

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*The article from Catholic vote is a brief explanation of the process of the church declaring someone to be a saint.*

*What follows is the technical text from the Vatican for those who just have to know everything.*

*A Christian becomes a saint by uniting his life to Jesus in word, sacrament, charity, even if he never receives formal declaration by the church. That should be the goal of all Christians*

*Those who are formally declared to be saints serve as examples of how to be united to Jesus and to follow him toward heaven.*

## **How to Become a Saint**



**CATHOLICVOTE**

[Elizabeth Kidney on May 28, 2024](#)



CV NEWS FEED // Everyone is called to sainthood, but the Catholic Church has conditions for being recognized as a saint. Canonization and beatification are the markers by which the Church recognizes a deceased person as having made it to heaven. What's the process, and what is the history behind it?

### What is a saint?

A saint is a dead person [one whose earthly life has ended] who during his or her life responded to God's call to holiness. The word saint is derived from the Latin word "sanctus," meaning holy.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops **identifies** saints as "persons in heaven (officially canonized or not), who lived heroically virtuous lives, offered their life for others, or were martyred for the faith, and who are worthy of imitation." There are upwards of 11,000 officially **recognized** saints in the Roman Catholic Church.

### What is the history of Catholic canonization?

In the infancy of the Catholic Church, people were declared saints through "vox populi, vox Dei," (voice of the people, voice of God) – or public acclaim.

Papal intervention in the process of canonization was not recorded until the 10th century and was formally put into practice in the 1500s during a reorganization of the **Roman Curia**. Until then, formal approval by a local bishop was required to declare a person a saint.

### What are the Modern Steps to Sainthood?

There are **three official steps** by which someone ultimately becomes a saint. The **first step is to become recognized as a “Venerable,”** a “title given to a deceased person recognized formally by the pope as having lived a heroically virtuous life or offered their life.”

The **second step involves being beatified and recognized as a “Blessed.”** For a Venerable to become a “Blessed,” there must be evidence of a miracle through the intercession of the deceased person. To be a “Blessed” the deceased must also be found to have lived a life of heroic virtue or to have died a martyr’s death.

**The final step on the path to sainthood is canonization,** which requires a second miracle following beatification.

We are all called to sainthood!

But how is a saint officially recognized in the Catholic Church?

How is someone declared a Servant of God?

The process begins when a petitioner asks the diocesan bishop to begin the investigation into the life of the particular person, which... [pic.twitter.com/Dwb4oZXhBW](https://pic.twitter.com/Dwb4oZXhBW)

— ChurchPOP (@Church\_POP) [November 1, 2023](#)

[What is the process for beatification and canonization?](#)

**Inquiry into the life of a deceased person to begin the road to sainthood typically cannot start until five years after the death of the holy man or woman.** Only the pontiff can accelerate the timeline, as was the case for St. Mother Teresa and Pope St. John Paul II. Their canonizations were speeded [sped] through and finalized – Mother Teresa’s by John Paul II and John Paul II’s by Pope Benedict XVI.

For the deceased to be considered for veneration, **the bishop of the diocese of the deceased must file a petition to the Holy See for a Cause for Beatification and Canonization.**

If there are no objections to the petition by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, then the formal inquiry or Cause moves forward and the deceased is given the title “Servant of God.”

Once a Servant of God’s life has been investigated and there is clear evidence of heroic virtue, the Congregation votes on whether to move forward to beatification. Ultimately, the Holy Father decides whether or not a Cause advances or is closed.

The process continues similarly through beatification and finally canonization.

According to [EWTN](#), in “ the Rite of Canonization the Supreme Pontiff, by an act which is protected from error by the Holy Spirit, elevates a person to the universal veneration of the Church. By canonization the Pope does not make the person a saint. Rather, he declares that the person is with God and is an example of following Christ worthy of imitation by the faithful.”

The Vatican’s official processes can be read [here](#).

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS NEW LAWS  
FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS  
promulgated in 1983

THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS  
NORMS TO BE OBSERVED IN INQUIRIES MADE BY BISHOPS  
IN THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

The Apostolic Constitution *Divinus perfectionis Magister* of January 25, 1983 set forth the procedure for the inquiries which

henceforth are to be made by Bishops in the causes of saints and likewise entrusted to this Sacred Congregation the duty of publishing particular Norms for this purpose. The Sacred Congregation has developed the following norms, which the Supreme Pontiff directed to be examined by a Plenary Meeting of the Fathers who are Members of this Congregation, which was held on June 22nd and 23rd of 1981. After consulting all the heads of the Offices of the Roman Curia, the same Pontiff approved these norms and ordered them to be published.

1. a) The petitioner advances the cause of canonization. Any member of the People of God or any group of the faithful recognized by ecclesiastical authority can exercise this function.

b) The petitioner handles the cause through a legitimately appointed postulator.

