

Cardinal beatifies first lay, black Brazilian woman, 'Nha Chica'

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Thousands of worshippers filled the streets of the town of Baependi for the beatification of the first lay, black Brazilian woman, Francisca de Paula de Jesus.

Known to most Brazilians as Nha Chica, Paula de Jesus was the daughter of a former slave. She died in 1895 after a lifetime of service that earned her the name "Mother of the Poor."

Her canonization process started in 1993, but in 1995 gained strength with the revelation that a schoolteacher was cured of a congenital heart defect after praying to Nha Chica. The miracle was sent for review to the Vatican in 1998, and in 2011 Pope Benedict XVI approved her heroic virtues.

Last June, the Vatican approved the miracle.

Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregations for Saints' Causes, celebrated the Saturday Mass.

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