

(From <http://www.solanusc Casey.org>)

About Solanus Casey

Fr. Solanus Casey, Capuchin Franciscan, was born Bernard Francis Casey on November 25, 1870 on a farm near Oak Grove, Wisconsin. He was the sixth child in a family of ten boys and six girls born to Irish immigrant parents. Bernard left the farm to work throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota as a logger, hospital orderly, street car operator, and prison guard.

At the age of 21 Bernard entered St. Francis High School Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the diocesan priesthood. Five years later he contemplated a religious order. Invested in the Capuchin Order at Detroit in 1897, he received the religious name of Solanus.

After his ordination in 1904, Fr. Solanus spent 20 years in New York, Harlem, and Yonkers. In 1924 he was assigned to St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit where he worked for 20 years.

Fr. Solanus spent his life in the service of people. At the monastery door as porter he met thousands of people from every age and walk of life and earned recognition as "The Doorkeeper." He was always ready to listen to anyone at any time, day or night.

During his final illness, he remarked, "I'm offering my suffering that all might be one. If only I could see the conversion of the whole world." His last conscious act was sitting up in bed and saying, "I give my soul to Jesus Christ." He died at the age of 86 on July 31, 1957 at the same day and hour of his First Holy Mass 53 years earlier.

Cause for Canonization

Canonization is the complex and lengthy process by which someone receives the title of "Saint" in the Roman Catholic Church. This process has taken many forms over the centuries and was most recently revised by Pope John Paul II. The current process consists of 4 stages: Servant of God, Venerable, Blessed, and Saint. The Servant of God Solanus Casey was named Venerable on July 11, 1995 by Pope John Paul II. With the support of the Guild, the Cause is currently pursuing the stage of "Blessed" (beatification) for Venerable Solanus.

The word "canonization" comes from the celebration of the Mass. What we now call the "Eucharistic Prayer" was formerly known as the "Canon of the Mass." Therefore, to say that one is "canonized" means that his/her name is able to be included in the list of saints in the "Canon of the Mass." The term is still in use today since that ancient rule-of-thumb still applies. When a person is canonized or named a Saint the Church may celebrate the Saint's feast day and the name may be included in the Eucharistic Prayer.

After his death the fame of Fr. Solanus continued to spread and many people visited his simple grave in the Friars' Cemetery. Three years after his death many friends formed the Fr. Solanus Guild to preserve his memory and ideals. The Guild sparked the movement to present Fr. Solanus as a candidate for Sainthood.

In 1966 a Vice Postulator was appointed. The first biography "The Porter of Saint Bonaventure's" was published in 1968. In 1976 the Vice Postulator contacted the Archbishop of Detroit, John Cardinal Dearden, who issued the official request in 1977 for all writings attributed to the Servant of God. These were transcribed, bound into four volumes, and taken to the Postulator General in June 1980.

By 1981 Cardinal Dearden was ready to petition the Congregation for Causes of Saints to open the Cause. Permission was granted in 1982 and instructions were sent to Edmund C. Szoka, the new Archbishop of Detroit, to begin the Diocesan investigation. After interrogating 53 witnesses the Process was completed and taken to Rome in October 1984.

The canonical exhumation and examination of Fr. Solanus' body took place on July 8, 1987 in the presence of Archbishop Szoka and Archdiocesan officials. Solanus' body, found to be quite intact, was clothed in a new habit, placed in a new steel casket, and sealed with the Archbishop's seal. The casket was reinterred in a cement vault beneath the floor of the north transept of St. Bonaventure Church where many people continue to pray for the intercession of Fr. Solanus.

The Positio {pronounced *po-zeef-sio*}, documentation of the Cause, was studied and approved by the Congregation for Causes of Saints in 1995. On July 11th of that year Pope John Paul II promulgated the Decree of Heroic Virtue for Fr. Solanus and declared him "Venerable." One miraculous cure attributed to the intercession of Venerable Solanus, then approved by the Congregation will advance the Cause to Beatification and the title of "Blessed." Another approved miracle after that will advance the Cause finally to Canonization or Sainthood.

