

# The Canonization of Saints

The word "canon" comes from the Greek word *kanon* meaning a standard or measuring rod. The custom of canonization began in the early church by popular acclamation. Hence the custom of calling all the apostles "Saint." The Roman Catholic Church since the 10th century has officially applied the standard of holiness of life to certain individuals who lived exemplary Christian lives and through a lengthy process of prayer and study have declared that the individual is in heaven. Contrary to the belief of some, the Church does not "create" saints, but simply applies the standard of gospel holiness to those God permits the Church to know are in heaven with Him. One principle way for God to affirm the presence of an individual in heaven with Him is through the performance of miracles through the intercession of that person.

## Current Canonization Process

On September 12, 1997, through the Vatican Information Service, the Holy See Press Office in Vatican City made public the following note on canonical procedure for causes of beatification and canonization:

1. Canon norms regarding the procedure to be followed for causes of saints are contained in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, promulgated by John Paul II on January 25, 1983.
2. To begin a cause it is necessary for **at least 5 years to have passed since the death of the candidate**. This is to allow greater balance and objectivity in evaluating the case and to let the emotions of the moment dissipate.
3. The **bishop of the diocese** in which the person whose beatification is being requested died **is responsible for beginning the investigation**. The promoter group: diocese, parish, religious congregation, association, asks the bishop through the postulator for the opening of the investigation. The bishop, once the *nulla osta* (no impediment) of the Holy See is obtained, **forms a diocesan tribunal for this purpose**.
  - a. **Witnesses are called before the tribunal** to recount concrete facts on the exercise of Christian virtues considered heroic, that is, the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity, and the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, and others specific to his/her state in life. In addition, all documents regarding the candidate must be gathered. At this point he/she is entitled to the **title of Servant of God**.
4. Once the diocesan investigation is finished, the **acts and documentation are passed on to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints**. The public copy used for further work is put together here. The postulator, resident in Rome, follows the preparation of the summary of the documentation that proves the heroic exercise of virtue, under the direction of a relator of the Congregation. The *Positio* undergoes **an examination (theological) by nine theologians** who give their vote. If the majority of the theologians are in favor, the cause is passed on for **examination by cardinals and bishops** who are members of the congregation. They hold meetings twice a month. If their judgment is favorable, the prefect of the congregation **presents the results of the entire course of the cause to the Holy Father**,

who gives his approval and authorizes the congregation to draft the relative decree.

The **public reading and promulgation of the decree** follows.

5. For the **beatification** of a confessor a **miracle** attributed to the Servant of God, verified after his/her death, is necessary. The required miracle must be **proven through the appropriate canonical investigation**, following a procedure analogous to that for heroic virtues. This one too is concluded with the relative decree. Once the two decrees are promulgated (regarding the heroic virtues and the miracle) **the Holy Father decides on beatification**, which is the concession of public honor, limited to a particular sphere. With beatification the candidate receives the **title of Blessed**.
6. For **canonization another miracle** is needed, attributed to the intercession of the Blessed and having occurred after his/her beatification. The methods for ascertainment of the affirmed miracle are the same as those followed for beatification. Canonization is understood as the concession of public worship in the Universal Church. Pontifical infallibility is involved. With canonization, the **Blessed acquires the title of Saint**.

## Biblical Description of Miracles

Three Greek words are used for the word miracle:

1. *Semeion*: a "sign" (used 78 times). *Semeion* was an event with divine significance. Jesus speaks of His resurrection as a "sign."
  - a. Matt 12:39 He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a **sign**, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet."
2. *Teras*: a "wonder" (used 16 times). It is also used in combination with *semeion*. *Teras* means something very unusual, out of the ordinary, amazing, or astonishing.
  - a. John 4:48 Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see **signs** and **wonders**, you will not believe."
3. *Dunamis*: a "power" It is sometimes used of ordinary power, but is often translated "miracle". It is often used in combination with *semeion* and *teras*. *Dunamis* emphasizes the source of the event.

A biblical definition can be drawn from a systematic study of the aforementioned words. A miracle is an unusual event ("wonder") that conveys and confirms an unusual (divine) message ("sign") by means of unusual power ("power"). A miracle is called supernatural because the effect is beyond the productive power of nature and implies supernatural agency. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: "Those effects are rightly to be termed miracles which are **wrought by Divine power apart from the order usually observed in nature**" (Contra Gentiles, III, cii) ... "and they are apart from the natural order because they are **beyond the order or laws of the whole created nature**." (Sacra Theologica I:102:4) In ordinary language: that which is beyond the present knowledge and power of the medical or physical sciences.

**On Oct 21, 2012,**

## **Canonization Mass in October will bring seven new saints**

Posted on **February 21, 2012** by Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY — Like Pope Paul VI and Blessed John Paul II often did, Pope Benedict XVI will mark World Mission Sunday in October by creating new saints. In the United States and Canada, many people are aware that the saints to be proclaimed Oct. 21 at the Vatican include Blessed Marianne Cope of Molokai and Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

1. Mother Marianne led a group of sisters from New York to the Hawaiian Islands in 1883 to establish a system of nursing care for leprosy patients;
2. Blessed Kateri, daughter of a Christian Algonquin mother and a Mohawk father in upstate New York, will become the first Native American to be canonized. She was baptized by a Jesuit missionary in 1676 when she was 20, and she died in Canada four years later.

After the creation of new cardinals Saturday (Feb 11, 2012), the College of Cardinals gave their assent to the pope's decision to make seven new saints this year. The other five who will be canonized in October are:

3. Jesuit Father Jacques Berthieu, who was born in Polminhac, France, and was martyred June 8, 1896, in Ambiatibe, Madagascar.
4. Peter Calungsod, a lay catechist born in Cebu, Philippines, and martyred April 2, 1672, in Guam.
5. Father Giovanni Battista Piamarta, an Italian priest and founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Nazareth for men and the Humble Servants of the Lord for women. He died in 1913.
6. Carmen Salles y Barangueras, the Spanish founder of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. She worked with disadvantaged girls and prostitutes and saw that early education was essential for helping young women. She died in 1911.
7. Anna Schaffer, a lay German woman who wanted to be a missionary, but could not because of a succession of physical accidents and diseases. She accepted her infirmity as a way of sanctification. Her grave has been a pilgrimage site since her death in 1925.