

**When the Saints go marching In! *Lessons learned from Causes, Past and Present***  
Presented by Mark G. Thiel at the Tekakwitha Conference, Alexandria, Louisiana, July 2015



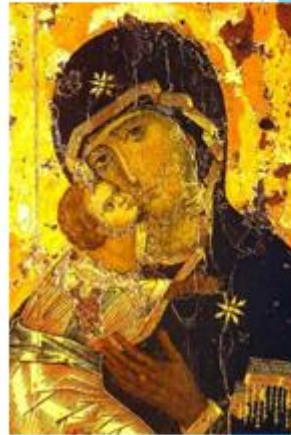
1. Welcome to “*When the Saints Go Marching In!*” and thank you for attending. My name is Mark Thiel, the Marquette University archivist who keeps the historical records of the Black and Indian Mission Office and the Tekakwitha Conference with some *Lessons Learned from canonization Causes, Past and Present.*

**Saints: Why canonize Them?**



2. Since its earliest days, the Christian community has proclaimed its notable saints as heroes who lead the march into Heaven. From all Christians – laity, clergy, and religious of all cultures, continents, and ways of life, they have provided a mosaic of diverse models of Christian virtue who have served as our intercessors and mediators with God for granting miracles and favors. In so doing, the Catholic Church continues to teach that while Jesus holds all power and all prayer must be answered by him, he chooses to *not act alone*. Rather, he *collaborates* with his vast multitude, the *Communion of Saints*.

### Origins of Canonization: Saints Stephen, Martyr, & Mary, Mother of God



3. In 34 A.D., soon after Jesus' crucifixion, the Apostles appointed **Stephen** as one of the first deacons to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem. He healed people and worked miracles too, which angered some who confronted him and stoned him to death. Then the Christian community proclaimed him a *martyr and saint*, and thus began the practice of proclaiming as saints those among us who lived exceptional holy Christian lives and entering their names into special canons or honor rolls. At first, local bishops presided over proceedings to evaluate candidates for canonization, and like Stephen, most early saints were so recognized because they, too, were martyrs who died for their faith. But others lived exemplary Christian lives by word and deed without being put to death, most notably, **Mary, the Mother of God** who was a lay woman. According to Catholic Church teachings, she passed – body and soul – directly into heaven, and since then, she has reappeared worldwide and has been honored by many titles.

## Papal Authority, 800-1200



4. As canonization proceedings evolved, bishops, by the Middle Ages increasingly sought intervention and more authoritative decisions by the Holy See in Rome, and through church-wide councils, they then collectively surrendered their canonization authority.

## Holiness: Pope Gregory IX, 1232



5. Pope Gregory IX canonized the popular Franciscan, St. Anthony of Padua, less than a year after his death, in 1232. While examining his cause, Pope Gregory established this principal for judging holiness in candidates, which is followed today: *Neither virtues without miracles nor miracles without virtues provide sufficient grounds alone – the Church must judge both.*

## Procedures: Pope Sixtus V, 1588



6. Three centuries later, Pope Sixtus V founded the *Congregation of Rites* – the predecessor of today's *Congregation of the Causes of Saints* – which developed standardized procedures for judging candidates. However, then as now, the Holy Father makes the ultimate judgement on who's a saint, which is always regarded as infallible, and not the congregation's procedures, which have been reformed periodically as needed.

## The Virtues & the Positio: Pope Urban VII, 1682



7. Pope Urban VII further required petitioners to explain how their candidate lived a life of holiness, which they had to do through a written questionnaire. It defined Christian holiness as practicing the seven Christian virtues defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, on the right, and other theologians, which are, *faith*,

*hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.* In response, the answers by petitioners evolved into the *positio* or *position*, a lengthy three-part work with a *vita* or biography, supporting *documents*, and an *informatio* or summary of arguments.

