

The Cause for Canonization for Lackawanna's Apostle of Charity

- October 7, 1987** Father Baker is named "Servant of God"
 - March 11, 1999** Father Baker's remains are transferred to the basilica
 - 1999-2007** Many miracle claims are made and files are prepared for review by the Vatican
 - February 2007** Msgr. Paul Burkard is named local representative for the case after the death of Msgr. Wurtz
 - Currently** Msgr. Burkard continues to receive claims of miracles and to monitor the status of the case
 - 1987 - 1997** Exhaustive research into his teaching and writing, and dozens of interviews with those who knew him personally, generates thousands of sheets of documentation
 - Spring 1998** Bishop Henry Mansell visits the Vatican to discuss progress with the case
- Rome recommends that Father Baker's remains be exhumed and re-buried in Our Lady of Victory Basilica to increase prayers and devotion

The Life of Rev. Msgr. Nelson Henry Baker, V.G.

"Padre of the Poor"

1936

- February 16, 1842** Born in Buffalo
- June 18, 1842** Baptized at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
- November 20, 1851** Baptized Catholic at Old St. Patrick's Church at age 9
- June 1859** Graduated from Old Central High School at age 17
- 1859 - 1863** Clerked in father's grocery and general store
- December 1871** Stricken for months with life-threatening skin disease
- February 18, 1842** Baptized at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
- November 20, 1851** Baptized Catholic at Old St. Patrick's Church at age 9
- June 1859** Graduated from Old Central High School at age 17
- 1859 - 1863** Clerked in father's grocery and general store
- December 1871** Stricken for months with life-threatening skin disease
- February 1882** Assigned as Superintendent of Limestone Hill Institutions
- 1882** Formed Association of Our Lady of Victory
- May 1874** Visited the shrines of Europe as member of first American Pilgrimage
- March 19, 1876** Ordained to priesthood on Feast Day of St. Joseph at age 34
- March 1876** Assigned as Assistant Superintendent of Limestone Hill Institutions
- January 1881** Transferred to St. Mary's Parish in Corning, NY
- June 26, 1889** Dedicated expansion and new chapel in rectory building
- August 21, 1891** Struck natural gas on property
- 1894** Enlarged rectory again with a major addition
- 1895** First published monthly *Vindicator* magazine for members of OLV Association
- March 1901** Celebrated 25th anniversary as a priest at age 59
- 1897** Enlarged rectory once again with a free-story addition
- Assigned by diocese to oversee Working Boys Home in downtown Buffalo**
- 1903** Built new four-story trade school building
- Established St. Charles Parish and School for families of steel plant workers**
- December 26, 1903** Appointed as Vicar General to the Diocese of Buffalo
- March 25, 1905** Named Domestic Prelate by the Vatican
- 1906** Opened mission which became Our Mother of Good Counsel in Black Mt., NY
- August 16, 1908** Opened OLV Infant Home
- October 2, 1919** Expanded Infant Home and built maternity hospital
- 1920** Converted maternity hospital to general hospital
- Established mission church for Italian and Polish immigrants, which became Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Orchard Park, NY**
- 1921** Opened OLV Academy as parish high school
- May 7, 1921** Celebrated first Mass at St. Patrick's Church
- June 23, 1922** Named Prothonotary Apostolic by Vatican
- March 19, 1926** Celebrated 84th anniversary as a priest at age 84
- May 26, 1926** OLV Shrine consecrated
- July 26, 1926** OLV Shrine named a Minor Basilica by Vatican
- December 1927** Underwent surgery to remove right eye due to infection, age 85
- 1929** Merged *Annals* publication with monthly *Vindicator* Magazine
- July 1930** Opened new Nurses Home
- 1930 - 1933** Began extensive outreach to individuals devastated by the Great Depression
- 1931** Enlarged St. Joseph's Orphanage and modernized to school
- 1932 - 1934** Established Black Apostolate, including Queen of All Saints mission church in Lackawanna, NY
- Spring 1936** Opened Camp Baker for residents to enjoy outdoor experiences
- July 20, 1936** Died at 9:20 a.m. in OLV Hospital at age 94
- August 3, 1936** Funeral held at OLV Basilica and burial at Holy Cross Cemetery
- October 7, 1987** Title "Servant of God," the first step toward sainthood, approved by Vatican
- March 11, 1999** Earthly remains exhumed and moved into OLV Basilica

What Father Baker Wore

As a priest with many roles, Father Baker's apparel reflected his duties for the day.

Black cassock with red buttons

In Father Baker's time, much more than today, a cassock was the daily outerwear of priests. The black cassock with red buttons and sash was worn by priests with the title "Monsignor."

Purple cassock

The purple cassock was, and still is, worn for solemn church services by bishops and Monsignors with the title "Prothonotary Apostolic" and "Prelate of Honor."

Rochet

The rochet is a tight-sleeved short garment of linen and lace worn by bishops and some Monsignors over a purple cassock for special ceremonies.



Mozzetta

Father Baker's rank as Prothonotary Apostolic allowed him to wear a mozzetta. This is a purple cape worn by bishops and some Monsignors over a rochet.

Miter

The miter is a two-peaked ceremonial hat worn by bishops. Father Baker had the privilege of wearing one on solemn occasions because of his rank as Prothonotary Apostolic.

Mass vestments

The chasuble is the outer vestment worn by bishops or priests for the celebration of Mass. The color changed by church season or Feast Day.

Black suit and Roman collar

The black suit with Roman collar is the formal street-wear of Catholic priests, in Father Baker's times and now.



The Sainthood Process

The Canonization Process, the steps taken to name a saint, has changed over time. The process for an individual's Cause for Canonization involves four steps, which may take many years.

The History of Naming Saints

The naming of saints in the Catholic Church dates back centuries. There are more than 10,000 individuals that the Church has officially recognized as being in Heaven and with God.

Sainthood recognizes individuals who led holy lives that can serve to inspire others. An individual is officially named a saint through a ceremony called "canonization."

Today's Canonization Process

A person worthy of consideration for sainthood must be deceased for at least five years. However, the pope has the authority to waive that waiting period. This has been done, for example, for the cases of Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II.

Step 1 - Researching a Candidate's Life and Works

Typically the local bishop begins the process by investigating the spiritual qualities of an individual, including an extensive search for the candidate's writings and teachings. People who knew the individual are interviewed. A review is then presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the department of the Vatican responsible for canonization cases. At this point, the individual is called "Servant of God."

Step 2 - Analyzing a Candidate's Virtues

If it is proven that the individual led an honorable and holy life, Vatican officials recommend that he or she be referred to as "Venerable." Materials may then be produced to encourage the faithful to pray to the Venerable for a miracle. Often, prayers ask for the healing of a medical condition that has no cure.

Step 3 - Verification of a Miracle

Any miracle claim is thoroughly investigated. Physicians must determine whether a claim of healing is medically unexplainable. Doctors question whether the condition is serious, if

healing cannot be attributed to medical intervention, if prayers were directed only to the Venerable, and if the cure happened quickly and is long-lasting.

If it is proven that a healing occurred through prayer, the Church recognizes that the Venerable is close to God and that God answered his or her request. A ceremony is then held called beatification, and the candidate is named "Blessed."

Step 4 - Verification of a Second Miracle

A second miracle must be proven in order for a candidate to be canonized. Those praying must ask the Blessed for a cure, and a miracle claim must once again be investigated.

Following canonization, a saint is assigned a Feast Day, normally the anniversary of the saint's date of death. Churches may be named in a saint's honor and the faithful may be inspired by their holy example for generations.

