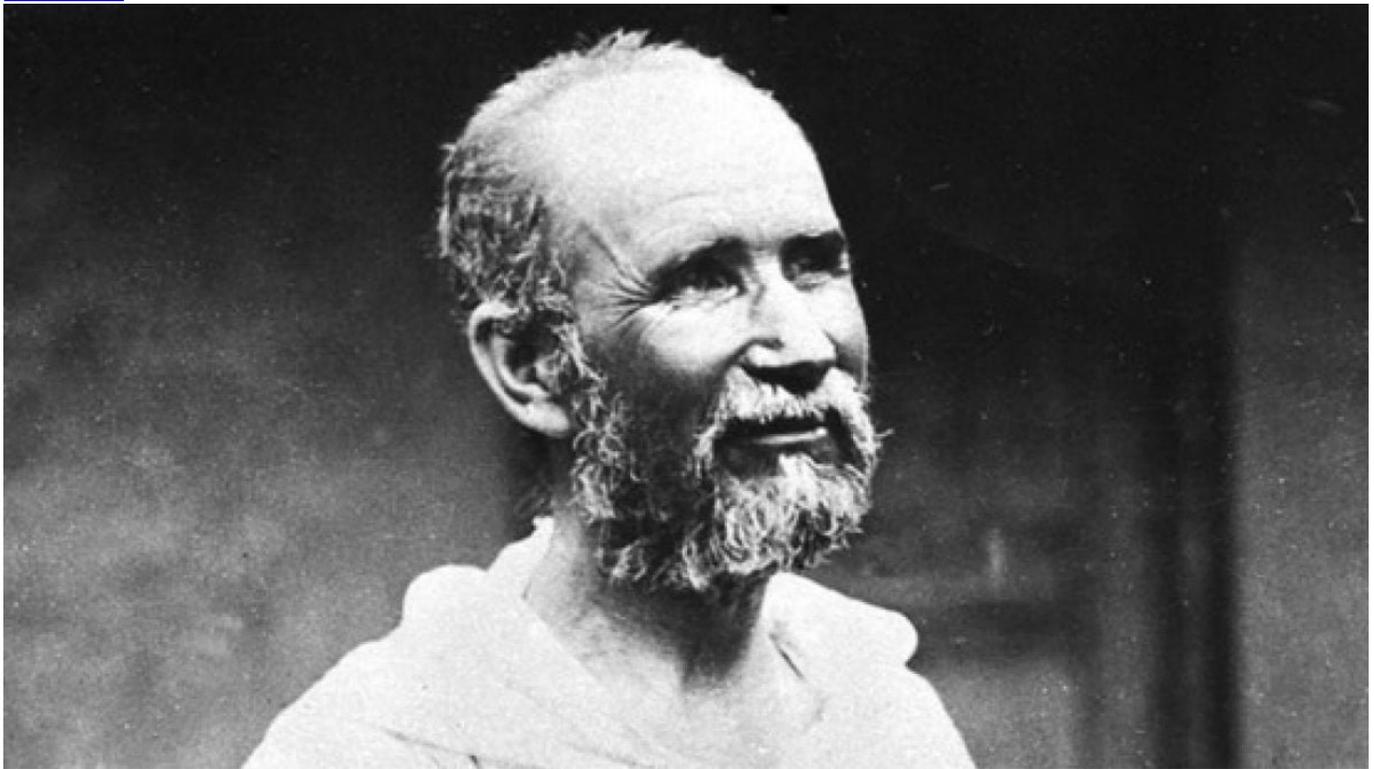


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Blessed Charles de Foucauld is pictured in an undated photo. (CNS photo/courtesy of I.Media)

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Vatican City — November 9, 2021

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Blessed Charles de Foucauld and six other candidates for sainthood finally will be canonized May 15, 2022, the Vatican announced Nov. 9.

The final stage in the sainthood process — a gathering of cardinals in Rome to affirm that church law had been followed in preparing for the candidates' declaration of sainthood and a formal request "in the name of Holy Mother Church" that Pope Francis set a date for the canonizations — took place in early May. But no date for the ceremony was set because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The previous time Pope Francis celebrated a public Mass for the canonization of saints was Oct. 13, 2019, when he canonized St. John Henry Newman and four others. However, in April, he used what the Vatican calls the "equipollent" or equivalent canonization to declare the sainthood of Blessed Margaret of Città di Castello, an Italian Dominican laywoman. He used the same formula in July 2019 to recognize St. Bartolomeu Fernandes dos Mártires, a 16th-century Portuguese Dominican and archbishop.

Along with Blessed de Foucauld, the spring ceremony will see the canonization of the Indian martyr Devasahayam Pillai and the five founders of religious orders.

Born in Strasbourg, France, in 1858, Blessed de Foucauld strayed from the faith during his adolescence, but during a trip to Morocco, he saw how devoted Muslims were to their faith, which inspired him to return to the church.

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He joined the Trappists, living in monasteries in France and in Syria, before seeking an even more austere life as a hermit. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1901, he lived among the poor and finally settled in Tamanrasset, Algeria. In 1916, he was killed by a band of marauders. His writings inspired the foundation, after his death, of the Little Brothers of Jesus and the Little Sisters of Jesus.

The martyr of India who will be declared a saint is Blessed Pillai, an 18th-century Catholic layman who was killed for refusing to refute his faith despite being brutally tortured.

Born to an upper-caste Hindu family in 1712 and given the name Neelakanda, Blessed Pillai became a trusted soldier of the Hindu king but later incurred his wrath for embracing Christianity. Baptized in May 1745, he was given the name Devasahayam, a Tamil rendering of the biblical name Lazarus.

The others approved for canonization are:

- Blessed César de Bus, the France-born founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, a religious congregation dedicated to education, pastoral ministry and catechesis. Born in 1544, he died in 1607.
- Blessed Luigi Maria Palazzolo, an Italian priest and founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor. He was beatified by St. John XXIII in 1963. The sainthood causes of six members of the order who died in Congo in 1995 caring for victims of Ebola also are underway.
- Blessed Giustino Maria Russolillo, an Italian priest who founded the Society of Divine Vocations for men and the Vocationist Sisters. He was born in 1891 and died in 1955.
- Blessed Anna Maria Rubatto, founder of the order now known as the Capuchin Sisters of Mother Rubatto. She was born in Carmagnola, Italy, in 1844 and died in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1904.
- Blessed Maria Domenica Mantovani, co-founder and first superior general of the Little Sisters of the Holy Family. Born in 1862 in Castelletto di Brenzone, Italy, she dedicated her life to serving the poor and needy as well as assisting the sick and the elderly. She died in 1934.