

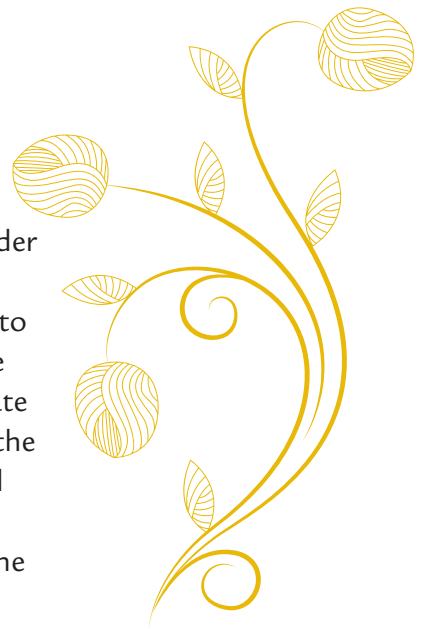
CANONIZATION:

4 Steps to Becoming a Saint

Being named a saint in the Catholic Church is a very high honor. It means the saint's name is added to the official catalogue of saints, and that Masses and feast days can be celebrated in his or her honor. Churches can then be dedicated in the saint's memory, and his or her name can be used in public prayers, such as litanies. What does it take for someone to be named a saint? The process is called *canonization* and it involves 4 major steps.

1 REQUEST FOR CANONIZATION

At least five years after a person's death (unless a special exception is made by the pope), a formal request is made to consider him or her for sainthood. The people making the request are usually from the candidate's church or religious community. They submit their request to the bishop of the diocese where the person died. The request tells how the person lived a life of holiness and lists reasons for considering the candidate for sainthood. If the bishop believes there is enough evidence to consider the person for sainthood, he asks the Vatican for permission to open a special tribunal. Witnesses are then called to attest to the candidate's goodness, holiness, devotion to God, and other virtues. If a person passes this step, he or she is named a "Servant of God."



2 DETERMINATION

The bishop sends a formal report and request to Rome where it is reviewed by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. Nine theologians read the material and determine whether there is enough cause to pass it to the entire Congregation. If so, the candidate's writings and other aspects of his or her life are studied to make sure there is nothing that goes against the teachings and practices of the Church. As part of this investigation a person called a "devil's advocate" raises questions and objections to the candidate's sainthood. This is to make sure the final decision is complete and fair, and all evidence of the candidate's saintliness is assured. Once a candidate has been determined to be virtuous and heroic in his or her faith, he or she is declared "Venerable."



3 BEATIFICATION

The next step is beatification. If the candidate was a martyr, someone who died for their faith, he or she may be beatified and named “Blessed.” Otherwise, a miracle brought about by the intercession of the saint must occur and be verified by the Congregation. Once the person is beatified and named “Blessed,” he or she can be venerated, or officially honored, in his or her city, diocese, region, or religious community.

4 CANONIZATION

After being beatified, another miracle is required for the person to be canonized and officially declared a saint. Once again, the miracle must have occurred as a result of the person’s intercession. The Prefect of the Congregation then sends the cause for canonization to the pope who makes the final decision. Once a person is canonized, he or she is officially declared a “Saint.” The pope declares this in an official way at a special Mass in honor of the new saint.

