

## SAINTHOOD

### Types of Saint

The earliest feast days of saints were those of martyrs, venerated as having shown for Christ the greatest form of love in their willingness to die a violent death rather than reject their faith.

The title "confessor" was used for saints who had confessed their faith in Christ by their lives rather than by their deaths. Martyrs are regarded as dying in the service of the Lord, and confessors are people who died natural deaths. A broader range of titles was used later, such as: Virgin, Pastor, Bishop, Monk, Priest, Founder, Abbot, Apostle, Doctor of the Church.

Cardinal Newman was, therefore:

- a Confessor: he confessed his faith by his life and died a natural death
- a Pastor: he was a priest
- because of his immense theological contribution, he could, at a later date, be made a Doctor of the Church.

### The Process

This is a multi-stage process requiring ongoing dialogue between the bishop of the diocese in which the possible saint lived (or the superiors of the order to which he or she belonged) and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome.

#### Stage 1

Local interest – People who knew the person or knew of his or her life believe that the individual 'gave an example of holiness that we can follow with confidence'. At least 5 years must 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.

#### Stage 2

Local Information gathering – The Congregation for the Causes of Saints instructs the bishop of the diocese in which the person died whose beatification is being requested, to begin collecting the evidence for their claim of holiness. Witnesses are called before the tribunal and all documents regarding the candidate must be gathered. During this stage, the candidate might be declared to be a 'Servant of God'.

### Stage 3

Examination by the Holy See – Further scrutiny of the life, writings etc. by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints might lead to the congregation issuing a Decree of Heroic Virtue by which the candidate is declared 'Venerable'.

### Stage 4

Examination of a miracle – The Congregation for the Causes of Saints want evidence that people are being drawn to prayer and holiness through the candidate. As a sign of a special relationship between the candidate and God, a miracle is required. For a miracle to be accepted, it must be scrutinised by a panel of independent experts in the field. It must be scientifically verifiable as 'beyond human capability and inexplicable other than in terms of the miraculous'. Generally, medical cures are the easiest to verify according to scientific, measurable criteria.

### Stage 5

Beatification – Once a miracle has been approved by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the person can be declared 'Blessed'. This is done in a ceremony called *beatification* which usually takes place in the country where the candidate lived and worked. It is usually performed by a representative of the Pope, generally from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

### Stage 6

Examination of second miracle – For canonisation another miracle is needed, attributed to the intercession of the Blessed and having occurred after his beatification. If the second claim of a miracle is accepted, the candidate can be accepted as a Saint. The final verdict depends on an examination (theological) by nine theologians who give their vote. If the majority of the theologians are in favour, the cause is passed on for examination by cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints. If their judgment is favourable, the Prefect of the Congregation presents the results of the entire course of the cause to the Pope, who gives his approval and authorises the congregation to draft the decree.

### Stage 7

Canonisation – Once the Pope has approved the canonisation a date is fixed for the ceremony. This is usually performed by the Pope in Rome. Canonisation is a declaration that someone can be venerated by the universal Church as 'an example of holiness that we can follow with confidence'.