

The Saints of Western Pennsylvania

by John C. Bates, Esq.

“There is only one sadness — not to be a saint.”

—Leon Bloy

A saint is one who has been officially recognized by the Catholic Church through canonization for having lived a life with an exceptional degree of holiness, sanctity, and virtue — and is therefore believed to be in Heaven. Butler’s Lives of the Saints lists more than 2,500 named saints. The precise number is unknown. A decree by Pope Alexander III in 1170 gave the pope the exclusive prerogative to declare saints through the formal process of canonization.

The Canonization Process

Canonization is a lengthy process that may take many years, even centuries. The Apostolic Constitution *Divinus perfectionis magister* (promulgated on January 25, 1983) and its implementing *Norms to be Observed in Inquiries made by Bishops in the Causes of Saints* (promulgated on February 7, 1983) establish the procedures. A petitioner (*actor*) may initiate a cause for canonization five years after the death of an individual or a group of Catholics. The petitioner may be an individual or a group (e.g., a diocese, a religious congregation, or an association of laity) whose task is to promote and finance the process.

The petitioner must name a *postulator* who is to be recognized by the bishop of the diocese in which the individual died (*the competent bishop*). The postulator is the lawyer of the cause and represents the petitioner before the Congregation of the Causes of Saints (the Congregation)¹ the Vatican office with jurisdiction over such matters. This individual — a priest, a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life, or a layperson — must be an expert in theological, canonical and historical matters, and conversant with the requirements of the Congregation.¹ The postulator conducts the investigation into the life of the candidate to establish the reputation of sanctity, has responsibility for administering funds collected for the progression of the cause, and takes an oath to observe strict confidentiality in the exercise of duties.²

The petitioner may also appoint a vice-postulator to act within the diocese. The bishop is requested to launch a formal diocesan inquest into the individual’s life. Simultaneously, the Congregation designates a protocol number for the case. If the bishop of another diocese would attempt to act in the process, he would have to obtain a decree of *competentia fori* (competent forum) from the Congregation.

The competent bishop must consult with the bishops of his ecclesiastical region on the appropriateness of initiating a cause. If no bishops in the region object, the bishop may declare the candidate for sainthood a “**Servant of God.**” This is the **first of four steps** in the process of canonization.

Next comes the **second step** in the canonization process: an investigation into the life of the Servant of God for evidence of a “heroic life.” The bishop must publicly publish the postulator’s petition and invite the faithful to report any relevant information. He must assign two theologian-censors to examine published and unpublished writings of the deceased. Their favorable opinion enables the cause to proceed. The bishop then assigns a promoter of justice (formerly known as the devil’s advocate) to formulate a questionnaire for witnesses. Finally, the bishop must obtain a decree *nihil obstat* from the Congregation that no Vatican records stand in the way to warrant suspension of the investigation.

After obtaining the *nihil obstat*, the bishop or his delegate would examine witnesses before a diocesan tribunal. The witnesses would include those brought in by the postulator as eyewitnesses to the life of the candidate as well as those who had examined the candidate’s writings. The questionnaire plays a significant role in the examination. Upon completion of the diocesan inquest, two copies of all its acts — what is termed a *transumptum* — are sent to the Congregation.

The Congregation would then issue a decree approving the validity of the diocesan investigation, and appoint a *relator* to the cause who would supervise the writing of a *positio*, typically by the postulator. The *positio* (*positio super virtutibus*) consists of two parts: (1) the *informatio*, a critical biography of the candidate based on the *transumptum*, and (2) the *summarium*, a collation of the testimonies of the witnesses and relevant documents submitted. The *positio* is thus the diocesan summary of its inquiry into the candidate’s heroic virtues, and may be more than 1,000 pages in length.

Upon presentation to the Congregation, the *positio* is examined by three bodies of experts: historians, theologians, and prelates — all of whom work for the Congregation. If these three bodies unanimously vote favorably on the position, the Congregation prepares a decree on the *heroic virtues* of the candidate. Typically, this decree is formally read and promulgated before the pope in a public audience. The Servant of God is now referred to as **Venerable**. This is the conclusion of the second step of the canonization process.

The Congregation requires that one exceptional miracle be proven to have occurred through the Venerable’s intercession. When a miracle — usually medically inexplicable healings after asking the prayers of the candidate — is reported, the postulator and the bishop of the diocese where the miracle occurred must petition the Congregation to authorize an investigation. The records gathered are sent to the Congregation, which then appoints a *consilia medica* — a body of physicians or scientists — to judge its

¹ This Congregation is the successor to the Congregation of Rites, which was established in 1588 by Pope Sixtus V. On May 8, 1969, Pope Paul VI divided the existing congregation in two: (1) the Congregation for the Divine Worship and (2) the Congregation for the Causes of Saints — the latter having three offices: the judiciary, the Promoter General of the Faith (formerly known as the devil’s advocate or *advocatus diaboli*) and historical-judicial. Pope John Paul II modified the process in 1983 by adding a College of Relators to prepare the cases of those declared “Servants of God.”

² The qualification, role, and function of the postulator are detailed in the Norms.

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extraordinariness. This body's favorable judgment is presented to the Congregation's theologians and prelates. The pope formalizes recognition of the miracle by a decree. The candidate's beatification is then scheduled. From 1971 to 2004, the pope himself officiated at the beatification ceremony, typically in Rome. Since then, at times a cardinal would be appointed to officiate, and the ceremony has often taken place in the country where the candidate lived, worked, or died. After the solemn act of beatification, the Venerable is thereafter referred to as **Blessed**. This would conclude the **third step** in the canonization process.

The **fourth and final step** in the process of canonization is **canonization as a Saint**. For the Blessed to be canonized, the original petitioner must again find one more exceptional miracle that occurred *after* beatification. The procedure for investigating a miracle is repeated. When a decree concerning this second miracle is promulgated, a special consistory consisting of the pope and cardinals is called to determine the date of canonization. The pope would personally canonize the deceased as a Saint, who is presented to the universal church for veneration and emulation.

Western Pennsylvania

While Catholic life has existed in Western Pennsylvania for a little over 250 years — originating with the brief arrival of the French in the 1750s at Fort Duquesne (later Pittsburgh) and a few other forts in the wilderness territory that would later constitute Western Pennsylvania — there have been two individuals who lived here who have advanced to sainthood. In addition, there are ten others who are at various stages in the process leading to canonization as a saint — seven who were either born here or who stayed in this area for some time, and three others who while not resident nonetheless had strong ties to this area through frequent visits during their lives.

