

REFORMS IN THE CANONIZATION PROCESS SINCE 1983

Cherian Thunduparampil CMI*

Abstract

The *Normae* promulgated by St. John Paul II in 1983 continues to govern the canonization process. The progress and advancements that have been happening since 1983, both in the Church and outside, along with the difficulties and issues encountered by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in the application of the above-mentioned norms, prompted the competent authorities to enact reforms into the current process of canonization. This article, paying homage to Prof. Dr. George Nedungatt SJ, my teacher, and guide, introduces and presents such important reforms in the field of the Canonization process.

Key Words: Norms, reform, beatification, canonization, rite, fund, offer (of life).

Introduction

As we pay homage to the veteran canonist, Prof. Dr. George Nedungatt SJ, and look into the person, particularly the scholar in him, I recall and appreciate the rich legacy of his love for knowledge, his hard work to further deepen it, the effort he took and the linguistic proficiency he had to scientifically and systematically diffuse the same to the posterity. His publications speak volumes of the same.

* Cherian Thunduparampil, born in 1964 in Pachai (Kerala), ordained priest (1994) in the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate Congregation, holds a licentiate (1997) and Doctorate in Oriental Canon Law (Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 2001) with specialization on the Process of Canonization and a diploma on the same (from Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Rome, 1998). He served DVK, Bangalore as Controller of Examinations, professor and Director of the Institute of Oriental Canon Law, and professor at PIO, Rome; the Master of theology Students (2003-2006 and 2010). He was a parish priest for 5 years and the defender of the bond at the archdiocesan marriage tribunal, Arch Diocese of Bangalore and Managing Editor of Dharmaram Journals, as also the founding chief Editor (2010-2020) of *Iustitia, Dharmaram Journal of Canon Law*. Currently, he serves as the Procurator and Postulator General of the CMI Congregation, in Rome.

He worked hard and made others also work. His work and study culture is an incentive for everyone interested in academics. I recollect the criticism I encountered from some of my colleagues as I chose him to be the director of my doctoral dissertation because he was more demanding and made his students work hard. Yes, it is true. However, at the end of the work, one can enjoy immense satisfaction from such training and hard work. The end product itself would prove it.

He was a motivator as well. I remember when I finished the initial stage of my dissertation, he took the initiative to publish the result of the first part of my research with slight modifications to meet the requirements of publication. That was my first serious and scientific publication. On the occasion of his posthumous 90th birthday, I would like to honour him by updating the work I accomplished under his direction and guidance.

1. Previous Legislation of 1917

Till 1983 the process of canonization was guided by the norms established by the Code of Canon Law of 1917 (CIC 1917), which for the first time, collected and presented scientifically and systematically the norms that governed the process till then. This Code dedicated 242 canons to govern the process of canonization in detail, divided into diocesan and apostolic processes. During the interim period between 1917 and 1983, different Pontiffs introduced some reforms at different times.

The scope of this article is to present the reforms and modifications that were introduced after the significant reform effected by St. John Paul II in 1983, abrogating the hitherto prevailing norms on the canonization process in the 1917 Code of Canon Law and those that the popes emanated during the interim period.

2. The *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983).

Pope John Paul II promulgated the new Code of Canon Law.¹ In the new Code, we do not see a detailed treatment regarding the causes of the saints. Canon 1403 directly deals with the causes of saints in two paragraphs:

¹ John Paul II promulgated the new Code on 25 January 1983. The legislation came into force on 27 November 1983, after 10 months of its promulgation.

The first paragraph declares that a particular pontifical law will regulate the causes of beatification and canonization. At the same time, the second paragraph makes it clear that this particular law has to consider the general norms established by the Code of 1983 each time the special law makes reference to the latter and when the very nature of the matter requires the application of the general norms. CIC c. 1403 §2 states: "The provisions of this Code are also applied to these cases whenever the special pontifical law remits an issue to the universal law, or whenever norms are involved which of their very nature apply also to these cases." As per the last canon of the Latin Code, the salvation of the souls, "*salus animarum*" is the supreme law in the Church (CIC c. 1752).

3. The *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (1990).

As the Latin Code of 1983, the Oriental Code that was promulgated by the same Pontiff John Paul II on 18 April 1990 and came into force in 1991, canon 1057 states, "in the Causes of the Servants of God for their canonization as saints the special norms determined by the Roman Pontiff are to be observed."

Both the new Codes, CIC and CCEO, in vigour cover the matter in just one canon each, making reference to a separate body of norms governing the same process. The legislator, thus, entrusted the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints² with the task of making special norms for the process.

4. The Great Reform of 1983

From the beginning of the early Church, the faithful used to venerate the holy men and women who tried to follow the perfection of their master Jesus, even by breaking their bodies and shedding their blood for the sake of faith in Jesus. It was part of Christian worship. The process of declaring them saints was simple at the beginning, and the complexity we see today emerged in the course of time, also in view of avoiding any kind of abuse in such a grave matter. With the

² Pope Francis, Ap. Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* on the Roman Curia and its Service to the Church in the World, 22 March 2022. With this reform, abrogating the *Pastor Bounus* the Holy Father has changed the names of the departments of Roman Curia, especially the Congregations have been renamed as Dicastery.

apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, Pope John Paul II reformed the whole process of canonization.