© 2005 Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order

In the words of Father Solanus:

Worry is a weakness from which very few of us are entirely free. We must be on guard against this most insidious enemy of our peace of soul. Instead let us foster confidence in God, and thank Him ahead of time for whatever he chooses to send us.

"If we only try to show the Dear Lord a good will and ask Him for resignation to the crosses He sends or permits to come our way, we may be sure that sooner or later they will turn out to have been just so many blessings in disguise."

The great challenge in life is not so much in finding work that will fulfill us, but in finding fulfillment in whatever work we are doing.

GOD'S HOLY DOORMAN: FR SOLANUS CASEY

1870-1957

Serving as a doorman was the way Fr Solanus Casey used to become holy. He would listen to the story of everyone as if he had all the time in the world...." Fr John Murray PP tells his story.

It was late at night and the monastery was asleep. Suddenly the bell rang and thirty residents were awakened from their slumbers. One man rose sooner than the rest to see who could possibly need help at that unearthly hour. Solanus Casey was the porter, the doorman, of St. Bonaventure's and everyone knew him.

Bernard 'Barney' Casey was born in Wisconsin to Irish immigrant farmers in the year 1870. He was the sixth of sixteen children. Early on, an epidemic claimed the lives of two of his siblings and permanently damaged his own voice, leaving it soft and wispy.

Turning point

His early working life saw him as a lumberjack, a prison guard and a streetcar motorman. Indeed it was while serving in that last capacity that he saw a drunken sailor stabbing a young woman. His biographer, James Derum, wrote 'to him the brutal stabbing and the sailor's cursing symbolized the world's sin and man-made misery. For him the only cure for mankind's wretchedness was the love that can be learned only from and through Him who died to show men what love is.'

As a result of that experience he decided to become a priest but his initial attempts were not successful. Bernard struggled with his studies and although he only entered seminary in his mid-twenties, he was dismissed after one year. Latin and German, the languages of the lectures, just proved too difficult.

Capuchin friary

However Barney retained a deep desire to be a priest and while praying at Mass one day, he felt within the words 'go to Detroit'. There, on Christmas Eve 1896, he entered the monastery of St. Bonaventure, a Capuchin friary. Again he struggled with the academic side but his moral qualities were so outstanding that his superiors allowed ordination on 24 July 1904. But there were to be limitations on his ministry: he was allowed to be a simplex priest; he could not preach formal sermons nor hear confession. The Lord would use him powerfully nevertheless.

Initially he was appointed to a friary in the state of New York (Yonkers) where he served primarily as porter and receptionist. Later he spent twenty-one years in Detroit in the same capacity. Word of his compassion quickly spread, along with

reports of miracles.

Often people would come back to the monastery and thank Solanus (the religious name he took) for healing them. 'No, it is your faith which has healed you,' he would say.

By 1923 his provincial asked him to keep a record of any special cases or reported healings. By the end of his life he had filled seven notebooks! These mentioned hundreds of recorded cures from cancer, arthritis, blindness and other illnesses. There were also countless incidences of people coming back to the practice of their faith and the resolution of many family and domestic situations.

Other brothers could not help but notice. At the beginning, the bell at the monastery rang a few times but very soon, more than a hundred visitors a day came. 'People might wait an hour or more to talk to him but nobody got impatient. And he would never hurry anybody. He would listen to your story as if he had all the time in the world, and he would try to advise you or comfort you, and then he would usually give a blessing. When the people got home they would discover whoever had been sick was cured,' one brother said.

Extraordinary and ordinary

Other brothers would share how people would wait for Solanus for even just one moment with him. 'It was only after his death that we realized how much he had done and how close he was to God.'

Yet it was his simple down-to-earth manner which endeared him to many. He loved to tell and hear jokes; he loved hot dogs smothered in onions; he loved an occasional beer in the local bar and he loved to play the violin though that did not always endear him to the others!

One friar said, 'When we saw him approaching we would often busy ourselves with other things to avoid the one-man-show! Then Solanus would take the violin into the chapel and play to the Lord Himself.'

In 1995 Pope John Paul declared Solanus to be Venerable, which is the first step on the road to sainthood. He is the first American-born man to achieve this stage. His remains had been brought in 1987 back to Detroit and today his shrine at St. Bonaventure's monastery is visited even more than when he was alive.