

## THE ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

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WHEN THE GENERAL CHAPTER of the Dominican Order convened in Washington last fall, the Capitular Fathers studied the report on the causes of canonization of certain Blesseds of our Order. The Chapter was informed of their present status before the Sacred Congregation of Rites by a letter from the Postulator General of Causes, the Very Reverend Christopher M. Berutti, O.P. In his letter Father Berutti presented a brief summary of the causes and exhorted the Capitular Fathers to work ardently towards their speedy completion. It is his prayer and hope that soon other illustrious names will be added to the ranks of the great Dominican Saints. Some of the Blesseds have advanced far on the difficult road to canonization, while other causes have not been as fortunate. This will perhaps become clearer from the following digest of the process of canonization and the official report on the Dominican Blesseds as given by Father Berutti.

Today the process of canonization is set in a strict form by the Church. Causes of Blesseds who died between 1181 and 1534 may be promoted by what is called the Extraordinary Process; all later causes must undergo the Ordinary Process. In the Code of Canon Law there is nothing explicit about this Extraordinary Process for canonization. However, many canons deal with this process in causes for beatification and it seems that it may be applied for canonization, for it was used in the canonization of St. Albert the Great and St. Margaret of Hungary.

### THE EXTRAORDINARY PROCESS

The Extraordinary Process is known as the way of cult. To advance a cause by this process, it must be proved that the Blessed is already venerated as a Saint and has been so venerated down the ages. As most of these causes are historical it is necessary that two conditions be fulfilled before this process may be employed. First, the Blessed must have died between 1181 and 1534; second, there must be a complete lack of records giving the testimony of contemporary witnesses of the miracles

performed through the Blessed's intercession. To determine these conditions, the cause may be referred to the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which will investigate the life and writings of the Blessed as gathered from sources other than authentic testimony. If, in the judgment of the Sacred Congregation, these conditions are fulfilled, the cause may proceed to equivalent, but not to solemn and formal canonization.

#### THE ORDINARY PROCESS

The Ordinary Process or process of non-cult is the most common method of procedure today. Before this can begin, the person proposed for canonization must have already received the honors of beatification either formally and solemnly or equivalently. For the canonization of those who have been formally beatified two additional miracles are required after beatification; for those equivalently beatified, three are needed. To begin this process, it is required that at least one of these have already been performed. When it is reported, the Postulator of the cause petitions the Sacred Congregation of Rites to reopen the process which will eventually lead to canonization. If the members of the Sacred Congregation find it advisable they will cast a favorable vote (which is merely consultative, as are all the decisions which are forwarded to the Pope) and present it to the Holy Father, who alone has the power and authority of granting permission to reopen a cause. Then follows an intensive investigation of the reported miracles. The first phase of the investigation is held at the place where they occurred, and all the testimony regarding the miracles themselves and the persons involved is minutely recorded under oath. The testimony of two doctors must be obtained to the effect that the cures were complete and that they cannot be attributed to natural causes.

When his data has been gathered and notarized, it is forwarded to the Sacred Congregation, where the second phase of the investigation begins. The record of the process, as it was carried out at the place where the miracle was reported, must be examined to see that everything was done according to Canon Law. Then the findings themselves must be examined in three distinct convocations or meetings of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The first examination is made at the Ante-preparatory Congregation which is held before the Cardinal *Ponens* (who is in charge of the entire cause) and the official prelates and con-

sultors. It is at this meeting that the testimony of the doctors who examined the cures is given to medical experts in Rome. If both experts reject the cures, the process is brought to a close. If only one is unfavorable, then the two new experts must give testimony at the second congregation.

This second meeting, called the Preparatory Congregation, is held at the Vatican Palace. All the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites attend, and during its session further difficulties, raised by the Defender of the Faith (Devil's Advocate) and the attending Cardinals, must be answered by the Advocate of the cause. The report of this assembly is then forwarded to the Holy Father.

The last of these meetings held to discuss the miracles is the General Congregation. This is also held at the Vatican Palace, but with the Holy Father present. All the matter previously gathered is again discussed and weighed by the Prelates. Finally, each writes his decision and if the majority is favorable, they beseech the Holy Father to grant the title of Saint to the Blessed. When this three-fold congregation has completed its examination, the authenticity of the miracles is proved. There remains, however, the question of the opportuneness of proclaiming the Blessed a Saint at this time. This question, known as the *de tuto* judgment, must be discussed at another General Congregation at which the Pope presides. If the vote of the Cardinals is again favorable, His Holiness will call a Consistory, disclose his intention of proclaiming a new Saint, and then issue a decree to this effect.