4.1 The Ap. Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* (DPM)³

Simultaneous to the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law of 1983, Pope John Paul II promulgated on 25 January 1983 the apostolic constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* (DPM), which regulates the process related to the causes of beatification and canonization. This, in turn, abrogated all the previous norms and regulations with needed modifications and amendments. According to the new legislation, there are two main phases in the cause of canonization, one taking place in the local Church and the other at the Vatican in two stages. DPM gives general guidelines as to i) what the Diocesan bishops are to do, ii) who the officials of the Congregation and what each one's functions are, and finally, iii) what are the procedures that happen at the Congregation phase of each cause.

4.2 Diocesan Inquiry: The "Norms to be Observed in the Inquiries Conducted by the Bishops in the Causes of Saints."⁴

In order to assist those who are responsible for instructing the diocesan inquiry, the Holy Father entrusted the Congregation for the Causes of Saints with the task of establishing special norms for the diocesan inquiry. Thus all that the competent diocesan bishop should do to instruct a cause of beatification or canonization are contained in the "Norms to be observed in the inquiries conducted by the bishop in the causes of saints" established by the Congregation and approved by the Holy Father on 7 February 1983.

St. Pope John Paul II effected a reform of the beatification and canonization process in 1983, which is substantially the juridical norms governing the said process in the Catholic Church till today. Here below, I present the changes introduced since 1983.

5. New Norms and Documents since 1983

Today, after almost 40 years of its promulgation, we see that many changes have happened and are still happening in the Church and

³ John Paul II, Ap. Const. *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, AAS 75 (1983) 349-355.

⁴ John Pal II, *Normae servandae in inquisitionibus ab episcopis faciendis in causis sanctorum*. AAS 75 (1983) 396-403.

secular society. The Church also tries to keep pace with the changes outside by reading the signs of the times without ignoring her ecclesiastical and theological basis. Thus, we can see that in many areas of her teaching and governing ministry Church has taken progressive steps having the foot firmly rooted in the radical and fundamental aspects of faith and morals. In the administrative systems of the universal as well as local Churches, we notice such changes taking place.

As part of the general sanctifying and evangelizing ministry of the Church, the Dicastery for the Causes of the Saints exposes formally and authoritatively to the whole world fruits of sanctity, following a rigorous study and judgment of those who lived the universal call to holiness perfectly.

From time to time, there have been revisions and reforms of the norms regulating the process of study and judgment in view of presenting models of sanctity and intercessors to the world. It is not within the scope of this work to deal with it here.

5.1 Preparation for the Postulators (1984): *Regolamento dello "Studium de Causis Sanctorum"*

The document *Studium de Causis Sanctorum* consists of just 13 paragraphs or numbers.⁵ The scope of the document is the formation of the postulators, other collaborators at the Congregation, and any who wishes to exercise some office in the Congregation. The *Studium* functions under the patronage of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints perfect, with the Secretary and undersecretary as its president and vice president, respectively. For the direct guidance and supervision of its functioning, there will be another secretary appointed by the prefect.

As we know, a Christian faithful's ultimate call is to sanctity or to strive after the holiness and perfection of the heavenly Father, which is reflected in Jesus Christ, his Son. Hence, it is also the interest of the Church to provide examples of sanctity for the imitation of the faithful. As the task is of great significance and great responsibility, the *Studium* has as its scope the formation of postulators, who play a key role in the

⁵ *Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi, Regolamento dello "Studium de Causis Sanctorum,"* AAS 75 (1984) 1089-1090. It was established during the Pontifical Audience of 02 June 1984.

process both at the diocesan and Roman phases. Similarly, it is also a great help for all others who somehow want to collaborate with the Dicastery for the causes of the saints.’⁶

Those who attend the programme are classified into the following categories: *Uditori ordinari* and *Uditori Straordinari*. Secular and religious priests, deacons, and even lay faithful who have an academic degree in sacred sciences or an equivalent are eligible to attend the *Studium* as ordinary participants (*Uditori ordinari*). So also anyone who has acquired a valid study certificate worth admission to the faculty or institute of any university is eligible for this course as an extraordinary participant (*Uditori Straordinari*): Admission as *uditori straordinari* is reserved to those who have a basic theological formation and an academic degree from a faculty or institute of any university equivalent to bachelorette. Anyone with an academic title in ecclesiastical studies can seek admission to this course as an ordinary student. A working knowledge of Italian is one of the conditions for admission.

A recommendation from the proper ordinary or religious superior, the previous academic degrees, and other requirements must accompany the request for admission.⁷

Content of the Course: The *Studium* covers (i) theological, (ii) historico-hagiographical, and (iii & iv) juridical aspects in two parts: i) Diocesan phase and ii) Roman Phase. This course could be followed in its entirety or parts with due permission from the relevant competent authorities. For students pursuing theology, ecclesiastical history, canon law, and spirituality in various faculties or institutes, this may be useful as optional courses. Thus, the scope of the *studium* has been enhanced a bit from the original one.

