

# Marthe Robin

## POSTULATION OF THE CAUSE OF CANONISATION

### Elements regarding the life of Marthe Robin and her canonisation process

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**Marthe Robin**  
an outstanding witness of hope

## Preamble

The Cerf publishing house recently announced the publication, scheduled for 8 October 2020, of a book by Fr Conrad De Meester, called *The mystical fraud of Marthe Robin*. The author, a Carmelite priest who died in December 2019, was one of the 28 experts asked to contribute to the beatification process of Marthe Robin, as a specialist in the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux and Elisabeth of the Trinity. As such, he was responsible for examining and evaluating the writings of Marthe Robin.

The postulation has not had access to the text of this work that was first revealed to two media outlets, including Paris-Match. However, according to the information we have, this work essentially repeats the theses contained in the report sent in 1989 – and completed in 1994 – by Fr De Meester to Bishop Didier-Léon Marchand, president of the diocesan commission of inquiry. At this stage, the postulation does not know whether Fr De Meester added new elements to his work. If so, the postulation will take the greatest care to diligently examine them.

In any case, the De Meester report, which is unfavourable on certain points and favourable on others, was comprehensively and precisely examined as part of the canonisation inquiry, and weighed against the other expert assessments. **The unfavourable assertions of the De Meester report were not retained and, after examining all the documents, testimonies and expert assessments, the Catholic Church, by the authority of Pope Francis, declared the heroic virtues of Marthe Robin in 2014**, opening up the way to a possible beatification. By this act, the ruling of the Church recognised the authenticity of Marthe Robin's Christian life.

Given the announcement of the upcoming publication of a work accusing Marthe Robin of mystical fraud, the importance of this spiritual figure in the life of the Church of France in the 20th century, her influence internationally and the extent of the popular devotion to her, the postulation has deemed it necessary to clarify certain points regarding the life of Marthe Robin and her canonisation process. Indeed, **it is important to situate the assertions of Fr De Meester within the context of the whole investigation. By focusing on one unfavourable assessment among the 28 assessments of this process, the view of the trial process is incomplete**, making it impossible to fully understand the deciding factors which led to the ruling of the Church concerning the heroic virtues of Marthe Robin.

**This text, drafted by the postulation, does not represent the sole personal opinion of the postulator Sophie Guex, but is based on the deciding elements contained in the *positio* of Marthe Robin, i.e. the document which served as a foundation for the Catholic Church to rule in favour of the authenticity of her Christian life.**

**The postulation responds in this way, with this document based on the *positio* (which addresses the objections of the De Meester report), to the accusations of mystical fraud and reaffirms why Marthe Robin is an outstanding witness of hope:** out of a broken life, she had a wide-reaching influence and was able to love and accompany thousands of people, particularly through the work of the Foyers de Charité, whose mission and fruits are recognised by many people in the Church. This postulation document also recalls the substance of a beatification process (definition, stages, people involved, etc.) and puts into perspective the key elements of the Marthe Robin trial process (chronology, postulators, experts, witnesses, conclusions of the *positio*, ruling of the Catholic Church).

**The postulation hopes that this document can shed light on the matter for those – priests, laity and consecrated people of the Catholic Church, members and friends of the Foyers de Charité, journalists, etc. – who are interested in the spiritual figure of Marthe Robin and wish to have a balanced perspective** regarding certain aspects of her life and of the general conclusions of the trial process for the recognition of the heroic nature of her virtues.

# CONTENTS

## 1 - THE CANONISATION PROCESS: A GENUINE INVESTIGATION

The phases of a canonisation inquiry .....	4
The Church's ruling .....	4
Marthe Robin's trial process: key dates and figures .....	5

## 2. THE POSITIO: CONFIRMATION BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF MARTHE ROBIN

General findings of the trial process to date .....	6
Study of different aspects of Marthe Robin's life .....	7
A. Disease .....	7
B. Mobility .....	8
C. Inedia .....	8
D. Stigmata .....	8
E. Writings .....	8
F. Elements regarding the death of Marthe Robin .....	9

## 3. MARTHE ROBIN AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH SHE LIVED

Regarding her relationship with Fr Fine .....	11
Regarding the link with the Foyers de Charité .....	11
Regarding the clairvoyance of Marthe Robin .....	11

<b>APPENDIX:</b> The steps in recognising the heroic nature of the virtues .....	13
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# 1. CANONISATION PROCESS: A GENUINE INVESTIGATION

Among all the people who have died and live with God for eternity, the Catholic Church chooses to shine a light on certain saints so that they can serve as a model of faith, hope and charity; and allow the faithful to publicly entrust their prayers to them: the saints intercede for us before God. The Church calls this canonised sainthood.

