

Four steps to sainthood

The path to sainthood is a long, thorough process that can take several years to complete. Here is a summary of the path to canonization.



Servant of God

Typically, a person is dead five years before being considered for sainthood. A bishop oversees an initial investigation and forms a tribunal. The tribunal interviews witnesses and the candidate undergoes examination by a panel of theologians. The results of the investigation are forwarded to the Vatican, which grants a *Nihil Obstat*, meaning nothing hinders, and the candidate is deemed a Servant of God.

Venerable

An advocate for the cause, called a Postulator, takes charge of the process and must prove that the candidate lived "heroic virtues." He examines documents and hears testimonies and delivers his findings to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican. Upon their approval, the candidate receives the title of Venerable.

Blessed

A canonical investigation is conducted to verify one miracle that can be attributed to the candidate's intercession. In most cases, miracles are miraculous cures. Alternatively, the Pope can make a declaration of martyrdom. After verification of a miracle or a declaration of martyrdom the candidate is beatified and called Blessed.

Saint

An investigation is conducted to verify a second miracle (or, in the case of a Martyr, a first miracle) that can be attributed to the intercession of the Blessed. The second miracle normally must occur after beatification. After verifying the miracle, the candidate is canonized and declared a Saint.