2. a) The postulator is appointed by the petitioner by means of a mandate written according to the norm of law, with the approval of the Bishop.

b) While the cause is being handled at the Sacred Congregation, the postulator, provided that he be approved by the Congregation itself, must reside in Rome.

3. a) Priests, members of Institutes of consecrated life and lay persons can exercise the function of postulator; all must be experts in theological, canonical and historical matters, as well as versed in the practice of the Sacred Congregation.

b) The first duty of the postulator is to conduct thorough investigations into the life of the Servant of God in question, in order to establish his reputation of sanctity and the importance of the cause for the Church, and then to report his findings to the Bishop.

c) The postulator is also entrusted with the duty of administering those funds offered for the cause according to the norms issued by the Sacred Congregation.

4. Through a legitimate mandate and with the consent of the petitioners, the postulator has the right to appoint others in his place who are called vice-postulators.

5. a) The Bishop competent to instruct causes of canonization is the one in whose territory the Servant of God died, unless particular circumstances, recognized as such by the Sacred Congregation, suggest otherwise.

b) In the case of an alleged miracle, the competent Bishop is the one in whose territory the event took place.

6. a) The Bishop can instruct the cause either personally or through his delegate, who is to be a priest truly expert in theological and canonical matters, as well as in historical matters, in the case of ancient causes.

b) The priest who is chosen as the promotor of justice must have the same qualities.

c) All officials, who take part in the cause, must take an oath to fulfil faithfully their duty, and are bound to maintain secrecy.

7. A cause can be recent or ancient; it is called recent if the martyrdom or virtues of the Servant of God can be proved through the oral depositions of eye witnesses; it is ancient, however, when the proofs for martyrdom or virtues can be brought to light only from written sources.

8. Whoever intends to initiate a cause of canonization is to present to the competent Bishop, through the postulator, a written petition, requesting the instruction of the cause.

9. a) In recent causes, the petition must be presented no sooner than five years after the death of the Servant of God.

b) If, however, it is presented after thirty years, the Bishop may not proceed further unless, upon investigation, he is convinced that there was no fraud in the case or deceit on the part of the petitioners in delaying the initiation of the cause.

10. The postulator must present together with the written petition:

1. in both recent and ancient causes, a biography of any historical import of the Servant of God, should such exist, or otherwise an accurate, chronologically arranged report on the life and deeds of the Servant of God, on his virtues or martyrdom, on his reputation of sanctity and of signs. Nor should anything be omitted which seems to be contrary or less favorable to the cause;  
(1)

2. an authentic copy of all the published writings of the Servant of God;

3. in recent causes only, a list of persons who can help bring to light the truth about the virtues or the martyrdom of the Servant of God, and about his reputation of sanctity or of signs. Those with contrary opinions must also be included.

11. a) Once the petition has been accepted, the Bishop is to consult with the Conference of Bishops, at least of the region, about the appropriateness of initiating the cause.

b) Furthermore, the Bishop is to publicize the petition of the postulator in his own diocese and, if he has judged it opportune, in other dioceses, with the permission of their respective Bishops, and to invite all the faithful to bring to his attention any useful information, which they might have to offer regarding the cause.

12. a) If a significant obstacle to the cause emerges from the information he has received, the Bishop is to notify the postulator about it so that he can remove that obstacle.

b) If the obstacle has not been removed and the Bishop has therefore judged that the cause should not be admitted, he is to advise the postulator, giving the reasons for his decision.

13. If the Bishop intends to initiate the cause, he is to seek the vote of two theological censors on the published writings of the Servant of God. These censors are to report whether anything is found in these same writings, contrary to faith and good morals.  
(2)

14. a) If the votes of the theological censors are favorable, the Bishop is to order that all the writings of the Servant of God, those

not yet published as well as each and every historical document, either handwritten or printed, which in any way pertain to the cause, are to be gathered.(3)

b) When such a search is to be made, especially in the case of ancient causes, experts in historical matters and in matters that pertain to archives, are to be employed.

c) After the task has been completed, the experts are to hand over to the Bishop an accurate and precise report together with the collected writings. In this report, they are to indicate and testify that they fulfilled their duty properly; to include a list of the writings and documents; to give a judgment on their authenticity and their value as well as on the personality of the Servant of God, as it appears from the same writings and documents.

15. a) Once the report has been accepted, the Bishop is to hand over to the promotor of justice or to another expert everything gathered up to that point so that he might formulate the interrogatories most effective in searching out and discovering the truth about the life of the Servant of God, his virtues or martyrdom, his reputation of holiness or of martyrdom.

b) In ancient causes, however, the interrogatories are only to consider the reputation of sanctity or martyrdom existing until the present as well as, if it be the case, the cult given to the Servant of God in more recent times.

c) In the meantime, the Bishop is to send to the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints a brief report on the life of the Servant of God and the relevance of the cause, in order to ascertain whether there is any obstacle on the part of the Holy See to the cause.