The Saints

St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R. (1811-1860)

The first resident of this area to be declared a saint was John Neumann. Johannes Nepomuk Neumann was born on March 28, 1811 in Prachatitz in the Kingdom of Bohemia, then part of the Empire of Austria. He entered the seminary in 1831 and sought to be ordained after completing his studies in 1835. As the bishop decided that Bohemia had too many priests, Neumann emigrated to the United States where he was ordained a priest of the Diocese of New York by Bishop John Dubois on June 25, 1836 in Old St. Patrick's Cathedral. After working initially with German-speaking immigrants, Neumann sought permission to join the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists) and entered that congregation's novitiate at St. Philomena's Church in Pittsburgh's Strip District. He was their first candidate in the New World. He took his religious vows as a Redemptorist in January 1842. After six years of work, he was appointed Provincial Superior for the United States. He became a naturalized American citizen on February 10, 1848.

On February 5, 1852, Neumann was appointed Bishop of Philadelphia, and was ordained a bishop on March 28 by Bishop Dubois. He organized the first diocesan school system, increasing the number of parochial schools from one to 200. New churches

were completed at the rate of one a month. He established the Sisters of St. Francis and brought the School Sisters of Notre Dame from Germany to provide educational and religious instruction. Fluent in Italian, he established the first Italian national parish in the country.

Neumann encountered religious bigotry; with the Know Nothings at the height of their political power, Catholic churches, convents and schools were burned in Philadelphia. He was present on December 8, 1854 as Pope Pius IX solemnly defined the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Neumann collapsed and died on a Philadelphia city street on January 5, 1860, as the result of a stroke. He was only 48 years old.

Pope Benedict XV declared the bishop Venerable in 1921. Pope Paul VI beatified Neumann during the Second Vatican Council on October 13, 1963, and the same pope canonized him a saint on June 19, 1977. Neumann's feast day is January 5, the date of his death. The Redemptorists' Postulator General, Father Nicola Farrante, had brought the cause to a successful conclusion. Following canonization, the National Shrine of Saint John Neumann was constructed in the Church of St. Peter the Apostle in Philadelphia. The saint's remains rest under the altar of the shrine within a glass-walled reliquary.

St. Katharine Drexel, S.B.S. (1858-1955)

Catherine Marie Drexel was born in Philadelphia on November 26, 1858, the second child of investment banker Francis Anthony Drexel. The child's mother died five weeks after the baby's birth. The father remarried in 1860, and a third child was subsequently born. The three daughters were tutored at home, supplemented by tours of the United States and Europe. Twice a week, the Drexels distributed food, clothing and rent assistance from their family home. Catherine nursed her stepmother through a three-year terminal cancer, and concluded that all the Drexel money could not buy safety from pain or death. Her life took a profound turn. She became particularly interested in the plight of American Indians, having been appalled by the book *A Century of Dishonour: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the North American Tribes* (1881).

A family trip to the West in 1884 enabled Catherine to see the plight of Native Americans and became the beginning of her lifelong personal and financial support of missions in the United States. After her father's death in 1885, Catherine took spiritual direction from longtime family friend Father James O'Connor — who was the brother of Pittsburgh's first bishop, Michael O'Connor — who counseled Catherine to defer her desire to join a contemplative order.

Catherine and her sisters went to Europe and in January 1887 had a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, during which she asked for missionaries for the Indian missions that she was financing. The pope responded by suggesting that she become a missionary herself. She then decided to give herself and her inheritance to God. In May 1889, she entered the Sister of Mercy Motherhouse in the Uptown section of Pittsburgh to begin a six-month postulancy. A Philadelphia newspaper carried a banner headline: "Miss Drexel

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Enters a Catholic Convent — Gives Up Seven Million.”³ The three sisters shared in the income produced by a \$14 million inheritance — about \$1,000 a day for each. In today’s dollars, the estate would be worth in excess of \$250 million.

During her time in Pittsburgh, Catherine, who had taken the religious name of “Katharine,” taught young black children at St. Brigid’s School in the Hill District. Her appreciation of the disenfranchised thus was enlarged to include both Native Americans and African-Americans.

On February 12, 1891, Catherine professed her vows, dedicating herself to work among American Indians and African-Americans in the western and southwestern U.S. She took the religious title and name of Mother Katharine; her habit was a slightly modified version of that worn by the Sisters of Mercy. Joined by 13 other women, she established a religious congregation, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Cornwell Heights, Pennsylvania. Mother Frances Cabrini counseled Mother Katherine about getting her order’s Rule approved in Rome — the meeting of two future saints!

By 1942, Mother Katharine had developed a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, plus 40 mission centers and 23 rural schools. She established 50 missions for Indians in 16 states. She established Xavier University in New Orleans. She was dogged by fierce anti-Catholic and racial prejudice at every turn: attempted state laws prohibiting white teachers from teaching black students, vandalism at purchased buildings, and threats from the Ku Klux Klan.

Over 60 years, Mother Katharine spent about \$20 million to build schools and churches and pay teachers’ salaries in her schools. After suffering a heart attack, she relinquished her office as Superior General in 1937. Despite growing infirmity, she devoted her last years to Eucharistic adoration. She died on March 1955 at the Motherhouse in Cornwell Heights.

Her cause for beatification was introduced in 1966. Pope John Paul II declared her Venerable on January 26, 1987. After the Vatican concluded that Robert Gutherman had been miraculously cured of deafness in 1974 after his family prayed for Mother Drexel’s intercession, Pope John Paul II beatified her on November 20, 1988. Subsequently, the Vatican determined that 2-year-old Amy Wall had been miraculously healed of nerve deafness in both ears through Mother Drexel’s intercession in 1994. The same pope then canonized Mother Katharine Drexel as a saint on October 1, 2000 — one of only a few American saints and only the second American-born saint (Elizabeth Seton was the first, canonized in 1975). Her feast day is celebrated on March 3, the date of her death.

Her order works in 21 states and in Haiti. The Saint Katharine Drexel Mission Center and National Shrine is located in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia. Her tomb lies under the main altar in St. Elizabeth Chapel. The building was listed on the

National Register of Historic Places in 1978. Much of the artwork in the chapel was done by or about Native Americans and African-Americans.

The Blessed

Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R. (1819-1867)

Francis Xavier Seelos was born in Fussen, Bavaria on January 11, 1819. As a child he expressed a desire to become a priest, and entered the diocesan seminary in 1842. After meeting missionaries of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists), he decided to enter that congregation and minister to German-speaking immigrants in the United States. Accepted by the Redemptorists in November 1842, he sailed the following year to New York, arriving on April 20, 1843. Upon completion of his novitiate and theological studies, Seelos was ordained a priest in the Redemptorist Church of St. James in Baltimore, Maryland on December 22, 1844.

