

Grade 7 Review: How Does the Church Choose Saints?

Canonization (the process the Church uses to name a saint), has only been used since about 900 AD.

- In the early church, saints were chosen by the **public**. However, some saint's stories were distorted by legend and some never existed.
- Gradually the bishops, and finally the **Vatican**, took over authority for naming the saints.
- In 1983, **Pope John Paul II** made big changes in the canonization process.
- The process begins after the **death** of someone the Church considers holy.
- Often the process starts **many years** after the death in order to give perspective on the candidate.
- The local bishop investigates the candidate's life and writings for **heroic virtue** or **martyrdom**, then a panel of theologians at the Vatican evaluate the candidate.
- After approval by the panel and Cardinals for Causes of Saints, the Pope proclaims the candidate **venerable** (worthy of reverence).
- The next step, **beatification**, requires evidence of one miracle (except in the case of martyrs).
- Miracles are considered proof that the person is in heaven and can **intercede** for us, so the miracle must take place after the person's death and as the result of a specific petition to the candidate.
- Only after the **miracle** will the Pope canonize the saint.
- The title of saint tells us that the person **lived a holy life, is in heaven, and is to be honored by the universal church**.

What is a Patron Saint?

- Patron saints are chosen as special protectors or guardians over areas of life.
- Francis of Assisi loved nature, so is patron of ecologists and animals.
- Francis de Sales was a writer so is patron of writers and journalists.
- Clare of Assisi was named patron of television because one Christmas she was too ill to leave her bed, but she saw and heard Mass even though it was miles away.
- St. Sebastian is the patron saint of athletes.

Why do we choose a name for Confirmation?

- As we go through our sacramental preparation for Confirmation, Confirmation saints are chosen to be a person we want to be like, as well as someone who can pray for us from heaven.
- In choosing a confirmation saint, we are choosing a special friend to intercede for us in heaven and after whom we can model our lives while here on earth.

Things to think about when choosing a Confirmation Name

- Are there saints you are drawn to? Their life story, what they are known for, or perhaps they share a common interest.
- Look at saints whose feast days fall on your birthday.
- Family connection – saints with names of family members you've connected with (grandparent, aunt or uncle, etc).
- Family heritages – is there a saint from the country or region your family is from?
- The meaning of the saint's name may speak to you.
- You may like the name of the saint. Research that saint and get to know more about them.