

Diocese celebrates beatification of Pope John Paul II

An iconic figure and beloved pope is soon to be beatified, and the Diocese of Beaumont is inviting all of Southeast Texas to come and celebrate.

Bishop Curtis Guillory, SVD, will celebrate a solemn pontifical Mass in honor of Pope John Paul II's beatification and Divine Mercy Sunday at noon May 1 at St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica, Beaumont.

The actual beatification of the pontiff will take place by Pope Benedict XVI May 1 at St. Peter's Square in the Vatican. Four steps are included in the canonization process of a saint with beatification being the third step.

To be beatified, the Vatican requires proof of one miracle by the candidate. In the case of Pope John Paul, the miracle of a French nun's healing is being accepted. Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre, member of the Little Sisters of the Catholic Motherhood, was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and believes she was cured in 2005 through the intercession of Pope John Paul.

A second miracle must take place after the beatification ceremony for the candidate to be canonized and recognized as a saint. After the beatification process, Pope John Paul will be known as Blessed Pope John Paul II.

Pope John Paul was devoted to the Divine Mercy movement, which was founded in the early 1900s by a Polish nun from Krakow, Sister Faustina Kowalska. Her special devotion to the divine mercy of God was a theme the pope himself took up in his 1980 encyclical "Dives in Misericordia" ("Rich in Mercy").

The pope beatified Sister Faustina in 1993 and canonized her in 2000, proclaiming the second Sunday of Easter as Mercy Sunday throughout the world. Pope John Paul's death in 2005 came on the eve of Mercy Sunday, and his beatification May 1 will be celebrated on Mercy Sunday.

Pope John Paul is being beatified not because of his impact on history or on the Catholic Church, but because of the way he lived the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love.