**Medical Miracles:  
Jake Finkbonner healed & miracle authenticated,  
2006-2011**



8. The Church regards *miracles and Divine signs* as phenomena not explicable by natural and scientific laws that may be attributed to God, a saint or sainthood candidate, or religious leader. For canonization causes, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints evaluates all alleged miracles attributed to a candidate, the vast majority of which pertain to healing. Shown here are scenes from the 2006 and 2012 Tekakwitha Conference in Seattle and Albany, New York respectively, with the Lummi boy Jake Finkbonner whose miraculous cure led to St. Kateri's canonization. Like her, he survived a life-threatening childhood disease with facial scars remaining. Earlier in 2006, he laid in Seattle Children's Hospital with an aggressive strep A infection on his face while swathed in bandages. Then Sister Kateri Mitchell visited and prayed with his parents to St. Kateri for the disease to stop while holding St. Kateri's relic. According to medical personnel, the disease was gone completely moments later when they removed his bandages. On the left, Jake, his family, and pastor gathered with Seattle Archbishop Brunet who announced that the Congregation was evaluating the cure, which involved scrutinizing his medical records and the testimony of Sr. Kateri and Jake's parents, doctors, nurses, and other witnesses. On the right, months after the Vatican announced it authenticated the cure as a miracle through St. Kateri's intercession and that she would be canonized later that year, Sister Kateri watched while Jake handed the cross-shaped reliquary with St. Kateri's relic to a representative of the next conference. The Congregation, which is comprised of cardinals and bishops, evaluates all alleged miracles on a case-by-case basis aided by opinions from hired *consultors* who are experts in history, medicine, or theology. Most are Italian clergy and university professors who receive meager compensation. First, historical and medical consultors determine whether an event is explicable through natural and scientific laws. If they conclude unanimously that an event is inexplicable, it's evaluated further by theological consultors who consider if and how the candidate, prayer, and relics were involved while determining if it's a miracle.

It they conclude that it's a miracle, first a panel of cardinals and then the pope must confirm it. Furthermore, miracles must be clearly attributable to only one intercessor with God, and only after all other possible explanations have proven inadequate, may the Church assume Divine intervention and declare an event worthy of veneration. In so doing, the Church does not require belief in any extra-Scriptural miracle as necessary for salvation.



9. **Pope St. John XXIII** began the Church's renewal by calling the Second Vatican Council, which then enabled Popes Paul VI, **St. John Paul II**, and Francis to update the canonization path. Paul VI founded the *Congregation of the Causes of Saints* as a separate body to focus exclusively on evaluating sainthood causes, while several advisory groups studied how to update its procedures. One study looked at 275 causes and noted that few came from the Western Hemisphere, even though nearly half of all Catholics lived there, and while most of the world's Catholics are lay people, they comprised less than a fourth of the candidates. Another study concluded that modern medical advances, coupled with the Vatican's strict authentication standards, was shrinking the realm of consideration for authenticating miracles, which prompted some theologians to call for more consideration of physical miracles not related to healing. Concerned with these issues, St. John Paul II instituted more reforms: He restored involvement by local bishops and simplified procedures; he reduced from four to two the number of authenticated miracles required for canonizing non-martyrs; he permitted *positios* to be written in local languages instead of Latin; and he doubled the number of Vatican *consultors*. Since then, the number of canonizations per year increased markedly. He canonized 110 new saints, which by 2005, doubled the pace to four per year. Now a decade later, Francis has more than doubled that again to ten per year.