To recognise the holiness of a person, the Church sets in motion a genuine inquiry to hear the favourable opinions and the objections (formerly known as a « trial process »). The objective is to seek the truth about the candidate and to be able to attain moral certainty.

## The phases of a canonisation inquiry

There are three possible paths that a canonisation inquiry can take, depending on the person's life: the recognition of martyrdom, the recognition of a life of self-offering, the recognition of the heroic nature of the virtues.

The Cause of Marthe Robin followed the path of recognising the heroic nature of virtues. The aim is to verify the authenticity of the person's Christian life and to confirm that she lived the Christian virtues in an outstanding way.

The investigation has three stages:

- 1 - Preliminary phase
- 2 - Diocesan phase
- 3 - Roman phase, which is broken down into three steps
  - Recognition of the heroic nature of the virtues
  - Beatification
  - Canonisation

## The Church's ruling

Throughout the proceedings, those involved in the trial process examine the person's development and seek to understand how the person allowed the grace of God to act in them. The final ruling of the Church is prepared by a long and elaborate process, which is precise and thorough, gathering together a vast amount of documents and involving many witnesses and experts, aimed at gaining a deeper understanding about a person so that a ruling can be pronounced with a good knowledge of the facts.

**Concerning Marthe Robin, the Catholic Church completed the stage of recognising the heroic nature of the virtues in 2014. This means that the Church confirms the authenticity of Marthe Robin's Christian life.** After checking the work of the diocese, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints appointed a rapporteur who, with the postulator, was responsible for drawing up the *positio*, i.e. the reference document on which the experts responsible for deciding on the cause based their work to prepare for the pope's ruling. It was then Pope Francis who engaged his authority by recognising the heroic nature of Marthe Robin's virtues.

The next step is beatification: it requires the recognition of a miracle, which occurred after the death of the candidate and was obtained through her intercession. The recognition of a miracle is considered to be the « finger of God » confirming the appropriateness of the matter in question. In order to be canonised later on and be called a « saint », another miracle is required, which must occur after the beatification. *More details in appendix 1*

## Marthe Robin's trial process

### Diocesan stage (1986 - 1996)

- 1986 Request by the Foyers de Charité to Bishop Marchand, Bishop of Valence (diocese of Marthe Robin), to open the trial process, appointment of a postulator, Fr Jacques Ravanel.
- 1988 Creation of an inquiry commission and appointment of the first experts, including Fr De Meester, hearing of the first witnesses.
- 1991 Episcopal decree opening the cause of canonisation.
- 1992 Continuation of the hearing of witnesses and appointment of additional experts.
- 1996 Closure of the diocesan process and transfer of the case file to Rome (Congregation for the Causes of Saints).

### Roman stage (1996 to the present day)

- 1996 Appointment of Fr Bernard Peyrous as postulator of the Roman cause.
- 1998 Decree of validity to confirm the conformity of the diocesan stage; appointment of a rapporteur for the cause.
- 1998 à 2010 : Drafting of the *positio* (reference document on which the declaration of heroic virtues is based).
- 2012 Submission of the *positio* to the consultant theologians.
- 2014 Submission of the *positio* to the cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

#### 7 november 2014

**Pope Francis pronounced the heroic virtues of Marthe Robin. Since then, the case of a healing is under examination to be recognised as a miracle.**

- 2018 Appointment of Sophie Guex as postulator.

### KEY FIGURES

- **3 successive postulators:** Jacques Ravanel, Bernard Peyrous, Sophie Guex
- **126 witnesses** heard
- **800 written testimonies**
- **17 000 pages** pages of documentation in the diocesan process
- **28 experts** (including Fr De Meester for the writings) in the following disciplines: historical, theological, medical, neurological, psychological, psychiatric, literary, demonological and graphological.