After ordination, he served for nine years at St. Philomena Church in Pittsburgh — first as assistant to the pastor, Father John Neumann, and later as Superior of the Redemptorist community in Pittsburgh, including three years as pastor of St. Philomena’s — then located in the Strip District of the city. As to Seelos’s relationship with Neumann, Seelos said: “He has introduced me to the active life and has guided me as a spiritual director and confessor.”⁴

Seelos was a hugely popular confessor and spiritual director, so much so that people came to him even from afar. He was an excellent preacher. In 1854, he was transferred to Baltimore, and in 1857 to Cumberland (Maryland), and in 1862 to Annapolis. He was Prefect of Students for future Redemptorists, while continuing to serve in parish ministry.

In 1860 he was proposed as a candidate to succeed Bishop Michael O’Connor as bishop of Pittsburgh. Pope Pius IX excused him from assuming this responsibility. The next six years saw Seelos as an itinerant missionary preaching in English and German in 10 states, ranging from Connecticut to Missouri and Wisconsin. In 1866, he was assigned to New Orleans as pastor of the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption. In September of that year, exhausted from caring for victims of yellow fever, he contracted the disease and died on October 4, 1867 at age 48.

The Seelos Center in New Orleans became the official petitioner to open the cause for canonization. The Congregation approved the diocesan investigative process on September 23, 1994. Redemptorist historian Fr. Carl Hoegerl of Baltimore drafted the *positio* on Seelos for submission in 1999. The validity of the diocesan investigative process relative to a claimed miracle was approved on November 13, 1998. The Congregation promulgated a decree recognizing the miracle and Seelos’s heroic virtues on January 27, 2000. Pope John Paul II then beatified Father Seelos in St. Peter’s Square on April 9, 2000. Seelos’s liturgical feast is celebrated on October 5.

³ The *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, as quoted in Peter Finney, “The Legacy of St. Katharine Drexel,” *St. Anthony Messenger* (March 3, 2012), appearing at the website: <http://www.americancatholic.org/news/report>.

⁴The quotation is from the life of Francis Xavier Seelos appearing at his national shrine’s website: <http://www.seelos.org/lifeBiography.html>.

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On May 19, 2009, the Archbishop of Baltimore opened the diocesan process to investigate a possible second miracle attributed to Blessed Francis Seelos. The key witnesses were subsequently deposed. On Sept 21, 2010, the two Vice Postulators (Redemptorists John Vargas and Byron Miller) convened in Baltimore to inspect the acts, and determined the inquiry to be comprehensive and thorough. That diocesan inquiry was closed on September 25, 2010 and the results of the investigation were then sent to the Congregation in Rome. Approval in Rome would be the final step to canonization as a saint.

The National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R., is located in St. Mary of the Assumption Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. The postulator is the Redemptorist Postulator General, Father Antonio Marrazzo, C.Ss.R. The Congregation's protocol number: 1091.

Bernard Mary Silvestrelli, C.P. (1831-1911)

Cesare Pietro Silvestrelli was born in Rome, Italy, on Nov. 7, 1831. Attracted to the life of the Passionists, he entered that order in Tuscany in 1854 at age 22. Ill health caused him to leave the order a month later. He continued his seminary studies and was ordained a priest on December 22, 1855. He then decided to re-apply to enter the Passionists. Upon acceptance, he entered the novitiate in 1856 and received the name of Bernard Mary of Jesus. He professed final vows on April 28, 1857, and pursued studies for preaching. In 1878 he was elected Superior General of the Passionists. He was re-elected Superior General in 1884 and resigned the position in 1889. He was again elected Superior General in 1893, 1899, and 1905. He visited every Passionist province in the world, including Pittsburgh. While here, he encouraged development of a retreat ministry. He declined the offer of a bishopric in the Mission in Bulgaria. He died on December 9, 1911 at the Passionist community in Moricone, Rome, Italy.

The cause for his canonization was opened on May 25, 1939. Pope Paul VI declared him Venerable in 1973. Pope John Paul II beatified him on October 16, 1988. His feast day is December 9. The postulator of his cause is Father Giovanni Zubiani, C.P. The Congregation's protocol number: 356.

Frances Siedliska (1842-1902)

Franciszka (Frances) Siedliska was born on November 12, 1842 to a Polish noble family in Roszkowa Wola, Rzeczyca [now in Belarus], in what was then known as "Congress Poland."⁵ Educated by governesses, the young girl was indifferent to religion until she met a Capuchin priest who prepared her for her first Holy Communion — at which time she offered herself completely to God. Between 1860-1865, she and her mother traveled in Central and Western Europe, following which they returned to Poland. With a renewed

faith, Frances promoted moral and religious upbringing. Delayed by parental opposition, she submitted a petition on October 1, 1873 to found a new religious congregation. She established the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Rome in 1875 after having received the blessing of Pope Pius IX. Establishment of the order in Poland was impossible since czarist authorities criminalized monastic orders in retribution for their support of the Polish uprising in 1863. Hence, her order was headquartered in Rome. Frances took the religious name of Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The order's name was chosen as the perfect model of total abandonment to the love of God.

The congregation spread rapidly to Poland, England, France, and in 1885 to the United States when she led 11 Sisters (over half of her little congregation) to found a community in Des Plaines (outside of Chicago), Illinois, to work among Polish immigrants. She moved to Pittsburgh in August 1895, where she resided at St. Stanislaus Kostka convent in the Strip District. More than 29 convents were established in her lifetime. She died in Rome on November 21, 1902 at age 60.

The cause for her beatification was opened on December 10, 1920, with the appointment of the first postulator. A petition of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth was forwarded to the Vicar of Rome in 1921. The investigative process began in 1922 and concluded in 1928. Her cause was formally introduced on February 5, 1941, and the attendant apostolic process ran from 1941 to 1946. The preliminary processes were approved on March 2, 1952.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed her heroic virtues on April 29, 1980. During the years 1986-1988, a cure attributed to the candidate was investigated in Warsaw and approved in Rome. On September 1, 1988, the pope signed the decree of proclamation for the beatification of Frances Siedliska. Pope John Paul II then beatified her on April 23, 1989, declaring her "Blessed." Her feast day is November 21, the anniversary date of her death.

A statue of Mother Mary has been placed in Pittsburgh's St. Stanislaus Kostka Church. Today, more than 1,500 Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth minister in 10 countries. No postulator is currently assigned to the cause of Mother Mary. The Congregation's protocol number: 328.

