

GLORIFICATION

How is a saint made a saint?

“Glorification” is the term used in the Orthodox Church for the official recognition of a particular person as a saint of the Church. This official recognition usually grows from the consensus of the Church.

Saints are customarily recognized by a local community, those among whom they lived and prayed. If this local popularity and recognition continues and spreads, it can then lead to recognition by the entire Church and eventual Glorification. The fact is, the Church does *not* “make” a saint. The person is already a saint and the Church is simply recognizing the fact.

When an individual falls asleep in the Lord, God may or may not choose to glorify that person through the manifestation of miracles. If He does so, then the devotion to that person as a saint will normally grow from the 'grass roots' level. As the Holy Spirit manifests more miracles, the devotion to the saint will grow. St. Nectarios, for example, has had attributed to him more than 2000 documented miracles and healings and is recognized throughout the Church as being a healer of cancers and AIDS.

At this point, of course, there are no formal prayers *to* the individual but rather, memorial services (parastas (*Greek*) or panachida (*Slavic*)) may be served at the person's grave or in church, praying *for* him or her. However, an individual *may* pray privately to someone who has not yet been Glorified and there is even the possibility of commissioning an icon of the person which could be kept in the home but not displayed in the church until such time as formal recognition or Glorification would be celebrated.

Eventually, the evidence of the person's saintliness will have grown to such a degree that a formal Service of Glorification may be scheduled by the Church. Often there will be a formal investigation to be sure that the individual was Orthodox in their faith, led a life worthy of emulation, and that any reports of miracles attributed to his or her intercession are verifiable. Martyrs need no formal Glorification. The witness of their self-sacrifice is sufficient provided that their martyrdom was the result of their faith and there is no evidence of un-Christian behavior on their part at the time of their death.

Sometimes, one of the signs of sanctification is the condition of the relics of the saint. Some saints will be incorrupt, meaning that their remains do not decay under conditions when they normally would. Sometimes, even when

the flesh does decay, the bones themselves will manifest signs of sanctity by their color or sweet aroma. Some relics will exude myrrh similar to that experienced with 'weeping' icons. However, the *absence* of such manifestations is not necessarily a sign that a person is *not* a saint.

In some traditions, a person being considered for Glorification might be referred to as 'Blessed', however, there is no formal service of "beatification" in the Orthodox Church. A number of fully glorified saints are referred to as "Blessed" such as 'Blessed St. Xenia', 'Blessed Augustine', 'Blessed Jerome' and others. In such cases the title of "Blessed" does not in any way lessen their status as fully glorified saints of the Church.

The Service of Glorification normally involves inscribing the saint's name into the Calendar of Saints, assigning a special day of the year on which the saint is to be commemorated. There is also a special Service chanted in honor of the Saint and the unveiling of an Icon of the new Saint. Before the Glorification itself, there may be a special "Last Memorial Service" ("parastas" or "panachida"), at which the Church, for the last time, prays for the repose of his or her soul.

After the Glorification, instead of a Memorial Service will be served a "Service of Supplication" ("Moleben" (*Slavic*) or "Paraklesis" (*Greek*)) to the particular Saint to implore his or her intercessions before God.

Of course, not every saint becomes known and recognized through Glorification and many, many saints will remain hidden by God until the Second Coming of Christ. For this reason, on the Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday of All Saints, the Orthodox Church celebrates all of the righteous souls together. On the Sunday following All Saints Sunday, in some traditions, there is a day of general commemoration of all the saints, known and unknown, of the local church such as: All Saints of America, All Saints of Russia, or All Saints of Carpatho-Rus.

St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "The saints in each generation, joined to those who have gone before, and filled like them with light, become a golden chain, in which each saint is a separate link, united to the next by faith, works, and love. So in the One God they form a single chain which cannot be broken.