The *regolamento* also spells out the details of the practice regarding the registration, fees, attendance, exams, and the diploma to the *Ordinary Uditori*. Those who complete the course successfully fulfilling all the requirements will be awarded a diploma certificate.

⁶ Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Le Cause dei Santi: Sussidio per lo Studium*, 4th ed., a cura di Vincenzo Criscuolo, Carmelo Pellegrino e Robert J. Sarno (Libreria Editrice Vaticana) p. 540.

⁷ *Studium de cause Sanctorum* no. 1. See, *Le Cause dei Santi*, pp. 541-543

5.2. The New Rite of Beatification (2005)

As per the norms of 1983, the celebration of beatification was presided over by the Holy Father, either in the Vatican or in the local Churches, according to the decision of the Holy Father in response to the request of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

In 2005 Pope Benedict XVI made a historical reform by approving the proposal of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. The latter published it through its communication *Nuove Procedure Nei Riti Della Beatificazione*.⁸ Two major changes were introduced.

5.2.1. Pontifical Act Performed by His Representative

The first change is that beatification which is a pontifical act, will normally be celebrated or presided over by the prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, as a representative of the Holy Father and not the latter personally, nor in the Vatican in normal cases.

5.2.2. The Place and Occasion of Its Celebration

The second reform introduced that the beatification ceremony will normally take place not at the Vatican but in the diocese or eparchy which has promoted the new candidate for beatification and canonization (n. 2). However, if the actor and the bishop request, it could be celebrated in the Vatican depending on the decision of the Secretary of the State (n. 3). Unless special liturgical reasons necessitate, it is celebrated during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Exceptionally, if religious circumstances require, it could be celebrated during the celebration of the liturgy of the hours or during a word of God celebration (n. 4).

⁸ José Card. Saraiva Martins, Prefetto e Edward Nowak (Segretario), *Comunicazione della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi*, Città del Vaticano, 29 settembre 2005. Cf. *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 544.

This was again updated on 23 June 2016 with "Annotazioni per la Cerimonia della Beatificazione" specifying some rubrics or guideline for the celebration. See, *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 638-639.

5.3. Instruction *Sanctorum Mater* (2007)⁹

The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints issued this instruction with the wish that this “will be a valid aid to the bishops so that the Christian people, following more closely the example of Christ, the Divine Teacher of Perfection, may give testimony to the world of the Kingdom of heaven.”¹⁰

“As it is evident from DPM, the restoration of the rights of instruction to the bishops was based on three motivating forces which prompted the restructuring and reorganizing of the process of the Causes of Saints: i) the need for experts; ii) the desire of the bishops for the simplification of the process; iii) and finally Vatican Council II’s call for collegiality.¹¹ After almost twenty-five years of practical experience in its implementation, it was to “clarify the dispositions of currently existing laws in the Causes of Saints, to facilitate their application and indicate the ways of executing them both in recent and ancient causes,” that the CCS issued the *Sanctorum Mater Instruction for Conducting Diocesan or Eparchial Inquiries in the Causes of Saints* (SM).¹²

⁹ Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Instruction, *Sanctorum Mater, Instruction for conducting diocesan or eparchial inquiries in the Causes of Saints*, AAS 99 (2007) 465-510. Pope Benedict XVI approved it on 22 February 2007 prior to its publication on May 17, the same year. SM clarifies the dispositions of the laws in force, facilitates their application and indicates in a practical and chronological manner, the ways of executing them both in recent and ancient causes (See, *Sanctorum Mater*, Introduction).

¹⁰ *Sanctorum Mater*, Intro., p. 13.

¹¹ Till the 10th century the elevation or transferral and the insertion of the name of a departed holy person in the Calendar of the local Church, which was equivalent to today’s canonization, were done mostly by bishops. According to the CIC 1917, local Ordinaries could, on their own authority, instruct the Ordinary Process. But in 1969 the Motu Proprio *Sanctitas Clarior* of Paul VI took away this right of the bishops and according to the Cognitional Process bishops needed the permission of the Holy See. The new legislation DPM restored the right of the bishops to instruct a cause on his own authority. The bishop has, however, to get the *nulla osta* from the Congregation, but it cannot be interpreted as permission strictly speaking.

¹² Congregation for The Causes of The Saints, *Sanctorum Mater*, (Introduction); Cf. Cherian Thunduparampil, “The Diocesan Phase of the Inquiry in the Canonization Process - CCEO c. 1057 and CIC c. 1403,” in G. Ruysen, S.J., S. Kokkaravalayil, S.J. eds., *Il CCEO – Strumento per il futuro delle*

Here I would like to highlight only the salient features of this instruction. We know and repeatedly hear the saying that experience is the best teacher. Yes, it is 'in the light of 20 years' experience' (SM. p. 13) of implementing the *Normae servandae* that this instruction was prepared and published with a clear view "to facilitate a closer collaboration in the causes of Saints between the Holy See and the Bishops" in the instruction of a cause of beatification and canonization. The first thing we have to bear in mind is that it is not a new legislation abrogating the *Normae* of 1983, nor a correction of the 1983 law¹³ because, as the CIC c. 34 §1 explains, these

"Instructions clarify the prescripts of laws and elaborate on and determine the methods to be observed in fulfilling them. They are given for the use of those whose duty, it is to see that laws are executed and oblige them in the execution of the laws. Those who possess executive power legitimately issue such instructions within the limits of their competence.

