



Becoming Blessed Edmund Rice

The Catholic Church has a detailed process to determine which individuals are recognized as saints. This process can take many years. Even before the process begins, there must be documented evidence that the candidate was considered an extraordinarily good person during his lifetime. This requires a tremendous amount of time and research.



In 1910, the Superior General of the Christian Brothers, J. C. Whitty, wrote to the Procurator General in Rome about what steps must be taken to begin the official process of having Edmund Rice declared “Venerable.” He appointed Brother Mark Hill to begin the process.

Brother Hill knew of many of the old Brothers who had lived with Edmund Rice and he found former students of Brother Rice who could give their recollections of him. Their statements had to be written, signed, and sworn to as being true. Then Superior General Whitty officially halted the process. However, the work that Brother Hill did was very important because it helped the Commission studying the Cause for Beatification for Brother Edmund Rice many years later.

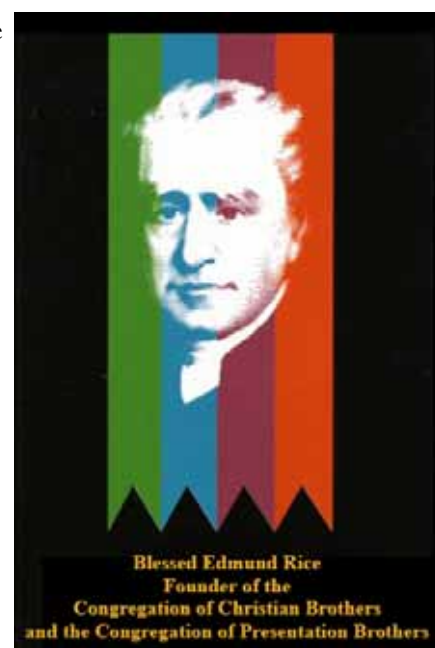
Some years later, Brother William Cullen took up the work of Mark Hill. He kept extensive notes about Edmund Rice and the social history of Waterford and Callan during that time.

In 1954, a Jesuit, Father Baumann, a member of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, read a biography of Edmund Rice and became convinced he was a candidate for sainthood. Application was made to the Holy See for Edmund Rice’s case to be considered by the Congregation of Saints.

Bishop Colhahan, of the Diocese of Waterford, Ireland, where Edmund died, was named by Rome to open the Cause in 1956. Bishop Colhahan did not have the staff for this process and six years later Rome established an Ecclesiastical Court to examine the life of Edmund Rice for possible beatification. For seven years the Commission continued its work only to vote negatively that the Cause of Edmund Rice could go no further because of insufficient evidence, a question about his relationship with his superiors, and his state of mental health. Edmund Rice was cleared of these charges when it was proved that the Founder’s signature on some questionable letters was a forgery. Years previously, it was this now discredited “evidence” that had caused Superior General Whitty to halt the process.

A new Historical Commission was appointed and in 1988. A book entitled “Edmund Ignatius Rice (1762-1844) The Positio Super Virtutibus” was completed and copies sent to the Cardinals and all members of the Congregation of Causes for the Saints. After a thorough examination of “The Positio”, the official readers decided that Brother Edmund Rice had lived a life of “heroic” virtue.

On April 2, 1993, Pope John Paul II bestowed the title “Venerable” on Edmund Rice and declared him a candidate for beatification.



A tribunal had been set up in Ireland in 1988 to investigate a possible miracle performed by the intercession of Brother Edmund Rice in 1976. A young man named Kevin Ellison, of Newry, Northern Ireland, age 19, had his appendix removed only to be followed by complications of gangrene. Further surgery was done but the doctors believed there was no hope of survival. Death would take place within 24 to 48 hours. A friend of the family, Brother Laserian O'Donnell, gave Kevin's parents a relic of Edmund Rice. Many friends prayed for a miracle through the intercession of Edmund Rice and a special Mass was offered for Kevin's recovery. Importantly for Edmund's cause, all relics and religious articles belonging to other holy people were removed from Kevin's bed and only the relic of Edmund Rice was placed there.

To everyone's surprise, Kevin survived the next day and after a further operation, he was able to return home after several weeks. Every witness to the miracle was questioned and examined separately. Once this was completed and documented, the Tribunal sent their report to the Congregation of Saints in Rome. The Vatican sent the report of the Irish Tribunal to two Italian doctors in Rome for their opinion, which was positive. The material was then submitted to doctors of the Roman Medical Commission for their study and opinion. This process took five years before the Commission gave their approval that this was a miraculous cure.

The process was still not over. Next the theological commission of the Congregation of Saints began their investigation to see if the cure could be the work of Edmund Rise. Their decision was also positive and the Holy Father gave his approval to the miracle in 1995.

In Vatican City, on October 6, 1996 (152 years after the death of Edmund), Pope John Paul II, beatified Venerable Edmund Rice who is now known as Blessed Edmund Rice, a title he will keep until he is canonized. Kevin Ellison presented the relic of Blessed Edmund to Pope John Paul II during the ceremonies in St. Peter's Square.

A second documented and investigated miracle attributable to Blessed Edmund Rice is required before Blessed Edmund Rice can be canonized and called Saint Edmund Rice.

There is encouragement in the number of people from all over the world who write to claim that through the intercession of Blessed Edmund Rice their prayers have been answered. Many indeed claim to have experienced a physical or spiritual healing through such prayers. All of this is encouragement that there is true devotion to Blessed Edmund out there.

The vast majority of "cures" that are on file do not generate sufficient medical evidence to convince the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome, this despite the fact that the people involved are convinced that there has been an exceptional answer to their prayers.



His Holiness John Paul II beatified Edmund Ignatius Rice on October 6, 1996, in St. Peter's Square.

Are YOU called to follow in Blessed Edmund's footsteps and be a Brother to the world?

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