

Step Three: Movement Toward Beatification

In the April and May 2019 issues of *FamilyOnline*, I presented the first two steps of becoming a Saint: Being named a Servant of God and being named Venerable. This third installment will deal with the next step of beatification.

Once an individual has been declared a venerable, the next step is to search for miraculous events, usually unexplained cures or healings that happened in people's lives. The key is the individual's strong belief that it was through the venerable's intercession which enabled the miracle to take place. The named venerable's intercession allowed the person to experience the grace of God through the miracle.

The miracle then needs to be investigated to determine authentication. The diocese where the miracle may have taken place is the primary entity responsible for this investigation. Canon lawyers have been used to interview eye witnesses who include family members and other persons who know the individual. Medical, scientific, psychiatric, and theological experts are consulted, and evidence is given to them for their professional opinion. If a scientific, medical, or psychological explanation exists for what had only appeared to be a miracle, then it isn't an authentic miracle. Only immediate, spontaneous and inexplicable phenomena are up for consideration as authentic miracles. If this investigation results in the belief that this miracle may be authentic, then all the documentation from the diocese is sent to Rome to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for further study.

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints will gather its own medical experts (who can be Catholic and non-Catholic) to study the documentation to make its final determination about the authenticity of the miracle. This team does not actually declare the cure to be a miracle but will state that the cure does not have any scientific or medical explanation. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints theologians are then responsible for pronouncing the cure a miracle. This decision is then sent to the Pope for final approval.

This is the typical process for beatification for those venerables who died naturally of old age or may have died due to sickness. This was the case for Blessed Chaminade and Blessed Adèle. But for individuals who died due to their faithful and heroic stances in times of conflict, they may be declared blessed because of the faith they professed at the time of their deaths. These individuals are considered martyrs for the faith and the investigation into a first miracle is not needed as was the case for our Marianist blessed martyrs from Spain and Austria. But, of course, an investigation had to occur for these men to determine if their deaths were the result of their faithful and heroic stance at the moments of their deaths.

Once the Papal approval is received then the preparations for the beatification take place. The date and place is determined. Traditionally, the beatification ceremony has occurred in St. Peter's Square in Rome but more recently beatifications have taken place in the place where the blessed has lived and died. Blessed Adèle's ceremony took place in Agen, France on June 10, 2018. By doing this, in my view, it gave the diocese a sense of ownership in the preparations and the people felt closer to the life and story of Blessed Adèle.