§2. The ordinances of instructions do not derogate from laws. If these ordinances cannot be reconciled with the prescripts of laws, they lack all force.

§3. Instructions cease to have force not only by explicit or implicit revocation of the competent authority who issued them or of the superior of that authority but also by the cessation of the law for whose clarification or execution they were given."

Thus the current instruction clarifies: i) the dispositions of currently existing laws in the causes of the saints, ii) facilitates their application, and iii) indicates the ways of executing them in the recent and ancient causes.¹⁴

The instruction clarifies better what the bishop should do before and after the decision to initiate a cause, how the real inquiry should happen and what measures to be taken to ascertain the sanctity of the

Chiese Orientali Cattoliche: Atti del simposio di Roma, 22-24 febbraio 2017, Centenario del Pontificio Istituto Orientale (1917-2017), Kanonica 25, p. 852.

¹³ See, *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 357

¹⁴ Recent cause is initiated between 5 years after the death and before the expiry of 30 years from the death of the Servant of God, and it could be studied based on the testimonies of eye-witnesses. Ancient causes are those that could be studied and verified only with the help of documents and not based on the testimony eye-witnesses.

person concerned, and finally, how the collected dossier with the *votum* of the bishop is to be sent to Rome for further “study and definitive judgment.”¹⁵

The instruction admits that in the past 20 years since 1983, there have been some difficulties with regard to the application of “some elements of the procedure... regarding the very Inquires about miracles.”¹⁶

5.4. Validity of the Technological Document as Proof

In the past few years, technology and media have revolutionized the world to a large extent beyond comparison. The Church recognizes this fact because this progress is not without impacting the Church and its various functions. The Church always wanted to keep pace with the fast-changing secular society. It is, however, a challenge for the Church to strike a balance between the secular values and those she has been holding on to. Therefore, the Pontifical Council for the legislative text published an authentic interpretation of the legal/ juridical value that is to be attributed to modern technical documents such as celluloid, magnetic or electronic.¹⁷ By making this interpretation applicable to the procedural law in the causes of the saints, Pope Francis cleared the doubt that was prevailing regarding the use of it in the tribunal procedures of canonization.

The Council for the Legislative text expressed that documents on celluloid, the magnetic or electronic device could be utilized in the probative apparatus of a cause of canonization during the diocesan and Roman phases: i) the judge should ascertain its utility, reliability, and lack of manipulation of any kind and ii) it should be inserted in the procedural acts of the cause.¹⁸ The Congregation also underlines the need, importance, and relevance of such technological support,

¹⁵ *Sanctorum Mater*, Intro., p. 13.

¹⁶ *Sanctorum Mater*, Intro., p. 3.

¹⁷ Cf. *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 357. “Il pontificio Consiglio per i testi legislativi pubblicò un’interpretazione autentica circa il valore giuridico da attribuire ai documenti tecnologici odierni (celluloide, magnetico o elettronico).

¹⁸ Cf. *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 357: “Nell’apparato probatorio di una Causa di canonizzazione (nella fase Diocesana e anche romano), possono essere ammessi documenti su un supporto celluloide, magnetico o elettronico, purché siano stati inseriti negli atti processuali dopo che il giudice abbia accertato la loro utilità, affidabilità e assenza di manipolazioni.”

especially regarding the documentary proves in the diocesan inquiry into an alleged miracle.¹⁹

5.5. Temporal Goods of Causes: Norme Sull'amministrazione dei Beni delle Cause di Beatificazione e Canonizzazione (2016).

The norm governing the administration of the temporal goods of the Causes of Beatification and canonization till 2016 was that approved by St. John Paul II on 20 August 1983. With the new "Norme sull'amministrazione dei beni delle Cause di beatificazione e canonizzazione"²⁰ the previous one was abrogated.

The process of beatification and canonization, as it is a rather long and complex one, requires a lot of expenses. The ultimate aim of the process of beatification and canonization is indeed spiritual, that is, to raise a person to the honour of the altar by officially declaring him or her a blessed or saint in order i) to glorify God through such holy men or women, and ii) to provide (a) examples of sanctity for the imitation of the faithful and (b) intercessors for the benefit of the faithful in their various needs. CIC c. 1752 states the purpose of all laws thus: "*Salus animarum suprema lex est,*" – the salvation of souls is the supreme law in the Church.

However, for this, deep knowledge about the person concerned, his or her life and activities, and his or internal and external dispositions leading to the truth about his/her sanctity, is necessary and this consumes a lot of time, money and energy, first in the original diocese/eparchy which promoted the cause or where the cause is initiated and then in Rome. These elements, the exposition and diffusion of the knowledge about the person in view of collecting more information from all possible sources, the official diocesan inquiry, and later at the Roman phase leading to the declaration and, finally, the celebration of the beatification or canonization, produces financial burden on the actors.