16. a) Then the Bishop or his delegate is to examine the witnesses proposed by the postulator and others to be questioned ex officio. A Notary is to be employed to transcribe the deposition of the witness, which is to be confirmed by the witness himself at the end of his testimony.



If, indeed, it is urgent that witnesses be examined lest any proofs be lost, they are to be questioned even though the gathering of the documents has not yet been completed.(4)

b) The promotor of justice is to be present at the examination of the witnesses. If, however, he was not present, the acts are to be submitted afterwards for his examination so that he can make his observations and propose anything which he judges to be necessary and opportune.

c) First of all, the witnesses are to be examined according to the interrogatories; the Bishop or his delegate, however, should not fail to propose to the witnesses other necessary or useful questions so that their statements may be put in a clearer light or any difficulties which may have emerged may be plainly resolved and explained.

17. The witnesses must be eye witnesses; if the case warrants it, second-hand witnesses may be added. All, however, must be trustworthy.

18. Blood relatives and relatives through marriage of the Servant of God are the first witnesses to be proposed as well as other friends and acquaintances.

19. In order to prove the martyrdom or the practice of virtues and the reputation of signs of the Servant of God who belonged to any institute of consecrated life, a significant number of the proposed witnesses must be from outside the Institute unless, on account of the particular life of the Servant of God, this should prove impossible.

20. Those who are not to be allowed to testify are:

1. a priest, with regard to all those things which were made known to him through the sacrament of Penance;

2. regular confessors of the Servant of God or spiritual directors, with regard also to all those things which they learned from the Servant of God in the forum of conscience outside the sacrament of Penance;

3. the postulator of the cause, during his term as postulator.

21. a) The Bishop or his delegate is to call some witnesses ex officio, who can contribute to completing the inquiry, if it be the case, particularly if they are opposed to the cause;

b) The Bishop or his delegate is also to call as ex officio witnesses those experts who conducted the investigations of the documents and wrote the relative report. They must declare under oath:

1. - that they conducted all the investigations and that they gathered all those things which pertain to the cause;

2. - that they neither changed nor destroyed any document or text.

22. a) In the case of miraculous healings, the physicians who treated the patient are to be called as witnesses.

b) If they refuse to appear before the Bishop or his delegate, the aforementioned is to see to it that they write a report, sworn if possible, about the disease and its progress, which is to be inserted into the acts, or at least their opinion is to be heard by a third party, who is then to be examined.

23. In their testimony, which is to be sworn to under oath, the witnesses must indicate the source of their knowledge of the things they assert; otherwise, their testimony is to be considered of no value.

24. If any witness prefers to give to the Bishop or his delegate a previously prepared written statement, either together with his deposition or in addition to it, such a written statement is to be accepted, provided the witness himself shall have proved by an oath that he himself wrote it and that its contents are true. It is also to be made part of the acts of the cause.

25. a) In whatever way the witnesses provide their information, the Bishop or his delegate is carefully to see to it that he always authenticates it with his signature and his seal.

b) The documents and written testimony, whether gathered by the experts or handed over by others, are to be authenticated

by the signature and seal of any notary or public official, who attests to its authenticity.

26. a) If inquiries regarding documents or witnesses must be made in another diocese, the Bishop or his delegate is to send a letter to the competent Bishop, who is to act according to the norm of these statutes.

b) The acts of this type of inquiry are to be kept in the archive of the Chancery, while a copy, made according to the norm of nos. 29 and 30, is to be sent to the Bishop, who requested the inquiry.

27. a) The Bishop or his delegate is to take the greatest care that in gathering the proofs nothing is omitted which in any way pertains to the cause, recognizing for sure that the positive outcome of a cause depends to a great extent on its good instruction.

b) Once all the proofs have been gathered, the promotor of justice is to inspect all the acts and documents so that, should he deem it necessary, he may request further inquiries.

c) The postulator is also entitled to inspect the acts so that, if it be the case, the proofs may be completed through new witnesses or documents.

28. a) Before the inquiry is concluded, the Bishop or his delegate is to inspect carefully the tomb of the Servant of God, the room in which he lived or died and, if there be any, other places where someone can display signs of cult in his honor. He is also to make a declaration on the observance of the decrees of Urban VIII regarding the absence of cult.(5)

b) A report is to be drawn up about everything which has been done and it is to be inserted into the acts.

29. a) Once the instruction has been completed, the Bishop or his delegate is to order that a transcript be made unless, in light of proven circumstances, he has already permitted this to be done during the instruction itself.

b) The transcript is to be transcribed from the original acts and made in duplicate.