Niceforo of Jesus and Mary Díez Tejerina (1893-1936)

Vincente Díez Tejerina was born on February 17, 1893 in Herrerueta, a town in the province of Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain. He became a professed member of the Congregation of St. Paul of the Cross (the Passionists), taking the name Niceforo (Nicephorus) and was assigned to Mexico for his seminary training. During the violent persecution of the Mexican Catholic Church during the opening decades of the 20th century, General Carranza entered the city of Toluca (near Mexico City) in August 1914, occupied the Passionist monastery, arrested the class of Passionist students from Spain and finally expelled them from Mexico as "foreigners." They found their way to Laredo, Texas where they ultimately were brought to Chicago to live with American Passionist students for three years and then were ordained at Immaculate Conception Monastery in Chicago, which was the provincial house of the Passionists' Holy Cross (Western) Province.

⁵The Kingdom of Poland, informally known as "Congress Poland," was created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna, following the defeat of Napoleon. It was a personal union of the Russian part of Poland with the Russian Empire, and was gradually politically integrated into Russia and became an official part of the Russian Empire in 1867. The autonomy of the Polish area was severely curtailed following popular uprisings, which necessitated that Frances Siedliska establish the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Rome rather than in occupied Poland.

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Father Niceforo was later recalled to Spain and traveled by train to Hoboken, New Jersey to reach his ship. On the way he stopped in Pittsburgh and stayed at St. Paul of the Cross Monastery on the city's South Side — an intermediary rest stop before his return to Europe. Once in Spain, he was elected Provincial of the Madrid Province of the Passionists.

Father Niceforo would leave Spain one last time — to return to Mexico in April-May 1936 to assess the current state of persecution of the Church. Disguised as a lay professor, he visited Vera Cruz ["True Cross"], where he had ministered two decades earlier. He wrote of his final trip to Mexico in an article entitled "I Entered Mexico," which was published in the August 1936 issue of the Passionists' monthly mission magazine, *The Sign*.⁶ The priest had been martyred a month before publication, but that fact would not be known for a year.

The Spanish Civil War broke out on July 17, 1936 and immediately became a violent religious war — mingled with issues of politics, economics and institutional privilege. Catholics were hunted down, tortured and killed. In that opening week of the war, Provincial Niceforo was conducting a canonical visitation of the Passionist monastery of Santo Cristo de la Luz in Daimiel, a municipality in Ciudad Real, Castile La-Mancha (near Madrid), Spain. It was a House of Studies for young seminarians.

On July 21, 1936, on the fourth day of the civil war, he received word that this monastery would be stormed. He roused the priests and seminarians, gave general absolution and Holy Communion, commenting that "Gethsemane has come" — before armed men burst into the monastery. All were ordered out to the local cemetery. The religious were set free at that time, but the Popular Front notified their fighters not to let them get away.

On July 23, 1936, Father Niceforo and four others were shot dead at Manzanares; the other Passionists were subsequently executed at other locations. A witness to the murder of Father Niceforo reported that after having forgiven his murderers and being shot, the priest turned his eyes to heaven and then turned and smiled at his murderers. At this point, one of the armed men became totally infuriated and shouted "What, are you still smiling?" and then shot the priest at point blank range.⁷ Father Niceforo was only 43.

He thus became one of the Passionist "Martyrs of Damiel," a group of 26 priests and young seminarians (ages 19-21) of the Congregation of the Passion that were killed by anti-clerical soldiers during the Red Terror of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). A full year passed before the story became known worldwide, and was published in *The Sign*.

The opening of the investigative process occurred on May 8, 1948 and concluded on September 29, 1951. The petitioner was the Congregation of Passionists in Daimiel, Ciudad Real (Diocese of Santander), Spain. A Decree on the validity of the investigative process was issued on September 27, 1984, and the cause for

canonization of the Passionist martyrs of Daimiel was then opened. A *positio* was submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 1987 — followed by a meeting of theological consultors on May 17, 1988 and a session of cardinals and bishop-members of the Congregation on October 18, 1988. The Congregation promulgated a Decree of Martyrdom on November 28, 1988, declaring them Venerable.

Pope John Paul II beatified them on October 1, 1989. In an unusual gesture of solidarity the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, traveled from England to join the pontiff for the ceremony. His action was unique since the Anglican Church does not recognize beatifications and canonizations — but the occasion was an ecumenical recognition of creeping secularism and atheism rooted in earlier 20th century upheavals. The two prelates together, in this dramatic gesture, sought to stimulate faith in the primacy of Jesus in his Passion.

The relics of these Spanish martyrs are preserved and venerated in the crypt of the monastery of Daimiel, which has been converted into a retreat house and spirituality center. The liturgical feast is celebrated on July 24.

The postulator is Rev. Giovanni Zubiani, C.P. The Congregation's protocol number: 700.

The Servants of God

Demetrius Gallitzin (1770-1840)

Prince Dimitri Dmitrievich Gallitzin was born on December 22, 1770 into a world of inherited privilege at The Hague, where his father was the Russian ambassador. His mother, a German countess, was a friend of Voltaire and a follower of Diderot — until a severe illness in 1786 led to her return to the Catholic Church, in which she had been nominally reared. While raised nominally as Russian Orthodox, Dimitri was greatly influenced by his mother's circle of Catholic intellectuals, priests, and aristocrats. At age 17, the young prince was formally received into the Catholic Church.

Following the custom of young aristocrats at the time, the prince completed his education by travel. On October 28, 1792, he arrived in Baltimore, Maryland, bearing a letter of introduction to Bishop John Carroll. The prince then decided to enter the priesthood and was ordained in March 1795 — one of the first Catholic priests ordained in America. The young priest's aristocratic manners and misdirected zeal led to repeated reprovals by Bishop Carroll.

In 1799, Gallitzin founded the settlement of Loretto in what is now Cambria County, Pennsylvania — an expansion of the "McGuire Settlement" established by Captain Michael McGuire in 1788. McGuire had bequeathed several hundred acres of land to Bishop Carroll for a Church, cemetery and support of resident clergy. Gallitzin dedicated Loretto's parish church to the honor of St. Michael the Archangel — reflective of the priest's Russia roots and Michael McGuire's initial work.

In 1802, Gallitzin became a naturalized American citizen under the name Augustine Smith — a name that he discarded in 1809. He authored a number of pamphlets designed to defend articles

⁶Niceforo Diez, "I Entered Mexico," *The Sign* 16: 1 (August 1936), 27-28.

⁷The priest's words are quoted at several Passionist websites, including: <http://www.passionistnuns.org/Saints/BINiceforo/index.htm>.

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of Catholic faith against Protestant attacks. Gallitzin was later suggested for the vacant see of Philadelphia in 1814 but there were objections due to the priest's accumulated and unpaid debts as evidence of a lack of financial acumen to run a diocese. Yet, Gallitzin was later suggested for the bishoprics of Bardstown (Kentucky), Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. Gallitzin built up the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania; the 12 Catholic families that he found on his arrival were to number in the thousands at his death. Gallitzin died at Loretto on May 6, 1840 at age 69 and is buried near the church, now a minor basilica.