## 2. THE *POSITIO* : CONFIRMATION BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF MARTHE ROBIN

The insights provided in this account are based on the results of Marthe Robin's canonisation inquiry and on the *positio*, a document which formed the basis for the Catholic Church to judge favourably in 2014 regarding the authenticity of her Christian life (declaration by Pope Francis of the heroic virtues of Marthe Robin).

### General findings of the trial process to date

The reason that Pope Francis declared Marthe Robin to be « venerable » in 2014 was not because of the stigmata or the non-consumption of food. **It was for the way she lived an authentic Christian life in a profound gift of self to God under the particularly difficult conditions she experienced.** Indeed, Marthe Robin's spiritual life and the stages in the development of her virtues were not lived in isolation from her illness, but very much associated with it. She embraced her life despite all her limitations, and she became an effective instrument in the hands of God, without leaving her sickbed. The radiating influence of her life and the tangible fruits of her work are a sign of God's acceptance of her self-offering.

Out of a broken life, she never ceased to communicate love, hope and joy to those who came to see her. She never lost her simple nature, great sense of humour, common sense and she was rooted in the essential values: loving those who came to see her and helping them to find God – a warm and loving God – in their own lives. **This woman is a model who is close to us: we do not choose our trials, but realising that God experiences them with us, at our side, we can choose the way in which we live them out, and have a radiating and far-reaching influence**<sup>1</sup>. Marthe Robin's essential message is that union with God, which is holiness, is possible whatever one's living conditions, however restrictive and difficult they may be.

**Marthe Robin can inspire the men and women of today through her example of Christian life**, her interior life, her experience of the tenderness of God as Father, her love of Our Lady, her faithfulness to the teaching of the Church, her insight into the future of the Church and her positive outlook on the world. She lived Christian perfection in her own simple, humble and joyful way. The following three characteristic features of her path to holiness were emphasised in particular:

- **her intimacy with the Lord;**
- **her faultless charity, full of compassion and discernment;**
- **her sense of the Church that she loved intensely and on which she always relied.**

<sup>1</sup> - To get an idea of the spirituality of Marthe Robin based on her experience, in the form of a spiritual journey for everyone, see Sophie Guex, Marthe Robin, coll. «Chemins vers le silence intérieur» (paths to inner silence) (Parole et Silence 2020)

## Examination of the different aspects of Marthe Robin's life

Fr De Meester asked questions which were useful for the canonisation process, although the other experts gave different answers and came to different conclusions than he did. These questions made it possible to arrive at a more nuanced picture of an exclusively mystical, almost «extra-human» Marthe. As a result, the experts were able to shed more light on her human dimension. Hence, **Marthe Robin's canonisation process revealed a more precise and complete reality than what was commonly said about her, especially with regard to her illness.** This more precise reality has been known to the public for almost 15 years and has been addressed in the works emanating from the postulation. At the end of the research, the radical nature of the self-offering of her life is even more radiant.

### A. Her disease and its development

Marthe Robin contracted a form of encephalitis that damaged the basal region of the brain, according to a diagnosis made in 1942 and recorded in a report whose quality, in accordance with the available knowledge of the time, was established by the doctors consulted during the trial process.

The canonisation process showed that this disease can be broken down into the following different periods:

- 1st stage (1918-27): headache, pain in the eyes, fainting, fever, vomiting, periods of coma, general weakness, loss of use of the legs, followed by the arms.
- 2nd stage (1927-28): emergence of significant digestive disorders (peptic stenosis of the oesophagus), followed by swallowing disorders.
- 3rd stage (1939-1940): complete loss of use of the neck muscles with pain all over the body. Almost total blindness (she could only distinguish shapes).

The progress of this disease is characterised by irregular progressive outbreaks marked by new lesions and including relative periods of remission. The physical, neuropathic-type, pain caused by this disease, is among the most intense known to medicine.

