

## How are Saints Made?

### Overview

Long before the beginning of the Church, people had a devotion to their departed loved ones. In some societies their ancestors were actually worshipped.

### What is a Saint?

Do you know what the difference is between Saints and sinners?

Sinners **think** that they are Saints while Saints **know** that they are sinners! We are all called to be Saints and to be holy. During our time on earth it may not always



be the easiest thing to do but this is what God expects of us. Everyone in heaven is a Saint – by definition – while some are considered by the Catholic Church to be so exceptional in their earthly lives that that are declared to be Saints. In the strictest sense people canonized by the church as persons who have lived a holy life, who now share the Beatific Vision – that is face to face experience of God – may be publicly venerated by the faithful. The key word here is venerating not worship.

### What is the process for Sainthood?

Sometimes we hear that someone is so holy in their earthly lives that we call them “living saints”. Mother Theresa of Calcutta is one of those and also Pope John II. Some define a Saint as anyone who has died and gone to heaven. While this is true and what the church has taught for thousands of years – the declaration of sainthood is reserved for the Pope. As one would expect this is not easy and generally takes many years - sometimes centuries before it occurs. While it was not

always this way the church is very careful and deliberates during this process. To become canonized as a saint requires three steps in the process. as follows:

**(1) Petition:** The person is introduced to the local Bishop by a petitioner who writes an introduction. The Bishop may request an investigation of the life and writings of the person. Alleged miracles – a requirement for this step – are investigated by experts. Some times this takes many years.

**(2) Beatification:** This second step occurs after the paper work has been examined and accepted by the **Congregation for the Causes of the Saints**. It declares that the person is now venerable and it is a public ceremony which declares the person’s holiness at a Papal mass. It further authorizes a prayer to the person beatified. At this point the person is not yet enrolled in the universal calendar of the church.

**(3) Canonization:** After a person has been beatified, further miracles may occur and must be verified. Upon satisfactory completion of this period and step the Pope issues a **“bull of canonization”** now declaring the person to be a Saint. The person may now be venerated by the faithful and is enrolled in the universal calendar. By the way, the day of the calendar assigned to a canonized Saint is the date in which they died – not when they were born. This practice emphasizes the importance in our belief of a life after death.

Once a person has been declared as a Saint a feast day is assigned and churches or shrines may be dedicated to the Saint. Generally, the day assigned is the date that the person died. Keep in mind that our church teaches that death is a celebration – a uniting of us with our God.