



## “How does someone get to be declared a Saint?”

- ❖ To determine sainthood, the Greek Orthodox Church goes by general public opinion, and other (non-Catholic) Christian sects are fairly casual about who they believe is in heaven. But the Catholic Church knows well that abuses can arise when sainthood is determined by popularity without a clear procedure. “In fact, the Church is the only religious organization in the world that has a regular, legalistic process for determining who’s with God.” (145)
- ❖ The declaration of sainthood is reserved to the Pope, who abides by a procedure that is long, complicated, and very strict.
- ❖ The commissions charged with investigating the issue begin by looking at a person with a suspicious eye. The more renowned the sanctity of a faithful departed one, the longer it will usually take for an official decision. The dust must settle, and usually, the decision waits until everyone who personally knew the deceased in question also dies. That way, the evidence will stand on its own “uncolored by personal affection or hostility.” (145)
- ❖ One of the things commissions are reputed to look for is “evidence of joy,” oftentimes present in a saint alongside some of the severest of penance.
- ❖ Another thing the commissions look for is strictest obedience to the Church and her laws. “True, many saints have persuaded certain hard-nosed prelates to change their minds, but they obeyed those prelates even as they changed them.” (146)
- ❖ The primary thing one looks for in a saint is “heroic virtue”—the practice of all Christian virtues in a truly perfect and exemplary manner. “Martyrdom is one good sign of heroic virtue, but even that has to be proved. It’s not enough to be a Christian (in full communion with the Church) and to be skinned alive by someone who isn’t. There’s got to be proof that the killing was done *in odium fidei*, in hatred of the Faith.” (147)
- ❖ “Heroic Virtue” also comes in quieter varieties. Saints like St. Catherine Labouré demonstrate this. There is an immense importance of “quiet heroism, of fighting the good fight inside yourself every day, without making a fuss about it.” (147) After all, how very few of the saints populating heaven remain hidden with God, the extent of their holiness still kept from our earthly eyes?
- ❖ The final requirement for sainthood is MIRACLES. The miracles have to count after a person’s death in order to count toward canonization. The idea is that if God wants it known that this person is in heaven, he will allow an extraordinary event in answer to prayers to the candidate. Miracles are subject to the full rigor of science, history, medicine and theology—to assure that this event did not happen due to natural causes... all of which takes time.

- ❖ “Then, if you’ve got your evidence of sanctity, you’re deceased, and you’ve pass all the inquiries (including certifiable miracles), you get declared ‘Blessed.’ If further evidence comes to light, you get put through the process again, and then, if you pass, you go to full canonization.” (148)

*The above material uses excerpts from Kevin Orlin Johnson’s Expressions of the Catholic Faith (New York: Random House, Inc./Ballantine Books, 1994), pp. 144-149. Page numbers for direct quotes are cited in parenthesis immediately following the quotes.*