The disease was therefore a significant ordeal for her. However, all the people who saw her, over a period of 50 years or so, met a balanced, joyful, attentive and lively person. She gave the best of herself to those who approached her, and that best of herself came from a self-offering they could not have suspected. Marthe Robin's life and influence are linked to the self-offering of the poverty of a seriously ill person.

### Regarding the lack of any hospitalisation for 50 years

Marthe Robin fell ill in 1918, at a time when the current health system didn't exist. In 1942, when her illness was diagnosed, there was no available treatment to cure her encephalitis. Moreover, as soon as she began to have mystical experiences, she was considered more as a mystical person than as a sick person. As a result, this had the effect of obscuring the need for certain medical treatments in the minds of her entourage. However, she received regular visits and treatment from a nurse.

## **B. Mobility**

Marthe Robin's legs seem to have been irreparably damaged. As for her arms, on the other hand, it seems that she was able to move them a little and that she wrote by herself in her youth. It is not impossible that, at certain periods of her life, she used her arms to slip out of her bed where she was in such pain. This sensitive issue must be viewed in light of the respect owed to the privacy of a sick person in their room. Marthe herself did not make a fuss about her situation as a disabled and extremely dependent person. She rarely spoke of herself to visitors.

## **C. Inedia**

Inedia refers to the non-consumption of food or drink. In Marthe Robin's case, the inedia was not a matter of choice but a consequence of her illness. From 1927, the disease affected the digestive system (swallowing became very difficult and painful), followed by the deglutition system. The trial process confirms that no one ever saw her eat and that no one ever prepared a meal for her. A few isolated accounts show that she was able to absorb a little liquid at certain periods. But in any event, this was not enough to sustain her or ensure her survival.

## **D. Stigmata**

Stigmatisation refers to the appearance of the marks of Christ's Passion on one's flesh. This manifested itself by bloody marks on the skin. Several credible testimonies heard during the canonisation process confirm the existence of bleeding wounds on Marthe Robin's face and heart. Analysis of a piece of blood-stained fabric confirmed that it was normal human blood in its sweated form. This confirms the authenticity of the phenomena associated with the «passions» (see the sweated blood of Jesus Christ at Gethsemane).

## **E. Writings**

Before the trial process, it was thought that Marthe Robin had been absolutely incapable of writing from 2 February 1929 onwards and that she had dictated all of her texts to third parties. However, the experts called upon during the trial process, including Fr De Meester, considered that she had probably written most of the notebooks, which were found after her death, by herself in her youth. This information has been made public since 2010. The research on her texts, conducted over a period of 10 years, has shown that Marthe's writing was original and not plagiarised. Her objective and method were indeed her own. Her compositions were carefully put together and the books she used are only materials of her own construction<sup>1</sup>.

This is how the elements borrowed from other mystics, and emphasised by Fr De Meester in his report to support the contention of fraud, were evaluated by the other experts, not as plagiarism but as a way of understanding and communicating what she was experiencing. Indeed, it was decided by the other experts that Fr De Meester forgot, in his analysis, to incorporate the aspect of time and of a process of development. Marthe Robin's writings date from her youth, when she was beginning to experience

<sup>1</sup> - See *Marthe Robin mystique et écrivain* by J. Bernard, S. Guex and M-O Riwer, published by Parole et Silence, 2017



mystical phenomena. She was not a theologian, and on the advice of a priest, she read mystical authors who gave her the words and phrases she needed to express what she was experiencing. She humbly immersed herself in them. What's more, she did not simply copy, but adapted what she was using to what she was experiencing. She is not the only person to have done this. Padre Pio did the same in his youth, using paragraphs of Gemma Galgani's work to describe his mystical states. Furthermore, it is important to note that Marthe Robin did not write with the idea of publishing a work. She did not have to demonstrate the same rigour as a writer experienced in referencing his work with formal acknowledgements of borrowed sections (quotation marks, footnotes).

### **Regarding the polymorphic writing**

Graphologists have confirmed that the different writings could be written by Marthe Robin. According to Fr De Meester, this was an indication that she knowingly wanted to deceive. This assertion was disputed by all the other experts. On the one hand, psychologists have demonstrated by studying her psychological profile that she had no intention to deceive. On the other hand, the doctors confirmed the circumstances of her disease, which could enable her to write in her notebooks herself during the disease's periods of remission.

