News



Father Augustus Tolton is pictured in a photo from an undated portrait card. (CNS/Archdiocese of Chicago)



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The cause for the canonization of Servant of God Fr. Augustus Tolton, the first African American to be ordained as a priest for the United States, has achieved an important milestone.

In an April 30 press release, the Chicago archdiocese announced that the *positio*, described as "an official position paper" that "summarizes the examination of a candidate's life, heroic virtue or martyrdom, and any alleged miracles insofar as research can be obtained," was approved by the Vatican's historical commission.

According to the press release, the approval "certifies the historical record of the case are correct," and "marks the end of the research phase" into Tolton's life. The cause will now go before the Vatican's theological commission, which will determine, with the Congregation for Causes of Saints, whether to move forward with the canonization process. If they do, with the pope's approval, Tolton will be declared "venerable."

A venerable person may be declared "blessed" if a miracle attributed to him or her is approved by the Vatican. Another approved miracle leads to canonization.

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Tolton was born in 1854 in Missouri to a slave couple. After gaining his freedom, Tolton sought to become a priest, but could not gain admission to a seminary in the United States because of his race. After studying in Rome, he was sent back to serve the African American community in Quincy, Illinois, and later Chicago, where he started and led St. Monica parish until his death in 1897.

The theological commission will begin its investigation into Tolton's cause February 2019.