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Melissa Villalobos of Chicago lights a candle during a vigil in advance of the canonization of St. John Henry Newman, Oct. 12 at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome. Villalobos' healing through the intercession of St. John Henry Newman was accepted as the miracle needed for the British cardinal's canonization. (CNS/Paul Haring)

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Vatican City — September 29, 2025

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Pope Leo XIV announced he will proclaim St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the church Nov. 1 during the Jubilee of the World of Education.

Speaking after Mass Sept. 28 for the Jubilee of Catechists, the pope said St. Newman "contributed decisively to the renewal of theology and to the understanding of the development of Christian doctrine."

The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints had announced July 31 that Leo "confirmed the affirmative opinion" of the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery "regarding the title of Doctor of the Universal Church which will soon be conferred on Saint John Henry Newman, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Founder of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in England."

St. Newman was born in London Feb. 21, 1801, was ordained an Anglican priest, became Catholic in 1845, was made a cardinal in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII and died in Edgbaston, near Birmingham, England, in 1890.

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Even before St. Newman was canonized by Pope Francis Oct. 13, 2019, there were calls for him to be named one of the three dozen doctors of the church — men and women saints, from both the Christian East and West, who are honored for particularly important contributions to theology and spirituality.

The 37 saints currently recognized as doctors of the church include early church fathers such as Sts. Jerome, John Chrysostom and Augustine, and theologians such as Sts. Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and John of the Cross, but also St. Therese of Lisieux, who was honored by St. John Paul II in 1997, despite her lack of scholarly achievement.

The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints said 20 bishops' conferences had petitioned for St. Newman to be declared a doctor of the church, including the bishops of England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia.

"His thought has had a significant impact on 20th-century theology, especially on the Second Vatican Council," the dicastery said. "Several popes, from Leo XIII to Francis, have drawn from his authoritative teaching in their pontifical magisterium."

Francis authorized the dicastery to begin the process for the declaration in May 2024 and that September, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said that "there were no doubts about the excellence and the quality of the saint's writings, expressing a completely positive judgment on his 'eminens doctrina' (eminent teaching)."

Consultants to the dicastery unanimously supported the petition, the dicastery said, as did the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery.