

# Beatification looms closer for John Paul II

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The cause for beatification of Pope John Paul II has cleared a crucial hurdle, and the Polish Pontiff could now be beatified with the approval of a miracle through his intercession, according to informed sources at the Vatican.

Respected Vatican journalist Andrea Tornielli reported this week that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has voted to approve a decree testifying to the "heroic virtue" of John Paul II. When that decree is officially approved by Pope Benedict XVI, John Paul would acquire the title of "venerable" and would be eligible for beatification as soon as Vatican officials attest to the authenticity of a miracle attributed to his intercession.

The Vatican has neither confirmed nor denied Tornielli's report. However officials have acknowledged that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has met and considered the dossier on John Paul II. The decisions of the Congregation are not ordinarily announced until the Pope ratifies them at an ordinary consistory of the cardinals present in Rome. Such a session would probably place in December.

Several miracles attributed to the intercession of the late Pontiff are already being scrutinized by Church officials. Reported miracles are examined first by a team of Vatican-appointed doctors, who are asked to rule out any possibility of a natural explanation, and then by theologians before being referred to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and ultimately to the Pope for final approval.

Ordinarily the Church does not allow the opening of a cause for beatification until 5 years after the candidate's death. Pope Benedict waived that waiting period in the case of John Paul II, citing his predecessor's worldwide reputation for holiness. If the reports from Rome are accurate, the Vatican might announce plans for the beatification of John Paul II barely 5 years after the late Pope's death.

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