

The Causes for Canonization in the Vincentian Family

*Roberto D'Amico, CM
Postulator General*

The Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, appointed me Postulator General for the causes for canonization in the double Vincentian Family on 16 January 1995.

The Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints accepted and confirmed my appointment on 9 May.

A few days later, on 17 May, the Preparatory Commission for the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre met in Rome, and I began immediately to get involved in a work which, little by little, I am finding to be "the finest and loftiest ministry in the Church", as Paul VI said to a group of postulators, since its aim is to bring out the glory and holiness of God through the heroic holiness of our brothers and sisters.

******The canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre has deeply affected us: with about 7,500 people, including 447 confreres and 1140 Daughters of Charity, together with almost all the Provincials, here in Rome together we really feel that we are one big family united by the love of Christ and the poor.

On 3 June, during an audience in the Paul VI Hall for pilgrims who had come for the canonization, the Holy Father said: "Priests of the Mission and members of the Vincentian Family, I urge you strongly to preserve the love for the Chinese people which animated your brother John Gabriel, to keep alive among yourselves the same desire to preach the Good News of the Lord Jesus there... In our world, which is characterised by so many different sorts of poverty, misery and despair, the Vincentian Family, which you represent here, must generously continue the work started by Monsieur Vincent. Priests of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, lay associations which he founded or which were born of his spirit, present-day conditions invite you to coordinate in an ever better way the various services which you give. The fine figure of John Gabriel Perboyre remains a source of missionary inspiration, a call to advance further along the roads of the gospel".

A canonization cannot be regarded merely as a reason for boasting or triumphalism before the Church as a whole, but rather as a great responsibility for living in holiness like John Gabriel, our brother. He lived out his faith, hope, and charity so heroically that he became an intercessor and leader for us, a team urged on to be totally committed in our time to our charism as evangelizers, a charism which leads to holiness.******

This Report may be divided into three sections: our beati who are awaiting canonization; the Servants of God whose beatification process is under way; those whose beatification process has only just begun or which will soon begin.

The beatified

1. **Blessed Francis Regis Clet**, *beatified 27 May 1900.*

John Gabriel Perboyre has worked a miracle in favour of the man who was an inspiration for him in the Chinese Mission in so far as the Pope has been requested to go ahead with the canonization of the 120 others who have been martyred in China, following the canonization of John Gabriel himself.

On March 5th last the President of the Taiwan Bishops' Conference, in an audience with the Holy Father, complained that the Pope had abandoned the Chinese (as he put it), in so far as he was canonizing someone from the western world while the beatified martyrs of Chinese nationality were not being canonized. In this way he was expressing the annoyance of the Taiwanese bishops on the one hand and the authorities of nationalist China on the other at this "intrusion" by the Vatican.

There have been days when, in the opinion of some monsignors in the Secretariat of State, the canonization of John Gabriel was in doubt.

So, on 20 April, we, the seven postulators for the martyrs, Chinese or killed in China, signed a request to the Holy Father that all the causes be joined in one.

2. **Blessed Mary Magdalen Fontaine and her Three Companions, Daughters of Charity**, *beatified 13 June 1920.*

3. **Blessed Louis Joseph François and John Henry Gruyer**, *beatified 17 October 1926.*

4. **Blessed Peter René Rogue**, *beatified 10 May 1934.*

5. **Blessed Mary Ann Vaillot and Odile Baumgarten**, *beatified 19 February 1984.*

6. **Blessed Ghebre-Michael**, *beatified 3 October 1926.*

The work of the Postulator, as is generally known, is, in the case of the beati, to pursue, with the Congregation for the Saints, the question of the miracle needed for canonization. But the matter of praying to the beati for such miracles cannot be confided solely to the Postulator.

Quite the contrary. It is up to all who have devotion to the beati to make them known, to pray with confidence to them, and to let the Postulator know of anything about which authentic documentation needs to be obtained. Knowledge about favours which have been granted can be very useful for spreading devotion, but it is obvious that, from the juridical point of view, a miracle is necessary. This means, as is well known, a) a happening beyond the natural laws, b) instantaneous, c) with no after effects or relapse.

This is why it is necessary to "cultivate" devotion to our beati by means of sufficient knowledge about their martyrdom, their lives, and about graces or miracles received from God through their intercession.

The Venerable

1. Frédéric Ozanam, (1813-1853)

Principal founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Decree on the heroicity of his virtues: 6 July 1993.

Following the proclamation of this decree the Postulator put before the Congregation for the Causes of Saints a case of a cure attributed to the intercession of this Venerable, in order to have its miraculous nature recognised with a view to beatification.

The case is that of an eighteen month old Brazilian child, *Fernando Benedetto Ottoni*, afflicted with "a serious form of diphtheria which endangered his overall health", and who was cured on 1 February 1926 in Nova Friburgo, Brazil. The person in question is still alive.

At a meeting of the Medical Commission on 22 June 1995 there was a unanimous affirmative decision on the natural and scientific inexplicability of the cure of the little boy.