### **Regarding Marthe's request to burn the letters**

Regarding Marthe Robin's letters that numbered in the thousands, there are two known cases in which she requested their destruction. In 1936, she asked her parish priest to burn the draft of a letter that she had dictated to him. In 1927, she asked a very close friend to burn all the letters she had sent her. This was not done. Marthe Robin was very intimate with this person, confiding in her about her suffering and loneliness. Out of modesty, she did not want these letters to be kept.

### **Regarding the borrowed elements in the account of the Friday passions**

We have the notes that Fr Faure (parish priest of Châteauneuf-de-Galaure and Marthe's first spiritual director) took when he spent time with his parishioner on Fridays, during her experiences of the passion. These notes are very precise. When he didn't hear a word, he would note it down. Out of 312 Fridays recounted by Fr Faure (52 Fridays over 6 years, between 1933 and 1938), there are only two passages where we find expressions by Gemma Galgani (one in 1934 and another in 1935).

## **F. Elements regarding the death of Marthe Robin**

The trial process could not establish with certainty all the exact circumstances of Marthe Robin's death. It is important to distinguish between what we know with certainty and what we do not know, and which can always be the subject of speculation.

### **What we know**

Marthe Robin was 78 years old. She was an elderly person, disabled and in very poor health. She died alone, without any direct witnesses, of natural causes following an acute bronchitis. She was also most likely suffering from damage to the oesophagus. She was found lying outside her bed with slippers on her feet that had apparently already been used.

A bowl containing a black and smelly liquid was found after Marthe Robin's death, under the cupboard in her bedroom. Witnesses spoke of « excrements », but the doctors mentioned

the possibility of it being melena, the sign of a haemorrhage of the digestive system, given that Marthe Robin was very probably suffering from damage to the oesophagus, as specified above.

### **What we don't know**

The trial process could not establish why Marthe Robin was lying outside her bed. All the possible scenarios put forward are a matter of speculation, and the trial made no conclusion on the question. At the time of her death, Marthe could have had a spurt of energy (a phenomenon sometimes observed in the last moments of a person's life) such that she could leave her bed with the help of her arms. Fr Finet's account of a supposed fight with the devil could not be confirmed either, for lack of evidence. Regarding the slippers, the scenario put forward by the postulation was that Marthe Robin put the slippers on herself to try to slip out of her bed, using her arms, but the trial could not conclude on this point and did not consider that it was an essential element in ruling on a life of heroic virtue.

### 3. MARTHE ROBIN AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH SHE LIVED

Marthe was not an isolated mystic: her life and her witness of faith belong within a historical and geographical context: with Fr Georges Finet, she founded the Foyers de Charité, a work whose influence has now spread internationally; she is an important spiritual figure of the Church of France at a pivotal period in its history, before and after the Second Vatican Council. It is therefore useful to shed light on some aspects of Marthe Robin's relationship with the Foyers de Charité, Fr Georges Finet and certain other ecclesial realities and figures of her time.

Indeed, the process of canonisation was useful in gaining a deeper insight into Marthe Robin, her life and her message, and adding more nuance to the story commonly told about her life. It is part of the normal course of a process of canonisation to gain deeper insight, superior knowledge and clarification.

#### **Regarding her relationship with Fr Finet**

Fr Finet was the closest person to Marthe Robin and he is an important witness to her life. However, the canonisation inquiry revealed nuances between the reality of Marthe Robin's life and Fr Finet's account of her life. He did not always clearly perceive the human aspects of Marthe Robin, especially certain aspects of her illness. He spoke to her with enthusiasm, emphasising the extraordinary phenomena she was experiencing, while she herself tended to hide them. She didn't always like the way he spoke about her and she knew how to tell him, sometimes with humour. Fr Finet had a strong personality and liked to talk about things with a certain «lyrical» tone. Naturally, his testimony was an important source of information in the trial process but it was supplemented, during the trial, by numerous testimonies and expert opinions in order to get a more accurate vision of the story of Marthe Robin's life.