At the Congregation level in Rome, the actor of a cause is made to participate in the progress of causes and share the expenses of the

¹⁹ Cf. *Le Cause dei Santi*, p. 357: "... evidente per quanto riguarda le prove documentali nell'Inchiesta sul miracolo."

²⁰ It was promulgated and published on 7 March 2016 in *Osservatore Romano*, *ad experimentum* for 3 years and obtained the force of law, the same day (n. 23). In the audience of 4 March 2016 conceded to Pietro Card. Parolin (Secretary of the State) Pope Francis approved it.

procedures for study and judgment by making a financial contribution to the Congregation in different instalments.²¹ These norms cover the question of finance involved in the process of canonization under 5/6 sections:

5.5.1 Fund of the Cause and the Designation of an Administrator

Once the *libellus* has been accepted, a fund for the cause could be instituted, and it will be known, by its nature, as **Fund for Pious Causes** (n. 2). The actor, in consultation with the bishop, appoints the administrator. The Postulator general,²² who can function as administrator, should inform the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints about the appointment of the administrator (nn. 3 & 4).

5.5.2 The Administration of the Fund [5-8]

The administrator has to administer the fund of a cause as per the stipulations of canon law regarding ecclesiastical goods, respecting the intentions of the donor (see CIC cc. 1282, 1284-1289, 1299-1310; CCEO cc. 1020-1033, 1043-1054; CIC 1267 § 3 and 1300 and CCEO c. 1016-1044) and he should always be accountable updating the status and should present the balance statement to the actor and the copy approved by the actor to the postulator. The postulator general is to maintain a separate account for each individual cause and without the authorization of the Congregation for the causes of the Saints, the fund, even if only a part of it, cannot be used for any other things. The actor is bound to give a copy of the approved balance sheet to the competent authority having vigilance over the cause (diocesan bishop, for example, at the diocesan phase).

5.5.3 Vigilance over the Administration [9-14]

The diocesan bishop/eparch, the religious superior or equivalent to them respectively, is competent to have vigilance over the such fund. He is responsible for being vigilant over all the transactions - income and expense of a cause. Having examined the account, the competent authority annually sends a copy of it to the Congregation. The latter can always intervene and seek clarification from the competent authority, actor, and postulator. The administrator must diligently

²¹*Norme sull'amministrazione dei beni delle Cause di beatificazione e canonizzazione*, Premessa, in *Le Cause dei santi*, p. 596.

²² Postulator General is one who handles several causes of the same religious Congregation, diocese/eparchy or any association that is having many causes at the Roman Phase.

follow the Congregation's norms in this regard. In case of abuse/misuse in the administration of the fund or not fulfilling the duty, the Congregation for the Causes of the saints can intervene and take disciplinary actions in accordance with CIC cc. 1377, 1386, 1399, and CCEO cc. 1449-1463.

5.5.4 Actor's Contribution to the Holy See (15-20)

To meet the expenses at the Roman phase, the actor has to contribute, as per the stipulation in the norm, depending on the nature of the cause and inquiry, in different installments: in the case of martyrdom or virtues or doctorate, it is done in four installments - at the time of the submission of the diocesan acts to the Congregation, at the request or appointment of the relator, at the submission of the position and at the time of the special Congress of the theologians. In the case of the miracles, it is to be done in three instalments: i) at the submission of the diocesan acts, ii) before the '*Consulta Medica*,' and iii) before the congress of the theologians.

It is to be noted that in case required, an additional contribution will have to be given. Similarly, the contribution does not cover the printing expenses of the position.

After the celebration of beatification/canonization, the administrator should submit the full account to the Congregation for due approval. Once the cause has reached its final goal, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, taking into consideration the actor's request for the use of the fund, and considering the demands of the Solidarity Fund, disposes of the remaining money. Once it is made available to "The Solidarity Fund," the fund of the cause ceases to exist (n. 20b).

5.5.6 Solidarity Fund (21-22)

The Holy See has a "Solidarity Fund," which is sustained with free offers from the actors or any other source besides that which is derived from particular causes as per the stipulation of n. 20a of the document. Such a fund will be used to support poor causes that find it difficult to go ahead due to financial burden. In that case, the request of the actor of such cause will be studied and verified by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints before conceding the request.

5.5.7 Entry of the Norm into Force

Finally, the document announces the coming into force of the norms.

6. Miracles and the *Regolamento della Consulta Medica*²³ (2016).

As we know, Church proceeds to the declaration of a blessed or saint after multiple inquiries and verifications beginning from the grass root level. Recognition of three voices precedes the declaration: *vox populi*, *vox ecclesiae*, and *vox dei*. The first two are human judgements. Once these two turn out to be positive regarding the sanctity or martyrdom of a Servant of God/Venerable or Blessed, the Church resorts to the third voice for the definitive confirmation, a divine sign. A miracle performed by God through a specific Venerable or Blessed is considered the voice of God (*vox Dei*) regarding the sanctity of the particular person in question.