## A Shadowy Cause: St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, 1723-2002



10. In 1531, a lay Aztec convert and farmer, **Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin**, received four visions from *Mary, the Mother of God*, who presented herself as Our Lady of Guadalupe, now the premiere Catholic symbol in Mexico. She wore traditional Aztec royal dress, and in his Aztec language, she requested that a church be built in her honor on a barren hill where an Aztec temple had once stood. Furthermore, as a sign for the bishop, she requested that he gather roses in his cloak from that site, even though they were out-of-season. Nonetheless, he found roses blooming, and while presenting them to the bishop, they discovered her image imprinted on his cloak, which remains permanently and inexplicably vibrant and well-preserved today. After its initial opening in 1723, the cause for Juan Diego languished; then in 1974, it was renewed and he was beatified in 1990. Because some scholars doubted his existence owing to the paucity of written evidence, consultants reexamined and approved it while a medical miracle from his beatification year was authenticated as well. In 2002, St. John Paul II canonized him and exclaimed, “*Mexico needs the indigenous people and the indigenous people need Mexico!*” As the first indigenous saint from the Americas, Juan Diego’s canonization reaffirmed the dignity of Catholic and Native traditions and the rights of native people. His remarkable cloak has been continuously displayed in the succession of churches below, built in response to our Lady’s request, and yes, roses still bloom on that holy hill.

## Heroic Missionaries & Saints:

Ss. Isacc Jogues, S.J., Jean de Brébeuf, S.J., et.al., 1884-1930

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, R.S.C.J., 1895-1986

St. Junípero Serra, O.F.M., -2015

Jacques Marquette, S.J.



11. Across the Americas, many missionaries and native converts lived heroic lives while spreading the Gospel. However, in Anglo-dominated North America, hostile governments handicapped the Catholic Church, which indirectly delayed efforts to open the first causes to canonization until after the development of national councils of bishops. At Baltimore in 1884, the third council in the United States took the first step and nominated who were believed to be their most viable candidates. From 17<sup>th</sup> century New York State near Albany, they nominated two martyred Jesuit missionary priests and **Kateri Tekakwitha**, a lay Algonquin-Mohawk convert born a generation later at the Jesuits' martyrdom site. Next, the Canadian council of bishops nominated five martyrs from Ontario and Quebec – all Jesuit priests and no lay native converts – thereby ignoring several notable native candidates, which latter-day critics saw as racist. Then, in spite of robust native support for Kateri's cause, the Vatican separated and suspended hers, because she was not a martyr, and it consolidated the Jesuit causes, to which the U.S. added another Jesuit candidate. In 1930, Pope Pius XII canonized all eight Jesuits, including **Isaac Jogues** and **Jean de Brébeuf**, amid widespread popular support, especially in Canada. While many other heroic missionaries have been considered for sainthood, so far, only a few have achieved it. Canonized in 1986, **St. Rose Philippine Duchesne** founded the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and served Pottawatomie people at a mission school in 19<sup>th</sup> century Kansas; and this fall in Washington, D.C., Pope Francis will canonize Franciscan Father **Junípero Serra** who founded and administered 19<sup>th</sup> century missions in California. Although Serra blunted Spanish abuses, critics said he nonetheless symbolized the persecutors, whereas canonization scholars countered that Rome judges saints on holiness, not imperfection. Many other heroic candidates have been proposed, including **Jacques Marquette**, a celebrated 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit priest-explorer of the Great Lakes-Mississippi basin. But as yet, their candidacies have not gained traction.



## Martyrs' Blood: St. Kateri Tekakwitha, 1900-2012, & Native Candidates



12. Soon after Pope Pius XII canonized the Jesuit martyrs, their supporters resumed Kateri's cause. They served as her *postulators* or official representatives in Rome, Canada, and the United States, and they engaged increasing numbers of native and non-native followers, which by 1980, included the Tekakwitha Conference and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Pope St. John Paul II beatified her that year, based on the preponderance of miracles attributed to her in spite of the paucity of documentation for any one miraculous event; then Pope Benedict XVI canonized her in 2012 after authenticating Jake Finkbonner's miracle. In 1990, while beatifying Juan Diego in Mexico, Pope St. John Paul II also beatified three *Tlaxcalan boy martyrs* – *Cristóbal, Antonio, and Juan* – all 16<sup>th</sup> century converts depicted in the upper right. Meanwhile in Ontario, momentum has been growing for Huron proto-martyr *Joseph Chihoatenhwa*, a 17<sup>th</sup> century convert depicted in the lower center; and the *La Florida martyrs* comprised of 17-19<sup>th</sup> century Apalachee converts and Dominican and Franciscan missionaries depicted on the lower right. Although first began and interrupted during World War II, Florida's bishops renewed their cause in 1982. Since then, organizers started a shrine in Tallahassee at one of several martyrdom sites and recruited postulators including Father Wayne Paysse of the Black and Indian Mission Office.