This, in a brief and summary form, is the way the Ordinary Process of canonization proceeds. There are many details not related here which must be fulfilled for the validity of the process. Problems must be solved, objections answered, facts verified, and because of these and other difficulties, many causes take years to be completed.

Four processes are of special interest to the Dominican Order at this time. Two concern Blessed Imelda and Blessed Martin de Porres, who are well known in this country; the others Blessed Innocent V (Peter of Tarantasia) and Blessed Gregory X, are better known in Europe. All four causes are advancing on the long and devious road to canonization.

#### BLESSED IMELDA

Almost five centuries after her death, Blessed Imelda was

equivalently beatified in 1826. Still another century was to pass before the renewal of her cause by a decree dated January 12, 1921, and only a few years ago, on March 28, 1941, the validity of the canonical process of two cures accredited to her intercession was established. The Ante-preparatory Congregation which judged them was held on January 10, 1942. At the Preparatory sessions of March 19, 1942 and November 23, 1943 further discussion about their validity was held. When the General Congregation convenes to discuss Blessed Imelda's cause, the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation will propose some doubts about her life and holy death which must be answered before her cause can proceed.

#### BLESSED MARTIN DE PORRES

After many years of tireless investigation, Blessed Martin was solemnly beatified in the summer of 1837, but it was not until June of 1926 that his cause was resumed. Two cures, one in South Africa and the other in Detroit, were investigated, but neither was sufficiently substantiated. Both medical experts rejected the cure in Detroit, whereas only one vouched for that in South Africa. So the process of Blessed Martin, the Blessed whom so many Americans implore and venerate, has not advanced beyond the first step required for canonization. It seems most unlikely that he will be canonized during the Holy Year, as many had hoped.

#### BLESSED INNOCENT V

Pope Leo XIII equivalently beatified Blessed Innocent on March 14, 1898. His process to canonization was renewed by order of Pope Pius XII in March, 1943. When the petition was presented to the Sacred Congregation, it was with the desire and hope that Blessed Innocent's process would be that of the Extraordinary way, as had been his beatification. At the present time the Historical Section is investigating the life and works of Blessed Innocent. If its report is favorable, then perhaps his cause will advance to equivalent canonization with the added title of Doctor of the Church. It is interesting to note that Blessed Innocent's process is similar to that of St. Margaret of Hungary, whose cause he himself introduced in 1276, during the few months of his Pontificate.

## BLESSED GREGORY X

Although Blessed Gregory was not a Dominican, he was a loyal friend of the Order. As a token of its gratitude, the Dominican Order is fostering Blessed Gregory's cause. When his process was resumed on November 7, 1944, it was thought that he would be equivalently canonized. Since then, however, documents have been found which show that during the seventeenth century, canonical processes were held about miracles attributed to him. These documents are now in the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation, and when a decision is reached concerning them, it will then be determined whether Blessed Gregory's cause shall proceed to solemn or to equivalent canonization.

These four Blesseds are the most advanced of the causes for canonization. There are others, however, whose causes will be resumed when the necessary miracles are reported. Among them are Blessed Francis Capillas and Blessed Henry Suso.

Besides these Blesseds, there are three Servants of God (those who are not yet beatified) whose causes are of special interest to us. At the present time their causes are at various stages in the process of beatification. The cause of the Tonkin Martyrs is rapidly nearing completion and there is hope that they may be beatified this year. Among these twenty-five martyrs are two Bishops, Joseph D. Sanjurjo and Melchior G. Sampedro. The second cause is that of Father Hyacinth Marie Cormier, the seventy-sixth Master General of the Dominican Order, who died in 1916. His cause is making progress but there still remain many things to be accomplished before he will be beatified. The third cause has only recently been started and is as yet far from completion. It is that of Sister Margaret Hallahan, foundress of the English Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena of the Third Order of St. Dominic.

Such, in general, is the present status of the Dominican causes before the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Father Berutti urges us to help advance these causes by work and prayer. Few of us will be able to take part in the actual work of the processes; we can, however, help the causes by increasing our devotion to these Blesseds and Servants of God and joining in prayer for their canonization. It should be our desire and prayer that soon they will receive a cherished place among our glorious brothers and sisters already canonized.



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