In 1899-1901, steel baron Charles M. Schwab funded construction of the current basilica church at Gallitzin's tomb. The nearby town of Gallitzin was named for Western Pennsylvania's first English-speaking priest. The Pennsylvania Railroad tunneled through the summit of the Allegheny Mountains, operating the Gallitzin Tunnel through the ridge into the town.

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, in whose territory Gallitzin worked and died, is the petitioner in the cause for canonization — operating under the title "Cause for Father Demetrius Gallitzin." In 2004, Bishop Joseph Adamec named a diocesan task force to begin work on Gallitzin's cause. On June 6, 2005, the Congregation named Gallitzin a Servant of God. The investigative inquiry by the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown opened on March 11, 2007, at a ceremony in the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel in Loretto, where Gallitzin ministered for 41 years.

On February 11, 2013, Bishop Mark L. Barchak of Altoona-Johnstown appointed Father Luis F. Escalante as Roman Postulator for the Cause of the Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzin, "The Apostle of the Alleghenies." The Congregation's protocol number: 2661.

Theodore Foley (1913-1974)

Daniel Bible Foley was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on March 3, 1913, the son of Daniel and Helen Bible Foley. He attended Sacred Heart School and Cathedral High School. He then entered Holy Cross Preparatory Seminary in Dunkirk, New York, which was operated by the Congregation of St. Paul of the Cross, popularly known as the Passionists. This religious order first came to the United States in 1844 and settled in Pittsburgh, establishing St. Paul of the Cross Monastery (and later Retreat House) on the city's South Side Slopes.

Daniel professed his vows as a Passionist on August 15, 1933 at Our Mother of Sorrows Monastery in West Springfield, Massachusetts, and received the religious name Theodore and his title of Mary Immaculate. On April 23, 1940, he was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Michael Curley in the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in Baltimore, Maryland.

He was a professor of philosophy from 1941 to 1942, and in the latter year began graduate studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he obtained his doctorate in Theology in 1945. He then taught theology at several Passionist Houses of Studies in the northeast and mid-Atlantic. He served as Director of Passionist students in Boston and Hartford from 1953 to 1956, when he was appointed rector of St. Paul's Monastery

in Pittsburgh. During this time, he became a noted confessor, attracting long lines of penitents at the monastery church. He was an enthusiastic sports fan of the Pittsburgh Pirates and regularly attended baseball games at Forbes Field in the Oakland section of the city.

In 1958, he was elected General Consultor for the Passionists in Rome. On May 7, 1964, Father Foley was elected Superior General of Passionists throughout the world. He was the first American from the eastern United States to hold this position. He thus guided the Passionists through the many changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council, the third and fourth sessions of which he attended through its conclusion in 1965. He sought to bring unity and peace in the midst of tumultuous change. During this time, Father Foley served as confessor to Pope Paul VI and to Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe. In 1970 Father Foley was re-elected as Superior General, but died unexpectedly in Rome on October 9, 1974 at age 61 after contracting a para-typhoid illness on a trip to Asia.

On May 9, 2008, the Province of St. Paul of the Cross (then headquartered in Union City, New Jersey), acting as petitioner, opened the cause for Father Foley in Rome. The diocesan investigative process continues at present and has not yet concluded. On June 23, 2009, Springfield Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell conducted a blessing ceremony in honor of Father Foley at Sacred Heart Church and commented: "There is holiness and then there is the superheroes of holiness, and many people recognized him as a superhero of holiness."⁸

On September 28, 2009, the body of Father Foley was removed from the Passionist plot in Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Springfield, Massachusetts. It was transported to St. Paul of the Cross Monastery in Pittsburgh where it was welcomed by Bishop William Winter at the church on October 28, 2009. The body now lies in a marble sarcophagus constructed at the base of the crucifixion scene at the rear of the church.

The postulator of his cause is Father Giovanni Zubiani, C.P. The Congregation's protocol number: 2820.

John Anthony Hardon, S.J. (1914-2000)

John Anthony Hardon was born on June 18, 1914 to a devout Catholic family in Midland, Beaver County, Pennsylvania. When only a year old, young John lost his father in an industrial accident, when scaffolding collapsed under him as he moved to secure a steel beam dangling dangerously over co-workers. John's 26-year-old mother then moved to Cleveland with her only child. The mother, a Franciscan tertiary, never remarried — out of concern for the influence a stepfather might have on her son's vocation. The mother attended Mass daily and received Communion. She embraced her difficult financial circumstances with courage and grace; the home lacked a phone and buying a newspaper was a rarity — but there were religious pictures and a considerable amount of spiritual discussion.

⁸As quoted in Our Sunday Visitor's Priest Year News, appearing at the website: <http://www.priestyearnews.com/2009/06/superhero-of-holiness.html>.

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Anna took her son at age four to his first all-night vigil at the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation in Carey, Ohio. After receiving his First Communion at age 6, he resolved to become a priest and thereafter accompanied his mother to daily Mass. He attended St. Wendelin School, walking the two miles from home to school daily. In 8th grade, a story about St. Peter Canisius inspired his interest in the Jesuits. Following high school at Cathedral Latin School, John attended John Carroll University. The Jesuits there profoundly influenced John. Foregoing an interest in becoming a medical doctor, John entered the Jesuit novitiate on September 1, 1936. He obtained a Master's degree in Philosophy in 1941. On June 18, 1947 he was ordained a priest.

The young priest obtained his Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1951. In 1956, he released his much-acclaimed *Protestant Churches in America*, and then became a visiting professor at several Protestant theological schools. He came a consultant to the Second Vatican Council about liturgy. He then began work for the Congregations for Religious and the Clergy, implementing the documents of Vatican II. In 1971, he helped found the Institute on Religious Life. He was a principal in the development of a media apostolate sought by Pope Paul VI, including the opening of the Pontifical Catechetical Institute to correct the catechetical formation of religious educators.

He was not without controversy. His opposition to New Age processes that he viewed as dangerous to the Catholic faith resulted in his being forbidden to teach at any Jesuit institution — a prohibition that lasted for 16 years until his death. The Detroit Archdiocese followed with a ban on use of his catechetical materials. This has been termed a “white martyrdom” in the cause of Catholic orthodoxy.