God's voice is, thus, the additional requirement after the positive judgement on the virtues. One of the important tasks is to scientifically establish the inexplicability of presumed miraculous healing. Hence the Congregation has reinstated the significance and relevance of the *Consulta Medica (Albo dei Periti Medici)* whose members are to examine the presumed miraculous healings proposed for beatification or canonization (art. 1). Though normally, the medical board is formed of experts from this *college of doctors*, if a particular cause warrants it, experts could be chosen from outside this group. So also, in case of non-physical healings or *technical miracles*, experts pertaining to that field could be sought (art. 2).

Articles 3 and 4 treat the composition of the *Albo* (medical board) and the qualities expected of experts. One major change with this reform is that the function of preparing the position, so far carried out by "one of the relators" as per DPM II, 8, is now the responsibility of the Under-Secretary of the Causes of the Saints (CM, art. 4 §7).

6.1. Functioning of the Medical Board of Physicians: Any expert assigned with the job of examining a particular case has the following duties: i) to prepare an official legal medical report and ii) to clear the doubts and to clarify the eventual objections related to the technical, scientific field of the matter that arose during the examination of the case (art. 5). Once assigned for a case, the doctors are not supposed to have any contact with the actor and postulator of the cause, and for any clarification, he is to contact the office of the undersecretary (art.

²³ The Secretary of the State approved these regulations of the Congregation, with the mandate of the Holy Father, on 24 August 2016.

6). If a medical expert is involved in a particular case in any title, he cannot be given any other ulterior role in the same case (art. 7).

Once the acts of the eparchial or diocesan process on miracle reaches Rome, after the preliminary process of opening and declaration of the validity, the case will be subjected to the study of two experts, specialists in the matter under consideration, appointed by the secretary in consultation with the undersecretary. In order for the case to go to the *consulta medica*, the report of at least one of these consultants should be positive. If both are negative, the postulator may request further examination by another expert, and provided it is positive, and it would go ahead. Otherwise, it would be the end of the case (art. 8-9).

The *consulta medica* comprises seven members, including the president and the specialists. For the validity of the meeting of this body, at least six should be present. Without the right to vote, the Secretary, undersecretary, and the promotor of faith can participate in the meeting.²⁴

All the seven/six are to prepare an independent individual written judgement on the "*diagnosis, prognosis, treatment/medication and the modality of healing*" and expose it to the college. At the end of collegial discussion everyone is to give his definitive opinion. The president and secretary of the *Consulta* sign the final report of the collegial discussion. The conclusion may be affirmative, suspensive, or negative.

If it is affirmative with a qualified majority, that is 5 out of 7 or 4 out of 6 depending on the number of participants, it will proceed to the next level; if suspensive the postulator, providing further clarifications, may request for another further examination by the same *Consulta*; if it is, instead, negative, a new *consulta* may be formed, as per the procedure, to re-examine the case, having first heard the opinion of two new experts. The result will, then, be communicated to the postulator of the cause (art. 13-17). After the third round of examination, if the conclusion is still negative, no further re-presentation of the case is possible (art. 18). The members are obliged

²⁴ Without the right to vote the Secretary, undersecretary and the promotor of faith can participate in the meeting.

to keep secrecy regarding the acts of the presumed miraculous healing in question, especially if it is minor.

7. Heroic Offer of Life: Ap. let. Mp., *Maiorem hac dilectionem*.²⁵

The 'heroic offer of life' is claimed to be a "*nuova fattispecie dell'iter*" of beatification and canonization distinct from the two traditional ones, that is, martyrdom and heroic practice of virtues – martyr and confessor, respectively. The scriptural foundation or basis for this new ground is the love of neighbour demanded by Jesus, seen in Jn. 15: 13. It is a free and voluntary offer of life, consistently persevered till death that is certain and not far distanced from the time of the proposal to offer. As per the document, this heroic offer of life is "suggested and sustained by charity" and expresses "a true, full and exemplary imitation of Christ" (Intro.).

"The new way establishes four prerequisites for the beatification process: two relate to death, while the other two regard the practice of virtues and reputation of sanctity. A fifth prerequisite concerning miracles is the same as that required of confessors and the heroically virtuous.

i) *Heroic offering of life*: How does this new way differ from martyrdom? Martyrdom is the "supreme witness of faith and charity" (LG 50) by which one voluntarily accepts *in favour of faith* a violent death imposed upon him/her by another out of hatred for the faith – *odium fidei*. In contrast, a "heroic offering of life" entails a death not brought about by hatred of the faith or external compulsion, but motivated by Christ's teaching on *love of neighbour*, or charity. The person who heroically offers his or her life does so deliberately, voluntarily, and out of love in order to save someone in need.

To offer one's life in this manner is both courageous and heroic. One accepts a death that is imminent, but perhaps neither instantaneous nor far removed from the decision to embrace it. Such was the death suffered by Maximilian Kolbe, executed two weeks after substituting himself for a condemned husband and father. For his decision, a spontaneous response to the prompting of the Holy

²⁵ On the Offering of Life, art. 1, 11 July 2017; cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 12 July 2017, p. 8 (5 articles to deal with the new element).