**Tenacious Causes for Tenacious Lives:  
St. Martin de Porres, 1664-1962,  
& Pierre Toussaint, 1968-**



13. Meanwhile, the Church has considered causes for several South and North American pioneers with African ancestry, all of whom built up the church amidst racism, poverty, and slavery. Known widely as a healer and social justice advocate, *St. Martin de Porres* was a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dominican brother in Lima, Peru, of mixed-race heritage. His cause began in 1664, just two decades after his death when cemetery workers discovered that his unembalmed body remained uncorrupted, like saints Cecilia, Vincent de Paul, and Francis Xavier, which is regarded as a sign of holiness. But in spite of the many miracles credited to him, his cause languished for nearly 300 years until 1962, when Pope St. John XXIII canonized him. Since then, U.S. dioceses opened causes for four 19<sup>th</sup> century African Americans. *Pierre Toussaint* was a New York City layman Haiti, who while becoming a successful hairdresser, served as a dedicated advocate for the poor. In 1988, the New York Archdiocese opened his cause, and since then, under its Office of Black Ministry, it has organized a guild that sponsors youth scholarships and an awards dinner named in his honor.

## Tenacious Causes for Tenacious Lives: Mother Henriette Delille, 1989- & Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, 1991-



14. **Mother Henriette Delille**, of mixed race heritage, founded the Sisters of the Holy Family, which serves poor and disadvantaged people throughout Louisiana, a state with many African American Catholics. The Archdiocese of New Orleans opened Mother Delille's cause in 1989 following a petition from her community, which garnered support through volunteers and local prayer groups or guilds. **Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange** founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence – the first community of women religious of African descent – which now provides Catholic education to poor and disadvantaged children in several Eastern states and Costa Rica. In 1991, the Archdiocese of Baltimore opened Mother Lange's cause following a petition from her community, which organized a guild that sponsors an annual mass in her honor.

## Tenacious Causes for Tenacious Lives: Father Augustus Tolton, 2011-



15. **Father Augustus Tolton** – the first acknowledged African American priest – studied for the priesthood in Rome and served as a diocesan priest and pastor in Chicago where he founded its first African American parish. A century after his death, the Archdiocese of Chicago opened Father Tolton’s cause and organized a guild, which has sponsored pilgrimages to his birth and childhood sites and launched the Tolton Ambassadors program, which in cooperation with local pastors, spreads the good news of his life story and the importance of prayer in the success of his cause. Either with or without a formal *guild* or official support organization, all four African American causes have networked and garnered widespread support from volunteers with diverse skills; they’ve secured required Vatican approvals, named postulators, received endorsements from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and support from the National Black Catholic Congress and the Black and Indian Mission Office; they’ve developed websites and electronic media, conducted research for positios, and created prayer cards. Since the 1990s, the Vatican has evaluated cures attributed to Toussant and Mother Delille, but as yet, it has not announced the authentication of any miracles attributed to them.