#### **Regarding the link with the Foyers de Charité**

The objective of a canonisation process is to search for the truth. Marthe Robin's trial process led to a shift in the perception of certain aspects of Marthe's image within the Foyers de Charité. The Foyers were not built on a « myth » but on a person, Jesus Christ, whose message they proclaim through the spiritual retreats they offer. Their attraction is based on the quality of these retreats and not on the extraordinary phenomena experienced by Marthe, who played a key role in their foundation and gave them a spiritual message which continues to inspire them today. From this point of view, it should be noted that Fr De Meester, as censor of her writings, made a positive appraisal in his report of Marthe Robin's spiritual message and the advice she gave.

#### **Regarding the clairvoyance of Marthe Robin**

Clairvoyance is a charism or gift given by God, which consists in seeing clearly into certain past, present or future events, and sometimes in certain people. It is sometimes said that certain saints, such as Padre Pio and the St John Vianney, could «read souls». Marthe Robin did not know everything: « *I do not belong to the union of fortune-tellers!* », she said. She was dependent on the interpretations

and could not verify them for herself. The clairvoyance was neither automatic nor permanent. It is given by God on certain occasions to help a person in a specific situation. The trial process gathered hundreds of testimonies backing up this assertion about Marthe Robin, but it did not specify a general and permanent ability to see into people and events, implying that her every word or choice should be considered to be directly inspired by God. Like every human person – and like every saint! – Marthe Robin could make mistakes.

It is important to understand this, when alluding to the people she knew and encouraged, or who worked with her, e.g. Fr Marie-Dominique Philippe, Jean Vanier or even Brother Ephraïm; and, of course, Fr Finet himself. Marthe Robin loved the Church and always encouraged Church initiatives, but never considered herself to be the counsellor of these founders. She referred people to their superiors and to their own responsibility. On the other hand, she always promised her prayer support and she really « carried » many new emerging initiatives, of every ecclesial leaning before and after the Second Vatican Council, in her prayers. She also encouraged orders or communities with more ancient roots in Church history.

The way in which some people could take advantage of her encouragements, e.g. by saying « *Marthe told me that...* », could sometimes give a distorted perception of her role alongside them. Encouraging people to take initiatives and praying for them is not an endorsement or validation given with the assurance that the validation comes from God.

### THE STEPS IN RECOGNISING THE HEROIC NATURE OF THE VIRTUES

The recognition of the heroic nature of a person's virtues is decreed by the Pope. The ruling is prepared by a long and elaborate process, which is precise and thorough, and the purpose of which is to reach moral certainty.

#### 1 - Preliminary process

The request to open a trial process is made by a legal entity, called the «actor of the cause» (diocese, congregation, association of the faithful, etc.), to the bishop of the location where the person died.

This request must be made five years after the person's death, to ensure that their reputation for holiness is not a flash in the pan. There must also be testimonies of graces and favours (healings, conversions, answered prayers, etc.) obtained through their intercession since their death.

The actor<sup>1</sup> of the cause appoints a postulator to represent it before the church authorities. This must be approved by the local bishop during the diocesan phase, and by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints during the Roman phase.

Before deciding to open a case, the bishop conducts a series of consultations:

- He consults the bishops of the region (or ecclesiastical province)
- He consults the faithful by making public his intention to open a trial process, so that anyone who has something to say in favour or against the proposed process can let him know.  
For Marthe, the bishop of Valence received more than 800 testimonies in favour of opening a trial process.
- Finally, he consults the Holy See, whose green light is called the nihil obstat («nothing stands in the way» to the opening of the cause).

Equipped with all these opinions, the bishop can officially open the cause for canonisation.

#### 2 - The diocesan phase of the inquiry

The objective of this phase is to collect the documentation which will be used to answer a double question: has the person exercised the Christian virtues to a heroic degree? Does the person have a reputation for holiness?

It is therefore advisable to look for «evidence» confirming (or not) the heroic practice of the Christian virtues in the life of the person. This research is done through two main channels: from documents and from hearing witnesses.

<sup>1</sup> « the actor »: this name refers to the legal entity (diocese, congregation, association of the faithful, etc.) that is requesting the opening of the trial process and that agrees to bear the moral and financial responsibility.