The Theological Consultors, at an Ordinary Meeting on 24 November 1995, unanimously agreed affirmatively on the miraculous nature of the cure and on its attribution to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Frédéric Ozanam.

On 21 May 1996, at an Ordinary Congregation, the bishops and cardinals gave a unanimous decision on the trustworthiness and solid foundation of the proofs put forward concerning the miracle attributed to the Venerable Ozanam. On June 9 the Pro-Prefect presented the decision of the meeting of the cardinals to the Holy Father.

Servants of God

1. Marc Antonio Durando, CM.

Born in Mondovì in 1801, died in Turin in 1880.

Co-founder of the Sisters of Jesus the Nazarene.

(The cause of the Foundress of these Sisters, **Luisa BORGOTTI**, 1803-1877, is also entrusted to our Postulator).

The cause of MARC ANTONIO DURANDO was very advanced, having reached the stage of the Meeting of the Cardinals, with a weighty Positio, in 1979. That is the final meeting before the proclamation by the Pope of the heroicity of virtues. But many years

have passed since in the preparation of a further in-depth study which was asked for. This examines his dealings with Mother Verna, whose cause for beatification is also in train.

Even if the Processes Concerning the Miracles are not dealt with until after the proclamation on the heroicity of virtues, it is very good that we already have submitted to the Congregation of the Saints two Processes concerning two miracles, one in Turin in 1936 and the other in San Remo in 1946.

2. Sister Giuseppina Nicòli, DC.

Born in Casatisma (Pavia) in 1863, died in Cagliari 31 December 1924.

The Summarium has already been printed, while the draft of the *Positio super virtutibus* is now ready, awaiting delivery to the printers.

We also have two miracles attributed to her, the Processes having been carried out in Milan (1936) and Turin (1942).

3. Gianbattista Manzella, CM.

Born in Soncino (Cremona) in 1855, died in Sassari (Sardinia) in 1937.

I went to Sassari in November last year for the celebration of the anniversary of his holy death. The church was overflowing, with about twenty priests concelebrating, with the local bishop present. All this, 58 years after his death.

Unfortunately, we know that there is a reponatur of the former Holy Office, about which my predecessors Alberto Piras and Giuseppe Guerra have already spoken at previous Assemblies.

4. Sister Rosalie Rendu DC, (1786-1856).

She helped and guided Frédéric Ozanam in his charitable work (Cf Ozanam).

The *Positio super virtutibus* was presented to the Congregation of the Saints in December 1992. On 31 March 1994 the Historical Consultors gave a unanimous affirmative decision on the *Positio* from the historical and investigative point of view.

It is necessary to await our turn for the Meeting of Theologians, where Servants of God from countries "behind the curtain" and married lay persons have a privileged track.

5. Salvatore Micalizzi, CM.

Born in Naples in 1856, died there in 1937.

The Informative Diocesan process (in Naples) finished in 1960.

The approval of his Writings took place on 2 March 1974. The *Summarium* has already been printed, while the *Positio*, needed to obtain the declaration on the heroicity of virtues, is being slowly got ready.

6. **Our Martyrs of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)**

TERUEL

- 1) VELASCO TOBAR Fortunato
- 2) PÉREZ NEBREDA Leoncio
- 3) AGUIRRE BILBAO Luìs

SIGÜENZA-GUADALAJARA

- 4) RODRIGUEZ GONZALEZ Ireneo
- 5) CERMEÑO BARCELO Gregorio
- 6) VILUMBRALES FUENTE Vicente
- 7) PASCUAL PASCUAL Narciso

OVIEDO

- 8) GRANADO PRIETO Pelayo-José
- 9) GARCIA SANCHEZ Amado
- 10) ATANES CASTRO Ricardo
- 11) GUTIÉRREZ MORAL Andrés-Avelino
- 12) PALLARÉS IBAÑEZ Tomas
- 13) PASTOR VICENTE Vicente
- 14) GONZALEZ CRESPO Salustiano

URGEL

- 15) CARMANIU Y MERCADER Antonio

The *Summarium* has already been printed. Work is continuing on the draft of the *Positio*. As you know, a miracle is not required for the beatification of martyrs, nor is it necessary to prove heroicity of virtues. All that is required is clear proof of *martyrdom* because of *odium fidei*.

7. **John Francis Gnidovec, CM**, bishop of Skopje in former Yugoslavia (1873-1939)

The *Summarium* of both the depositions and documentation has already been printed.

The *Informatio* is in course of preparation. It is expected to be submitted to the Congregation of the Saints this autumn.

8. **Antonio Ferreira Viçoso, CM**, (Portuguese), bishop of Mariana, Brazil (1844-1875)

The diocese of Mariana has undertaken the responsibility of being the "actor" (sponsor) of the Cause.

Work on the Positio is at last going ahead in a serious and competent way, and it is hoped that by the end of this year it can be submitted for examination by the Historical Consultors. Their task is to make a declaration on the quality of the documentation as well as on its completeness and adequacy for the purposes of the Cause. Their opinion provides a guarantee to the theologians that there is a solid historical foundation on which to base a statement on the merits of the Cause.