The author of over forty books, Hardon in 1975 issued *Catholic Catechism: A Contemporary Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which was considered a defining volume of Catholic orthodoxy and a reaction to the controversial *Dutch Catechism*. Hardon's work served as the normative standard until the 1992 publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* — the official codified teaching of the Church, promulgated by Pope John Paul II. Hardon also served as executive editor of *The Catholic Faith* magazine. He was an advisor to many Catholic organizations, including Catholics United for the Faith. He developed a catechetical instruction program for Mother Teresa of Calcutta's congregation. Devoted to Eucharistic adoration, he spent at least three hours a day praying before the Blessed Sacrament.

Hardon died from bone cancer at the Jesuits' Colombiere Center in Clarkston, Michigan on December 30, 2000. He willed his extensive library and correspondence to Archbishop (later Cardinal and Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura) Raymond L. Burke. Burke, then Archbishop of St. Louis and national director of the Marian Catechist Apostolate that Hardon had founded, initiated the priest's cause for canonization in 2005. On May 31, 2007, the Archdiocese of St. Louis, rather than the Archdiocese of Detroit (in whose territory Hardon had died), was deemed the competent forum. A formal diocesan inquiry has not yet opened there.

There are dual petitioners: (1) the Father John Anthony Hardon Archive and Guild in St. Louis, Missouri, and (2) the Marian Catechist Apostolate in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The role of the Father John Anthony Hardon Archive and Guild was transferred to Eternal Life in Bardstown, Kentucky in March 2013.

Father Robert T. McDermott, S.J., is the postulator of the cause, a work that he began in 2008. Father McDermott studied directly under Father Hardon while a graduate student of Catholic Doctrine at St. John's University in Jamaica, New York. The Congregation's protocol number: 2775.

There are three additional candidates for canonization with strong ties to Western Pennsylvania. While they were neither natives of this area, nor temporary residents, their repeated visits to this area really made them “family” to Catholics in the western part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These three individuals are:

Fulton John Sheen (1895-1979)

Peter John Sheen was born on May 8, 1895 in El Paso, Illinois. Throughout his life, he was known by his mother's maiden name, Fulton. He studied at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, where famed Pittsburgh architect John T. Comès instructed the future bishop as to Catholic Church architecture. Sheen was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria on September 20, 1919. At that time, he made a promise to make a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, which he kept faithfully for the rest of his life.

He pursued post-graduate studies at the University of Louvain, Belgium, earning the Cardinal Mercier Prize for International Philosophy and attained the *Aggrege* degree with outstanding distinction in 1923. He studied further at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1924, Sheen earned a Doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Angelicum in Rome. From 1926 until 1950, he taught philosophy and theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He encouraged teachers to “educate for a Catholic Renaissance” in the United States.

Sheen was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of New York on June 11, 1951, where he would serve until 1965. He wrote the first of 73 books in 1925. In 1930, he began a weekly Sunday night radio broadcast called *The Catholic Hour*. In 1951, Sheen began a weekly television program entitled *Life is Worth Living* — the unpaid bishop spoke in front of a live audience at the Adelphi Theatre in New York City without a script or cue cards, occasionally using a chalkboard. His program challenged ratings giant Milton Berle. Fan mail of 8,500 letters arrived each week. In 1952, Sheen won an Emmy Award. His best remembered presentation came in February 1953, when he concluded a show by saying: “Stalin must one day meet his judgment.” The Russian dictator suffered a stroke a few days later and died within the week. Sheen's show ran until 1957, drawing 30 million viewers a week.

In 1958, Sheen became national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, serving for eight years until being appointed Bishop of Rochester, New York. He hosted *The Fulton Sheen Program* from 1961 to 1968, essentially the same as his original TV series. In 1974, he initiated an international cassette tape ministry.

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Sheen was known for his conversion of notables such as Clare Boothe Luce, Henry Ford II, Communist Louis Budenz, and violinist Fritz Kreisler. On October 15, 1969, Sheen resigned his bishopric and was appointed Archbishop of the titular see of Newport (Wales). On October 2, 1979, Pope John Paul II visited St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and embraced Sheen, saying: "You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a loyal son of the Church."⁹ Sheen died of heart disease less than two months later, on December 9, 1979 and was interred in the crypt of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation was formed in 1998, and officials then approached John Cardinal O'Connor of New York for permission to commence the process for the cause of Sheen's canonization, as Sheen had died there. However, on September 14, 2002, the Diocese of Peoria (in which Sheen had been born) was deemed the competent forum — and the Diocese of Peoria became the official petitioner. On that date, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints officially opened the cause for Archbishop Sheen's canonization and conferred on him the title "Servant of God."

The diocesan investigative inquiry opened on September 19, 2003. On February 3, 2008, the diocesan phase of the inquiry into the life and words of Fulton Sheen came to a close. The investigative report was sealed at a ceremony at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria. Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, postulator of the cause, was commissioned by the bishop of Peoria to present the report to the Congregation in Rome. Two months later on April 15, the investigation into Sheen's heroic virtue officially opened in Rome with a ceremony at the Congregation's office. The Congregation approved the diocesan inquiry on October 17, 2008.

On May 25, 2011, Peoria Bishop Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C., presented the *positio* (the summary of the life and work of Sheen) to Pope Benedict XVI. The pope mentioned that he knew Archbishop Sheen personally and had worked with him during the Second Vatican Council. A little more than six months later, on December 11, the diocesan tribunal's three-month-long examination of a potential miracle through the intercession of Sheen — that would support beatification — officially closed, and the documentation was sealed and sent to Rome. Six months later, on June 28, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI announced that the Congregation had recognized Sheen's life as one of "heroic virtue" and declared Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen "Venerable."

In 2006, documentation of two claimed miracles attributed to Sheen was sent to Rome. One of these involved a child in the Pittsburgh region who recovered from a critical illness after relatives prayed to Archbishop Sheen for intervention. A tribunal for the Diocese of Pittsburgh spent over five months investigating the matter. The inquiry opened on February 13 and closed on July 27, 2006. More than 1,000 pages of documentation were then sent

⁹The pope's words are recounted by the narrator in the biographical movie of Sheen, entitled "Servant of All" (2010), as well as in various published sources.

to the Congregation in Rome.¹⁰ The second attributed miracle was from Sheen's home diocese of Peoria, and was simultaneously investigated there. On February 20, 2009, the diocesan inquiry as to miracles was approved, and the normal Roman medical investigation followed. In March 2014, the medical experts concluded that there was no natural explanation for survival of the child in the Peoria case, which will next be reviewed by a board of theologians in order to be authenticated. Final approval would lead to beatification.