Spirit, Kolbe was initially beatified as a confessor of faith. He was later canonized as a martyr of charity.²⁶

The first criterion of the new path thus contains four requisite elements: i) heroic offering of life; ii) motivated by charity (*propter caritatem*); iii) resulting in a certain death that iv) occurs shortly thereafter. One wishing to promote such a cause must ensure that these conditions are fulfilled before proceeding with it (cf. Norms, art. 1b and 8). Since the document does not further specify the "short period of time" necessary, the latter could be weeks, months or even years.

ii) *Connection between the offer and the death*: The second criterion is that the self-sacrifice in question should not be a natural death, e.g., due to old age, normal common sickness or accident, but a premature death well-foreseen by the one who voluntarily embraces it. Hence, there should be an evident link (*nexus*) between the offering of life and the premature death embraced.

iii) *Exercise of Christian virtues to at least an ordinary degree*: In terms of Christian or gospel values, how do persons who heroically offer their lives differ from confessors? For confessors, it matters not only a) *whether* they practise the theological and cardinal virtues but also b) *to what degree* they practice them. Confessors practise all the virtues longer and more heroically than in ordinary human experience. The apostolic constitution *Divinus perfectionis Magister* describes it as an "outstanding practice of Christian virtues" (DPM, 1983).

In a heroic offering of life, that is the new path, the above-mentioned requirements are not strictly necessary. Those belonging to this category are expected first to esteem and exercise the Christian virtues *at least to an ordinary degree* before deciding to offer their lives, and then they must persevere in it until death. Therefore,

²⁶ Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximilian_Kolbe: On 12 May 1955, Kolbe was recognized as a Servant of God. Pope Paul VI declared him venerable on 30 January 1969, beatified him as a *Confessor of the Faith* in 1971 and canonized as a saint by the same Pope on 10 October 1982. Upon canonization, the Pope declared St. Maximilian Kolbe NOT a confessor, but a *martyr of charity*.

they need not practice the virtues to the heroic degree required of confessors, but only to an ordinary degree.

iv) *Reputation of sanctity at least after death*: This criterion again deviates from that required of confessors. Whereas confessors must enjoy a verified reputation of sanctity both *before* and *after* death, in the new category this reputation should be evident *at least after the death*. In other words, those without the fame of sanctity during life must possess it after death, in virtue of the heroic offering of life inspired by a love of neighbour. For, as Jesus said, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn. 15:13). Thus, the requirement of a reputation of sanctity before death is not necessary for the new path.

v) *Miracle*: Finally, for the person to be beatified, God must perform one miracle through his/her intercession. For canonization, a second miracle must happen after beatification. Both requirements are also needed of confessors.”²⁷

Art. 4 of the *motu proprio* stipulates the doubt or question be cleared in the *Positio*, of this new *fattispecie*, thus: “*An constet de heroica oblatione vitae usque ad mortem propter caritatem necnon de virtutibus christianis, saltem in gradu ordinario, in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur.*”²⁸

In accordance with the nature of the new cause, the following articles in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* and *Normae* have been modified to accommodate the new *fattispecie*: articles 1; 2,5; 7,1; 13,2; 6; 7; 10, n.1’ 10, n. 3; 15a, b; 19; 32 and 36.

8. Instruction on Relic: Istruzione “Le Reliquie nella Chiesa: Autenticità e Conservazione.”²⁹

Though veneration of the relic is part of the age-old tradition of the Catholic Church, without proper authentication from the part of the

²⁷ Cherian Thunduparampil, “New Path for “Declared Sanctity,” *Iustitia*, Vol. 17, n. 1, pp. 125-127.

²⁸ Does it consist of the heroic offering of life to the point of death for the sake of charity, as well as of the Christian virtues, at least on an ordinary level, in the case and for the effect in question?

²⁹ Congregazione per le Cause dei Santi, Istruzione, *Le Reliquie nella Chiesa: Autenticità e Conservazione*, December 8, 2017, signed by Angelo Card. Amato, S.D.B (Prefetto) e Archbishop Marcello Bartolucci (Segretario). It consists of 38 articles under three parts. With this instruction the appendix to *Sanctorum*

competent ecclesiastical authority, it cannot be exposed for such public worship. The mortal remains are depicted as *reliquie insigni* (body of the blessed or saint, notable part of the body, or the entire volume of the ash deriving from its cremation); *reliquie non insigni* (small fragments of the body and the objects directly in contact with these persons) and the mortal remains of those not beatified or canonized - *resti mortali [exuviae]*. They are simply called mortal remains of Servants of God or Venerables whose causes are in the course. Until beatification, they do not enjoy any public cult or any privilege that pertains to the blessed and saints.