9. Mother Justa Dominguez De Viaduretta, DC.

Born in Tafalla (Navarra) 2 November 1875, died in Madrid 18 December 1958.
Visitatrix of St. Vincent's Province, Madrid, from 24 July 1932 till her death.

The Process was begun in Madrid on 12 November 1991 in the chapel of the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity (St. Vincent's Province). It concluded on 2 December 1993.

The *Summarium* of witnesses and documentation has already been printed last April, and work is in hand on the Positio.

Meanwhile, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Process has been concluded on a miracle of 1972, concerning Sister Prudencia Zuazo DC.

10. The Daughters of Charity, Martyrs of the Spanish Civil War.

The Daughters of Charity have also requested, and been granted, the opening of the Diocesan Process on their martyrs.

Sister Josefa Martinez Pèrez and 12 Companions.

The Process opened with the first session in Archbishop's House, Valencia, on 25 November 1994. The diocesan investigation finished on 22 May 1996. The Roman phase began on 3 June 1996.

Current Diocesan investigations

1. Sister Clemência (Francisca Benícia) Oliveira DC

Born in Redençao 23 August 1896, died in Baturitè 2 July 1966.

The Daughters of Charity of the Fortaleza Province have been appointed Actores (Sponsors).

On 6 September 1995 I was present in Baturitè, in the diocese of Fortaleza, for the opening of the Diocesan Investigation, preparing all the documentation and nominations, because the Cardinal Archbishop of the diocese had been moved and the Vicar Apostolic was unfamiliar with such affairs.

Forthcoming Investigations

1. **Mgr Emilio Francisco Lisson Chaves CM** (1872-1961)

Archbishop of Lima 1918-1931. His remains were repatriated from Spain to Lima cathedral on 24 July 1991. Cf. *Vincentiana* 33 (1991) pp. 261-265.

The Archbishop of Lima, as Actor (sponsor), asked us to be Postulator. The Cause, however, promises to be very complicated because of so many situations to be investigated and clarified.

2. **Sister Anna Cantalupo, DC**

Born in Naples 3 September 1888, died in Catania 17 March 1983.

There is the "*fama sanctitatis*", especially in Catania where this Neapolitan Daughter of Charity always lived, becoming the landmark for all charitable activity. We hope to start the Diocesan Investigation soon.

3. **William Slattery, CM**

Born in Baltimore 7 May 1895, died in Philadelphia 10 August 1982. Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission 1947-1968.

The death of Fr. Dirvin, who was preparing a biography, has interrupted this important work.

At the same time there is a feeling among confreres of his Province that our confrere's holiness is out of date, and for that reason he could not be put forward as a model for our time. In my opinion holiness has values which are eternal, transcending the period in which a person lived.

Besides, I would like to remind you that the Church requires, as a first condition, that there be "*fama sanctitatis*", which means that we have to show that at least some group, or diocese, or Congregation, is interested. So it is not enough that "*there is no difficulty*", or that "*there is nothing against it*". Some positive and constructive commitment is required.

Commitment and Collaboration

The tradition in the Community to have the honours of the altar given only to St. Vincent has by now, I believe, completely disappeared; and this has happened for theological reasons. The canonization of a saint is, above all, a giving of glory to the truly holy Father, who shows his holiness through the holiness of his children who, placed on the lampstand illuminate the Church, the "locus" of all holiness, and the Vincentian Community, a family called to holiness.

The Postulator General must involve himself in the study and promotion of our Causes, but without taking the place of the *irreplaceable* interest of the Community.

One of the basic essential requirements of the Causes is the *fama sanctitatis*. This is a technical term: we are talking of interest, care, collaboration, favourable ground.

Someone may say: but if they are canonized there will be interest, and these Servants of God will fulfil the role of example; but looking at it the other way round, the Church will not canonize persons who do not already fulfil the role of examples and landmarks.

It is up to us, then, to see that virtues practised to a heroic degree by our confreres are not like a light hidden under a bushel, but that they shine out so that others, as well as ourselves, may see what is to be done, and that *glory be given to the Father who is in heaven*.

Here are some practical things which can be done to spread this interest throughout our Community:

1. It is necessary, at least in those Provinces where a Diocesan Investigation has already begun, that a Vice-Postulator be appointed who, in conjunction with the Postulator General, would animate the confreres under this heading.
2. It is important that, at least in those Provinces which have a Servant of God, there be *prayer*, for giving glory to God through the evidence of the holiness of the Servant of God, and remembrance of the day of his holy death by *celebrations or conferences*.
3. For keeping the fama sanctitatis in the public eye it is very useful to avail of the mass media, for example pictures, brochures (flyers), information sheets, slides, videocassettes, etc.

All this, while it sets in motion a deepening of our acquaintance with confreres who have gone on to the "Mission in heaven", serves to strengthen our faith and to lead us to live according to the spirit of holiness which is present in our Community.

Rome, 7 May 1996

(Thomas Davitt CM Translator)