## 2.1 Gathering the documentary evidence:

The bishop forms a historical commission, charged with researching and appraising all the documentation about the person.

The bishop appoints two theologian censors to examine the person's writings and assess whether or not there are elements that contradict the faith of the Church.

Other expert assessments may be requested to supplement the documentation.

All this documentation is used to sketch out a preliminary human and spiritual description of the person.

## 2.2. Gathering evidence from testimonies

Witnesses who have known the person well and can give consistent and relevant testimony (family, close friends, spiritual family, acquaintances and any opponents of the cause) should be questioned. For this, the bishop sets up a court which must include a president, a promoter of justice (formerly known as «devil's advocate») and one or more notaries to hear the witnesses.

The hearing of certain witnesses may begin before the decree to open the case is issued, to avoid the loss of evidence. This is the case when the witnesses are elderly.

The hearing of witnesses is not a simple discussion between the officers of the court and those concerned, but a real interrogation with questions aimed at revealing the truth about the Servant of God. Witnesses take an oath to tell the truth and have the opportunity to listen to or read their testimony again, in order to confirm or correct it.

All the material (historical documents, writings, testimonies, expert assessments and depositions of witnesses) is sent to Rome, to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, an organisation that is specialised in studying and recognising «canonisable» holiness.

## 3 - The Roman phase of the inquiry: the examination of the cause

After checking the work of the diocese, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints appoints a rapporteur who, with the postulator, is responsible for drawing up the *Positio*, which is the reference document given to the experts responsible for ruling on the Cause. The documentation from the diocesan inquiry may be supplemented with other expert assessments, if necessary.

The *Positio* includes a historical biography based on the documents of the trial process, a precise and detailed study of the Christian virtues of the person, the testimonies confirming the person's reputation for holiness and the expert assessments of the trial process. It is examined successively by two or three authorities, depending on the case: historian-consultors (if it is an old cause), theologian-consultors and, finally, the college of bishops and cardinals who are members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Each of these authorities works in a collegial manner and decides by a vote. The cardinals and bishops, who are members of the Congregation, do not only give their opinion about the heroic virtues of the person, but also consider the course of the trial process as a whole, from the diocesan inquiry onwards. They also give their opinion about the ecclesial importance of the cause. If the opinion of the members is positive, the cause is referred to the Pope for the final ruling.

## 4 - The papal decision

It is up to the Pope to rule on the heroic nature of the person's virtues. He makes his judgement known by means of a decree. The person then receives the name of «venerable».

## 5 - Beatification

In order to be beatified and be called «blessed», the recognition of a miracle, which happened after the person's death, is still required. Indeed, holiness is part of «God's world» and the Church does not decide alone on this point. The recognition of a miracle is considered to be the «finger of God» confirming the appropriateness of the matter in question.

In order to be canonised later on and be called a «saint», another miracle is required, which must occur after the beatification.

### THE ACTORS

#### «The actor»

This name refers to the legal entity (diocese, congregation, association of the faithful, etc.) that is requesting the opening of the trial process and that agrees to bear the moral and financial responsibility.

#### The bishop of the diocese where the person died

It is under his responsibility that the diocesan phase of the trial process takes place. It is his diocese that will benefit from the concession of cult if the person is recognised as blessed (with the spiritual family, if this is the case - congregation, association of the faithful, etc.)

#### The Congregation for the Causes of Saints

The authority, based in Rome, that is specialised in examining and evaluating the «evidence» of the holiness of people. It is under its responsibility that the Roman phase of the trial process takes place.

#### The promoter of justice

During the diocesan phase, the promoter of justice ensures that the inquiry is lawful. Formerly known as the «devil's advocate», he is the one who challenges, so to speak, the holiness of the candidate.

#### The postulator

As the mainstay of the process, appointed by the «actor», the postulator is required to collaborate with the church authority (bishop of the diocese and Congregation for the Cause of Saints) in searching for the truth.

*Marthe Robin*

POSTULATION DE LA CAUSE  
DE CANONISATION

[www.martherobin.com](http://www.martherobin.com)

 les Foyers de Charité  
RETRAITES SPIRITUELLES