

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

CHINA

The Canonization

of Blessed

JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE

professed priest

of the Congregation of the Mission

a martyr

(1802-1840)

DECREE ON THE MIRACLE

Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre was born on 6 January 1802 in a place called Le Puech, in the diocese of Cahors, in France. Having entered the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul he took his perpetual vows in 1820 and was ordained a priest in 1825 (1). Ten years later he received permission to go to China as a missionary, where he quickly got involved in the apostolate. When persecution of the Catholic religion broke out he was arrested on 15 September and horribly tortured. On 11 September 1840, in the town of Wu Ehang (2), he was sentenced to death and handed over to be hanged.

He was recognised as being a true martyr for the faith and shortly after his death the Cause for his canonization was begun, and on 10 November 1889 Pope Leo XIII declared him Blessed.

With a view to Canonization, the Postulator of the Cause (3) re-submitted for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints the rejected extraordinary cure which took place in 1889 in the town of Heverlé, near Leuven in Belgium, and which was attributed to the intercession of the Blessed. The cure concerned Sister Gabrielle Isoré, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of

Charity of St Vincent de Paul. In February 1889, at the age of 38, she began to experience pains in her feet. The following month these pains extended to her lumbar regions and then to her neck. They were not, indeed, continuous, but at times were so severe that they brought tears to her eyes and interfered with her sleeping and even her breathing. Her condition got worse, and eventually she was completely affected in the lower limbs and also in the upper right side, with trouble also beginning in the upper left side. Not only was the Sister unable to get up and stand, she could not even be turned round in bed. She also suffered from insomnia, constipation, retention of urine, mental confusion and great difficulty in eating. In September there was a short improvement, but then everything got worse and at the beginning of November the patient was in danger of death, even in the opinion of the doctor. The situation had gone beyond all hope from human effort. The Sister's superior therefore wrote to many religious houses of her Institute asking them to start a novena of prayer in honour of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre asking for the cure of Sister Gabrielle. She also arranged for a priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus) to celebrate a novena of masses. During the novena of prayer, in which she joined, the patient's condition worsened. But on 10 November, at four o'clock in the morning, when the patient woke up, she found herself, to her surprise, completely cured. So much so, in fact, that she was able to get up out of bed by herself and, without help, go to the chapel to receive Communion. That same day the Venerable Perboyre was being beatified.

The cure was immediately believed to be extraordinary, and in 1892 the canonical process concerning it took place in the Malines curia. The authority and import of this process were later recognised by the Congregation of Rites on 9 March 1896; a supplementary process of the same curia took place in the same year. In 1901 the Antepreparatory Congregation took place, and in 1903 the Preparatory Congregation in which affirmative, conditional and negative sentences were declared. After this there was a long period of silence. So, not very long ago the Postulator of the Cause, with a view to the canonization of the Blessed, asked the Holy Father that the rejected extraordinary happening be re-examined. On 17 November 1994 the Medical Council unanimously agreed that the cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré's "ascending polyradiculoneuritis" had been instantaneous, total, permanent and inexplicable according to scientific knowledge. On 21 February 1995 the Special Congress of Theological Consultors took place and on the following 4 April the Ordinary Session of Cardinals and Bishops took place, with the Most Eminent Cardinal Edouard Gagnon as *Ponens* of the Cause. And at both meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, an affirmative answer was given to the proposed question as to whether there had been a miracle worked by divine power.

When an accurate report on all these matters had been given to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, His Holiness, acceding to the request of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the above-mentioned extraordinary cure be drawn up.

When this had been duly done, the Cardinals were summoned today by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect who is also the *Ponens* of the Cause, and with me, the Bishop Secretary of the Congregation, and the others who are customarily called together, and in their presence, the Most Holy Father declared: *There is question of a miracle worked by God, through the intercession of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre, a professed Priest of the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul, in the matter of the instantaneous, total and permanent cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré's "ascending polyradiculoneuritis".*

His Holiness wished this decree be published and be reported in the *acta* of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome 6 April A.D. 1995.

ANGELO Cardinal FELICI, *Prefect*

Seal + here

+ Edward Novak, tit. archbishop of
Luni, *Secretary*

(THOMAS DAVITT CM, translator)

Translator's notes:

1. There is documentary evidence that JGP was ordained in 1826, not 1825 as in the Decree.
2. The town where he was executed is Wu Chang, not Wu Ehang as in the Decree.

3. For the Latin *Postulatio Causae* I have used *The Postulator of the Cause* as there is no usual word in English for *postulatio* in this context.