And what was Sheen's connection to Western Pennsylvania *before* the local miracle attributed to him? The young Sheen early on had made the acquaintance of Father Thomas Coakley, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside and spiritual advisor to architect John T. Comès (who had been the instructor of seminarian Sheen in the ecclesiastical fine arts). And from the inception of Sheen's two and one-half decades of teaching at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., he also made the acquaintance of Pittsburgh diocesan priests who were pursuing graduate studies and Pittsburgh religious order seminarians and priests who were studying in the national capital. Among these Pittsburghers were two priest-brothers, Howard Carroll and Coleman Carroll. Howard, who had received his doctorate at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, was serving as assistant secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (later renamed the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) and Coleman was pursuing his doctorate in canon law. Sheen was to become life-long friends of the two brothers, and their third brother, Father Walter Carroll, who was serving in the office of the Secretary of State at the Vatican. Through these many priests and students Sheen also became a friend of another prominent Pittsburgh priest, Father Lawrence O'Connell, pastor of the Church of the Epiphany in the Lower Hill District.

Sheen undertook a series of talks in Pittsburgh during the first week in January 1927, at Coakley's new Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside, which led *The Pittsburgh Catholic* to acknowledge him as "one of the most brilliant minds in the country"¹¹ — "one of the clearest thinkers and perhaps the most brilliant writer on philosophical subjects that the Catholic Church has put forward in this present generation,"¹² standing "in the front rank of Catholic preachers."

Over almost 50 years, Sheen appeared repeatedly as the speaker at a number of events tied to Coakley and O'Connell. Sheen's next trip to Pittsburgh took place in 1928, when he delivered a Lenten series of seven evenings at Sacred Heart Church titled "The Axis of the World's History." He returned to Sacred Heart Church several

¹⁰William Hill, "The Road to Sainthood? Diocese Investigates Alleged Miracle Credited to Intercession of Archbishop Fulton Sheen," *Pittsburgh Catholic* (August 4, 2006), 7; Ann Rodgers, "Sainthood at Stake: Claim of Miracle Studied for Archbishop to be Beatified," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (August 27, 2006), B-1, B-2.

¹¹Elizabeth Daflinger, "Dr. Sheen Talks on Psychology," *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (January 6, 1927), 1.

¹²Thomas F. Coakley, "Book Review," *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (December 30, 1926), 11.

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more times: (1) in 1951 as Bishop Sheen for the funeral of Father Coakley, (2) in 1954 as the homilist for the dedication of the Lady Chapel in the church at the invitation of the new pastor and Sheen's old friend, the now-Auxiliary Bishop Coleman Carroll, and (3) in 1972 as Archbishop Sheen to serve as homilist for the centennial anniversary of the founding of Sacred Heart Parish. The last was an event captured on a long-play record.¹³

Sheen returned to Pittsburgh on February 28, 1938 as the keynote speaker at the 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of Father O'Connell, where the then-Monsignor addressed over 2,000 attendees at the testimonial dinner in the William Penn Hotel. The address of Sheen, the well-known radio "Catholic Hour" orator, was broadcast nationally and generated strong media attention.

While other American priests enjoyed a good relationship with Sheen, none of these appear to have been so high-profiled as those Sheen enjoyed with the Carroll brothers, Coakley, and O'Connell.¹² Sheen was also present at a ceremony with Pittsburgh Bishop Vincent Leonard in 1970. In 1975, the Archbishop again returned to receive an award from the Catholic Youth Association at a dinner jammed with political, social, and other prominent officials from Pittsburgh and beyond.

Sheen was bi-ritual; he was the first Latin Rite prelate to receive a special indult from Rome to celebrate the Byzantine Divine Liturgy in the United States, using the English language. His connection to the Byzantine Catholic Church began in 1932 when he participated in a Byzantine Divine Liturgy at the 31st International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, Ireland. In subsequent years, Sheen was homilist at Byzantine Bishop Daniel Ivancho's episcopal ordination in Pittsburgh on November 5, 1946. In May 1955, Sheen was the homilist at the Solemn Pontifical High Mass celebrating the fourth Seminary Day in the chapel of SS. Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Seminary on the city's North Side. In September 1955, Sheen celebrated the first Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in English at the Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Mount Saint Macrina Monastery in Uniontown, Fayette County (Greensburg diocese), the motherhouse of the Ruthenian Province of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great. This event drew over 120,000 pilgrims, both Byzantine and Latin. The service was broadcast around the world via the Voice of America. Sheen returned again for the pilgrimages in 1956 and 1957, drawing similarly sized crowds.

On September 12, 1956, Sheen returned to Pittsburgh to lecture on "Mission to the World" before a capacity audience of 2,000 at Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland, on behalf of the Society for

¹³See "Sacred Heart Parish 1872-1972, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania" [LP] (True Images Recordings, 1972).

¹⁴While there were many newspaper accounts of Sheen's activities in Pittsburgh, the best is a summary letter by Sacred Heart parish's current pastor, Rev. Robert J. Grecco, "Archbishop Sheen was No Stranger to Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Catholic* (August 11, 2006), 12.

¹⁵Andrea Ambrosi heads a law firm in Rome that is active in the field of canon law and works closely with the members of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints. Ambrosi began his training in the Office of the General Promoter of Faith (*advocatus diaboli* or Devil's Advocate); in 1978 he became an attorney for the Congregation, and a postulator in 1992. The firm's current work includes candidates from the Spanish Civil War as well as Nazi and other persecutions. See the firm's website at http://www.beatificationprocess.com/en/chisiamo_en.shtml.

the Propagation of the Faith. For years, the *Pittsburgh Catholic* newspaper carried Bishop Sheen's weekly column "God Love You."

Dr. Andrea Ambrosi is the Roman postulator and Rev. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R., who was ordained a priest by Sheen, is vice-postulator of the cause in the United States. The Congregation's protocol number: 2505.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

Dorothy Day was born on November 8, 1897 in Brooklyn, New York, to an Episcopalian family. The family moved to San Francisco, where they survived the 1906 earthquake; the devastation and resultant homelessness deeply impacted the young girl. She later lived in New York, was inclined to radical social reading, and bought her clothing and shoes from discount stores to save money. She engaged in anti-war and women's suffrage protests, and maintained friendships with prominent American Communists.

In the 1920s, Dorothy began a period of spiritual awakening. She began to attend Sunday Mass. She identified with Catholics, who constituted the majority of the working class with whom she made common cause. After giving birth to a daughter in 1926, Dorothy chanced upon a Sister of Charity and inquired about baptism for the child. Religious instruction followed. In December 1927, Dorothy made a conditional baptism (due to her prior baptism in the Episcopalian Church) at a Catholic Church on Staten Island. In 1920, Day began writing for Catholic publications, such as *Commonweal* and *America*. In the early 1940s she became a Benedictine oblate, with its sustaining religious practices.