The diocesan/eparchial bishops, those equivalent to them, and the Congregation for the causes of the saints are to have special care and vigilance over the relics/mortal remains, in order i) to ensure the proper conservation, ii) veneration, and iii) to evade abuses of them. All those who are somehow related to the process of relics of the blessed and the saints and the mortal remains of Servants of God or the venerable, besides the bishops and equivalent to them in power, are to apply these norms with appropriate importance due to them.

This instruction presents the procedures to be followed in i) verifying the authenticity of the relics and the mortal remains, ii) in guaranteeing their proper preservation, and iii) promoting the veneration of relics through specific operations such as a) canonical recognition, b) collection of fragments and c) confection of them; d) translation of the urn, and e) alienation of relics. The instruction also deals with what is required to get the permission of the dicastery i) to effect such operations and ii) the procedure to be followed for the pilgrimage of the relic.

The instruction is presented in 3 parts: Part 1 deals (in 5 articles) with the consent required of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. It stipulates that with the prior permission of the Congregation for the causes of the saints, the diocesan or eparchial bishop of the place where the relics or mortal remains are conserved, have the competence to do any operation on the relics or mortal remains (art. 1). It urges to observe all that is prescribed in the local civil law on the matter and to obtain the consent of the heir (art. 2, §1). Before the eventual beatification or canonization, the competent bishop invites the heir to

Mater, "Ricongnizione canonica delle Spoglie Mortali di Un Servo di Dio," of 17 May 2007, is substituted.

donate, in conformity with the civil as well as ecclesiastical law, to the Church the mortal remains so that they could be well conserved (art. 2 §2). For any operation he intends to do, the competent bishop requests in writing the consent of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, indicating the exact place and name of the church/chapel or public/private cemetery, etc., where the mortal remains rest currently. In the same letter, he also has to inform the Congregation that the civil legal prescriptions have been fulfilled (art. 3). It is possible to transfer the mortal remains elsewhere, within the same diocese/eparchy or to another one. In both cases, it has to be informed to the Congregation, indicating the specifics in detail as to where they are currently and to where they are going to be transferred including the details of the project for that; if it is to another diocese/eparchy, then the written consent of the bishop (*ad quem*) who receives them also must be included (art. 4).

8.1. Alienation

If a competent bishop intends to alienate the relic or mortal remains permanently, then along with the request for permission, he has to send the written consent of the alienator as well as that of the future proprietor if alienation takes place within the same diocese/eparchy (art. 5,1).

Instead, if the place of future collocation of the alienated relic or mortal remains is outside the proper diocese/eparchy of the competent bishop, then together with the request for permission, he has to include the written consent of the alienator as well as that of the bishop of the place (*ad quem*) who receives them, and the plan of the collocation is to be included (art. 5, 2); if it is the *reliquie insigni*, icon, or precious image of oriental Churches, both the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and the Patriarch with the consent of the synod as per the stipulations of CCEO c. 887 and 888 are competent (art. 4 §3).

8.2 Pilgrimage

For taking the relic of a blessed saint on pilgrimage to another diocese/eparchy, the bishop should obtain the written consent of each bishop who receives it and send it to the Congregation along with the request for permission to do so (art. 5, 4).

Part II of the document, in 3 titles, articles 6 – 27, deals with the specific process to be followed at the diocesan phase of the process, beginning with the constitution of the diocesan special tribunal for it (Title I, 6-

12); the second title, chapter 1 deals with the canonical recognition of the relic or the mortal remains and procedures for that (art. 13-20); chapter 2 treats how to collect the fragments of the body in view of imminent beatification or canonization (art. 21-25); chapter 3 is dedicated to the treatment of the transfer of urn, and the alienation of relics (art. 26-27) and title III of part II presents the final acts of the diocesan process for the recognition (art. 28-30). Part III is dedicated to covering the matter regarding the pilgrimage of the relic (art. 31-38).

Conclusion

From the very beginning, veneration of martyrs and, later, subsequent to the time of persecution, of confessors was part of the Christian life from the apostolic times. As the Christian community was small and all knew each other, it was easy for them to recognize who offered their lives by shedding their blood and breaking their body, for the sake of faith, in imitation of Christ's death. There were not many rules and norms to regulate the process. At the initial stage, the such cult was very much local, and the process consisted of the "elevation," "transferral" and the inclusion of his or her name in the liturgical calendar.

Later as the cult of confessors began, gradually, somehow, abuses also crept into the cult and the process. As a result, several norms evolved in the course of time and restrictions stipulated to evade abuses. Though canonization by bishops was prohibited earlier, only by the 13th century did the canonization process become more centralized, and the bishop or local Church could no longer declare someone a saint without the permission of the Holy See.

The whole complex of norms that governed the process of beatification and canonization till 1917 was codified scientifically and systematically into the Code of Canon Law of 1917. Again, reading the signs of the times in 1983, Pope John Paul II revised and reformulated the process, incorporating the pontifical interventions of the interim period after 1917.

As the Church always undergoes changes, so also do the laws and regulations in the Church are subjected to reforms. Thus, the changes and developments in the world necessitated the Church to update its laws and rules. This article was an attempt to introduce the new documents and briefly present the recent reforms in the process of beatification and canonization during the period after the 1983 reform.