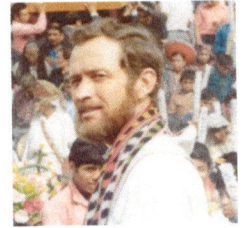


Servant of God Father Stanley Rother



Process of Canonization

Making of a Saint

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All souls in heaven are Saints. Formerly, the Catholic Church declared "Saints" as people who were outstanding in holiness either because they died as witnesses for the Faith (Martyrs) or they lived a life of heroic virtue (Confessors). The exact number of canonized Saints is unknown because not all recognized as Saints have been officially canonized. For the first half of the Catholic Church's history, Saints were canonized in various ways. Today, the process of canonization is very complex and thorough. A record number of Saints have been canonized in the past thirty years, and about 2000 candidates are being evaluated today.

SERVANT OF GOD:

The official process of canonization, called a Cause, does not begin until five years after the death of the candidate. This period of time permits the Church to verify whether the candidate enjoys a true and widespread reputation of holiness and of intercessory prayer. When a Cause is officially begun the candidate receives the title "Servant of God".

The first stage of the process begins with the official opening of the Cause by the Bishop of the Diocese* where the Servant of God died, and the appointment of a Postulator, to assist in its promotion. The Bishop then nominates various Officials for a Tribunal, to gather all the evidence for and against the Canonization. Two theologians examine the Servant of God's writings to make sure that there is nothing in them contrary to the Faith and Moral teaching of the Church. Afterwards they proceed to taking the testimony of witnesses who knew well the candidate.

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD:

The second step toward canonization starts when all the evidence is studied by the Congregation for Causes of Saints in Rome. If the evidence reveals true holiness exercised by the Servant of God, the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation informs the Pope that the Servant of God either was a true Martyr or has lived a life of extraordinary and heroic virtue. The Pope then orders the Congregation to issue the Decree either of Martyrdom or of Heroic Virtue, and the Servant of God is given the title "Venerable". This means that the Servant of God either died as a true Martyr for Christ or led a life of heroic virtue and, is worthy of imitation by the Faithful.

BLESSED:

When the Servant of God has been declared a Martyr he or she may be beatified, that is, declared "Blessed". If, on the other hand, the Servant of God has been declared to have lived a life of heroic virtue, it must be proven that one miracle has been granted by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God. Then, he or she is declared "Blessed." For a healing to be considered a true miracle, a tribunal to gather all the evidence is established in the Diocese where the event took place. It must be determined that there is no scientific explanation for the cure and that the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God is proven. The Congregation for Causes of Saints conducts its study and judgment of the cure by the testimony of medical experts that no scientific reason can explain the recovery, and of theological consultants to verify that the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God was requested. Once again the conclusions are presented to the Pope who alone can declare that the event is a true miracle. Then the Venerable Servant of God may be beatified. When someone is declared "Blessed", public ecclesiastical veneration is permitted by the Pope but only in the Diocese or Country, or Religious Community to which the Blessed belonged.