

THE PROCESS OF CANONIZATION

VENERABLE

The first stage of the canonization process cannot begin until five years from the time of a candidate's death, however, the pope can dispense from this waiting period. All of the candidate's writings are then gathered and carefully studied, and their friends, family, and acquaintances are interviewed. The local bishop then creates a file of the person's life and writings and submits it to the Vatican, where officials examine the file. If they determine that the candidate's life expressed heroic virtue, they are proclaimed "Venerable" and receive the title, "Servant of God."

BLESSED

In order for the "Servant of God" to move to the next level of canonization, a miracle must be attributed to their intercession. If such a miracle occurs, a group of theologians and scientists assemble to examine the case. They must determine whether it is in fact a miracle (scientifically unexplainable) and whether it can be attributed to an act of intercession. Their goal is to disprove the miracle in some manner. If it proves unexplainable, the miracle is approved and this person may be beatified and proclaimed "Blessed." In the case of a martyr, no miracle is required.

SAINT

The final stage of canonization is sainthood. To attain this, another miracle must occur after the person was declared Blessed. The same process is used again to evaluate the new apparent miracle. Upon the acceptance of a second miracle, the Blessed can be "canonized." At this point, the Pope has proclaimed this person to be a Saint, affirming that they are truly in heaven. Canonization allows for the public veneration of the Saint by the Universal Church, and their name and feast day can be added to the liturgical calendar.