30. a) Once the transcript has been finished, a comparison is to be made with the original and the notary is at least to initial each page and stamp them with his seal.

b) The original, closed and secured with seals, is to be kept in the archive of the Chancery.

31. a) The transcript of the inquiry and attached documents in duplicate, duly wrapped and secured with seals, are to be sent by a secure means to the Sacred Congregation, together with a copy of the books of the Servant of God which were examined by the theological censors and their judgment.(6)

b) If a translation of the acts and documents into a language accepted at the Sacred Congregation is necessary, two copies of the translation are to be prepared and declared authentic. These are then to be sent to Rome.

c) Furthermore, the Bishop or his delegate is to send to the Cardinal Prefect a letter testifying to the trustworthiness of the witnesses and the legitimacy of the acts.

32. The inquiry on miracles is to be instructed separately from the inquiry on virtues or martyrdom and is to be conducted according to the norms which follow.(7)

33. a) Once the Bishop competent according to norm no. 5b has accepted the petition of the postulator together with a brief but accurate report on the alleged miracle as well as those documents which pertain to the case, he is to ask for the judgment of one or two experts.

b) If he has then decided to instruct a judicial inquiry, he is to examine all the witnesses either personally or through his delegate, according to the norms established above in nos. 15 a, 16-18 and 21-24.

34. a) In the case of a cure from some disease, the Bishop or his delegate is to seek help from a physician, who is to propose questions to the witnesses in order to clarify matters according to necessity and circumstances.

b) If the person healed is still alive, he is to be examined by experts so that the duration of the healing can be ascertained.

35. A transcript of the inquiry together with attached documents is to be sent to the Sacred Congregation according to what is laid down in nos. 29-31.

36. Any solemn celebrations or panegyric speeches about Servants of God whose sanctity of life is still being legitimately examined are prohibited in Churches.

Furthermore, one must also refrain, even outside of Church, from any acts which could mislead the faithful into thinking that the inquiry conducted by the Bishop into the life of the Servant of God and his virtues or martyrdom carries with it the certitude that the Servant of God will be one day canonized.

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His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in an Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation on the 7th day of February in the year 1983, approved and ratified these norms, ordering that they be published and take effect from this very day, and are to be duly and conscientiously observed by all Bishops who instruct causes of canonization and by all others whom they concern, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even those things worthy of special mention.

Given in Rome, from the Offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on the 7th day of the month of February in the year 1983.

PIETRO Card. PALAZZINI

Prefect

TRAIAN CRISAN

Titular Archbishop of Drivasto,  
Secretary

## GENERAL DECREE ON THE CAUSES OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD WHOSE JUDGMENT IS PRESENTLY PENDING AT THE SACRED CONGREGATION

The Apostolic Constitution *Divinus perfectionis Magister* of January 25, 1983, n. 16, established that the causes of the Servants of God, whose judgment is presently pending at the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, are henceforth to proceed according to the spirit of this new law. Furthermore, it gives to this same Congregation the responsibility of establishing by a special decree the rules for handling these causes from this moment on.

In the desire to fulfill its responsibility, the Sacred Congregation has divided these causes into four categories and has established the following rules:

1) As regards "recent" causes, in which the Position on virtues or on martyrdom has already been published, the Position is to be passed on to the theological Consultors for their vote in accordance with the norm of the new law.

2) As regards those causes, in which the Observations of the Promotor of the Faith or the Response of the Patron are being prepared, every care is to be taken that all the documents that pertain to the cause are critically examined and, if the case require it, be added to the Response.

3) In other "recent" causes, once the writings of the Servant of God have been examined, one may not proceed further unless, under the guidance of the Relator of the Cause, the Position on virtues or on martyrdom has first been prepared according to the critical method, after those documents which in any way pertain to the cause have been gathered and studied.

4) As regards "historical" causes, in which the Position on virtues or on martyrdom, compiled by the Historical-hagiographical Office, has already been published, that Position, together with the votes of the Consultors of the same Office, is to

be passed to the theological Consultors for their vote according to the norm of the new law, together with any explanations, which the Relator General may judge to be necessary.

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The Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, in an Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation on the 7th day of February in the year 1983, approved all the above and ordered them to be observed from this day forward.

Given in Rome, from the Offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on the 7th day of February in the year 1983.

PIETRO Card. PALAZZINI

Prefect

TRAIAN CRISAN

Titular Archbishop of Drivasto,

Secretary

(1) Cfr. Const. Apost. Divinus perfectionis Magister, n. 2.1.

(2) Cfr. ibid., 2.2.

(3) Cfr. ibid., n. 2.3.

(4) Cfr. ibid., n. 2.4.

(5) Cfr. ibid., n. 2.6.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid., n. 2,5°.