To keep the testimonies of these men and women from fading into history once more, Pope John Paul II dedicated the Basilica as a memorial place for the “new witnesses of the faith.” He reflected:

“The experience of the Second World War and the years that followed led me to consider with grateful attention the shining example of those who, from the early years of the twentieth century until its end, experienced persecution, violence, death, because of their faith and their behaviour inspired by the truth of Christ. And they are many! Their memory should not be lost, rather it should be recovered in a documented manner.”