In 1931, she met Peter Maurin, with whom she would co-found the Catholic Worker Movement. Maurin had a vision of social justice for the poor, inspired by St. Francis of Assisi. He grounded Day in the Catholic theology necessary for her social action. The two began publication of the *Catholic Worker* in 1933 to promote Catholic social teaching and pacifist positions. This developed into a "house of hospitality" (without charge) in New York and throughout the U.S. and other countries. Pittsburgh was one of the early locations of such a house, and that brought Dorothy into contact with Father Charles Owen Rice and other local priests active in the labor movement. Day stayed at the St. Joseph House of Hospitality that Rice opened in the city's Hill District in 1937.¹⁶ Pittsburgh priest Fr. John Hugo was a spiritual advisor to Day. Her ties to this city were deeply spiritual.

Day received the Laetare Medal from Notre Dame University in 1972. She visited Mother Teresa in Calcutta. She spoke at the Eucharistic Congress held in Philadelphia in 1976. She died of a heart attack on November 29, 1980 at Maryhouse in New York City. She was buried in Resurrection Cemetery on Staten Island.

The Claretian Missionaries proposed her canonization in 1983. In March 2000, John Cardinal O'Connor of New York opened her cause, thereby allowing her to be called a "Servant of God." The Guild for Dorothy Day, in New York City, was the formal petitioner. In November 2012, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York sought the endorsement of the US Conference of Catholic

¹⁶ Representative of Day's many visits to Pittsburgh, with attendant publicity, is the following article "Catholic Radical Alliance: Dorothy Day Pays Visit," *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (June 2, 1938), 1.

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Bishops to advance the cause at the diocesan level — and they unanimously endorsed sainthood. In death, like her life, Dorothy Day remains a somewhat polarizing figure — and her canonization process has received criticism from both right and left.

There is no current postulator. The Congregation's protocol number: 2261.

Gwen Cecilia Coniker (1939-2002)

Gwen Cecilia Billings was born in Chicago on September 27, 1939. She met her future husband, Jerry, when she was 14 years old and both were students at St. Gregory High School. They were married on August 15, 1959. Gwen was 19 and Jerry was 20 years old.

In the 1960s, they became involved in the nascent right-to-life movement. By 1971, they had concluded that the antidote to abortion and family disintegration was spiritual, not political. In that year, the family moved to Fatima, Portugal for a "two-year retreat." Upon return to the U.S., the pro-life couple worked to establish in Wisconsin the national center of the Militia Immaculata (also known as the Knights of the Immaculata), an international Catholic evangelization movement founded by St. Maximilian Kolbe in 1917.

They were about to found a ministry to families. In 1975, Gwen refused to have an abortion after doctors said she would otherwise die giving birth to the 11th of her 13th children. The Conikers then founded the Apostolate for Family Consecration in 1975. At the same time, they began producing television shows for EWTN. In 1990, the ministry purchased an abandoned seminary property from the Diocese of Steubenville, and began restoration of the buildings — operating Catholic Familyland, a 950-acre Catholic resort and retreat center in Bloomingdale, Ohio. It offers catechetical and educational programs and has published a Church-approved 2-volume *Apostolate's Family Catechism*. The Apostolate later spread to Philippines, Mexico, Belgium, Burma, Russia, Nigeria, and Portugal — and operated Familyland Television Network (until its subsequent discontinuance). The Apostolate enjoyed the support of Francis Cardinal Arinze and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). Blessed Mother of Calcutta joined its advisory council in 1976.

Gwen and her husband met Pope John Paul II nine times between 1984 and 2002. In 1999, Pope John Paul II named the Conikers as one of 20 couples to advise the Pontifical Council for the Family. The Coniker family represented the theme "Children, the Springtime of Hope for Family and Society" at the Jubilee Year 2000 celebration in St. Peter's Square with the pope before hundreds of thousands of people. In 2004, the pope named Coniker a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Family. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a Decree of Recognition and Approval for the Apostolate as a private international association of the faithful of pontifical right, with a juridical personality, in accordance with canon law. Families evangelizing families!

In 2001, Gwen Coniker was diagnosed with hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver from a tainted transfusion administered during one of her Caesareans. She was set for a transplant when doctors found cancer. She died of on June 22, 2002, and was buried in the crypt of St. John Vianney Chapel at Catholic Familyland, Bloomingdale, Ohio.

Just two months past the minimum five-year waiting period for commencement of the canonization process, Catholic Familyland petitioned for the opening of her cause. Bishop Daniel Conlan of Steubenville let the cause for her canonization proceed. The initial investigation into whether she showed "heroic virtue" began in September 2007; part of the evidence presented was her refusal to abort her eleventh child, Theresa, which her doctor had advised.

The uniqueness of Gwen's cause was that it would fill a need for a saint with a healthy marriage, and Rome is seeking such saints. Gwen and Jerry were married for 42 years and their family consisted of 13 children and 52 grandchildren. Gwen's connection to Western Pennsylvania included here frequent visits in the Pittsburgh area, where some of her family lived, and she enjoyed Mother's Day at the Grand Concourse in Station Square, Pittsburgh.

Her postulator is Dr. Andrea Ambrosi in Rome. The Congregation's protocol number: 2802.

St. Paul of the Cross Monastery was a magnet for these holy people. Father Francis Seelos laid the cornerstone of the monastery. Mother Katharine Drexel sought the counsel of a spiritual director there. Father Bernard Mary Silvestrelli helped to launch its retreat ministry. Father Niceforo of Jesus and Mary stayed there in the interim between his exile from the violent persecution in Mexico and his departure for Spain, where he was ultimately martyred. Father Theodore Foley was the rector of St. Paul's Monastery and is buried there.

For further information, readers may consult these websites:

St. John Neumann: <http://www.stjohnneumann.org/>

St. Katharine Drexel: <http://www.katharinedrexel.org/HOME.html>

Father Francis Xavier Seelos: <http://www.seelos.org/>

Mother Frances Siedliska: <http://www.nazarethcsfn.org/index.php/about-us/history/>

Father Bernard Mary Silvestrelli: http://thepassionists.com/?page_id=131

Father Niceforo and the Martyrs of Dairiel: <http://newsaints.faithweb.com/martyrs/MSPC26.htm>

Father Theodore Foley: <http://theodorefoley.org>

Father Demetrius Gallitzin: <http://demetriusgallitzin.org/>

Father John Anthony Hardon: <http://www.hardonsj.org/>

Archbishop Fulton John Sheen: <http://www.archbishopsheencause.org/>

Dorothy Day: <http://dorothydayguild.org/>

Gwen Cecilia Coniker: www.familyland.org

The current state of all open causes appears at: <http://newsaints.faithweb.com/index.htm> which may be searched by the year of death of the candidate or by the Congregation's protocol number.