## Contrasting Crusaders: St. Katharine Drexel, 1966-2000, & Dorothy Day, 2002-



16. In 1966 and 2002, the Archdioceses of Philadelphia and New York respectively nominated two contrasting 20<sup>th</sup> century American crusaders of marginalized people. **Katharine Drexel**, a Philadelphia convert born with extreme wealth, was the wealthiest American to become a nun who gave away over \$20 million to U.S. Catholic schools for African Americans and Native Americans and she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, which administered some of them. The Philadelphia Archdiocese opened her cause with sponsorship by her community and support by the Black and Indian Mission Office and others. Her lengthy 1,612 page *positio*, which required special consultants fluent in English, became the first one written entirely in English. But in examining her cause, they failed to grasp the racist and segregated nature of U.S. society and the groundbreaking nature of her unique mission. Furthermore, they failed to probe vigorously for less than virtuous conduct. Only one witness presented such evidence who retold an incident when Mother Katharine threw a badly shrunken wool garment at the sister who caused the accident by laundering it incorrectly. Following two authenticated medical miracles, Saint Katharine Drexel was beatified in 1988 and canonized in 2000. Today, her community maintains a shrine in her honor at their motherhouse near Philadelphia. **Dorothy Day**, a New York City lay convert, promoted pacifism and advocated for the poor through the Catholic Worker Movement she founded. She loved the Church, yet she felt ambivalent about its collective wealth and lack of responsibility for poor and marginalized people. Proposed as “*a saint for our times*,” the New York Archdiocese opened the cause with Vatican approval followed by endorsement by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Meanwhile, in collaboration with the archdiocese, supporters organized a *guild* for the cause, which initially received opposition from a few family members and Catholic Worker Movement leaders who saw it as contrary to her wishes. They accused the cause of attempting to put her on a “pedestal”, and knowing that most causes are lengthy and costly, they advised supporters to “*...take your money and give it to the poor...*”

## Momentum for New Causes: Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., Rose Prince & Nicholas Black Elk



17. Recently, momentum has grown for several prospective causes. **Rose Prince**, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Carrier laywoman from British Columbia, was known for her piety and support of Catholic schools for native children. While relocating graves several years after her death, cemetery workers exhumed her body and discovered that her unembalmed body remained uncorrupted like that of a number of saints. Soon, at her new gravesite, persons with ailments attributed healings to her through intercessory prayers and touching the soil, which received a favorable review by a Vatican investigator. In 1990, this prompted the founding of a diocesan-sponsored gravesite pilgrimage, which now attracts about 1,000 participants per year. Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration **Thea Bowman**, a 20<sup>th</sup> century African American convert, became first a religious sister and then a religious educator in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Inspired by Native Catholic inculturation efforts, she advocated for the church to become more welcoming to African Americans and their heritage, which gained her national acclaim. In 2012, two decades after her death, her religious community began to explore her sainthood cause. **Nicholas Black Elk**, a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Lakota lay convert from South Dakota, is widely known through the books **Black Elk Speaks** and **Nicholas Black Elk: Medicine Man, Mystic, Missionary**. Baptized “Nicholas” after the saint whose generous giving resonates with Lakota traditions, Nicholas Black Elk committed his life to teaching the faith and truly living Native and Christian ways without contradiction, which led over 400 Dakota and Lakota people to baptism. When near death in August 1950, he announced that a Divine celestial sign would note his passing. Then, on the night of his wake and continuing to the fourth day, the skies danced vigorously with an extraordinary display of aurora borealis seen around the world, which affected global telecommunications. After learning about his holy life and inspired St. Kateri’s canonization, some Native Catholics imaged Black Elk’s canonization as well. They developed a petition towards seeking approval to begin his cause, and that petition drive is still open and has a special booth in the vendor area where you may sign it and get more information.



## **The Sainthood Path: Servant of God, Venerable, Blessed & Saint**

18. Each sainthood candidate lived a unique holy life and attracts a unique following with unique challenges and opportunities along the canonization path. To begin a cause, a *petitioner*, such as a religious community or an ad-hoc group of faithful, requests permission from the local bishop to investigate the candidate's holiness no sooner than five years after their death. This entails gathering and studying all relevant writings and testimony about the person's holiness. When the bishop approves, he submits the investigation to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. With the congregation approves, the cause may open officially with the candidate now known as a *Servant of God*. The bishop then seeks an endorsement from the national council of bishops, *postulators* are appointed as official liaisons between Rome and the diocese, and the diocesan postulator direct the writing and compilation of the *positio*, which first the congregation and then the Holy Father review. If he recognizes the virtues of the Servant of God, he declares the servant *Venerable* in a special public ceremony. Most servants declared venerable will reach sainthood eventually, but only God knows for sure. Now prayer cards may be issued, intercessory prayers are encouraged, and favors and alleged miracles are recorded. Congregation protocols are strict and causes vary greatly in length for many reasons. If the Holy Father determines that a venerable servant is a *Martyr*, or if he authenticates a miracle through their intercession, he declares the servant *Blessed* in a special public ceremony. Then a feast day is designated and churches may be named in their honor with some restrictions. After the Holy Father authenticates a miracle through the intercession of a blessed, he canonizes the servant a *Saint* in a special public ceremony and previous restrictions are lifted. While causes have taken hundreds of years, many today are completed in just ten years with the incurred expenses of about \$250,000 shared over time by various supporters.

## The Flowering of Saints



19. Collectively, *canonized saints* comprise an ever growing flowering bouquet, to which Holy Mother Church continually adds more saints. While the causes are arduous, the sainthood pathway and pace under Pope Francis is the best ever, and his advocacy for social justice and the earth resonates perfectly with these pioneers who likewise served the Americas' marginalized people and our mutual home – Mother Earth. So if you feel called to an active or potential cause, by all means, support it with your prayers and talents in whatever way you can.

## Pictures

- ▶ Archdiocese of Chicago Archives
- ▶ Brian Cumming
- ▶ Marquette University Archives
- Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions (Black & Indian Mission Office) Records (U.S.)
- Dorothy Day - Catholic Worker Collection
- W. Ben Hunt Collection
- Herman N. Ray Collection
- St. Francis Mission Records (South Dakota)
- Anne M. Scheuerman Collection
- Tekakwitha Conference Records (U.S. and Canada)
- ▶ Martyrs of La Florida Missions
- ▶ Public Domain



20. Pictures are crucial to PowerPoints, and I'm grateful to these sources, which helped to make this presentation possible: The Archdiocese of Chicago Archives; Brian Cumming; these special collections



in the Marquette University Archives: the Black and Indian Mission Office Records, the Dorothy Day – Catholic Worker Collection, the W. Ben Hunt Collection, the Herman D. Ray Collection, the St. Francis Mission Records, the Anne M. Scheuerman Collection, and the Tekakwitha Conference Records; plus the Martyrs of La Florida Missions and the public domain.

## Suggested Sources

- ▶ Nicholas Black Elk petition booth at 2015 Tekakwitha Conference
- ▶ Websites of sainthood causes
- ▶ *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't and Why* by Kenneth L. Woodward, 1990



21. To learn more about canonization causes, visit the Nicholas Black Elk petition booth among the vendors here, browse the Internet for web pages on sainthood causes, and read Kenneth Woodward's book, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't and Why*.

## When the Saints Go Marching In! Download it & more questions.

Download: 1. Go to Marquette Archives homepage, <http://www.marquette.edu/library/archives/>,  
2. Click on Native America icon, 3. Scroll way down that page & 4. Click on the "Saints" title.

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22. Also, the illustrated script from this PowerPoint is available online and questions are always welcome about your research needs and the collections at Marquette. To download the script, there are four easy steps: 1. Go to the homepage of the Marquette University Archives at [www.marquette.edu/library/archives/](http://www.marquette.edu/library/archives/); 2. Click on the icon “Native America”; 3. Scroll way down that page; and 4. Click on the title, “When the Saints Go Marching In!” Now, in the time remaining, I would be happy to take questions and comment further on points of interest.

### Postscript Notes

12. Fr. Sebastian Rale and Penobscot martyrs from 17-18<sup>th</sup> century Maine will be recognized soon in a forthcoming book. (Ref: Researcher, July 22, 2015)

12. While visiting the United States, Pope Francis will proclaim the La Florida martyrs Servants of God on Columbus Day, October 12<sup>th</sup>. (Ref: Dr. Mary Soha, July 24, 2015)

16. Dorothy Day’s cause continues and a number of former opponents to it have been won over. (Author’s clarification)

17. Efforts towards a cause for Rose Prince have been stalled by a lack of documentation on her life. (Ref: Sr. Kateri Mitchell, July 24, 2015)