

## Visayan poised for sainthood

Written by Administrator  
Saturday, 29 October 2011 12:23

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### **PEDRO CALUNGSOD**

The Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints has endorsed to Pope Benedict XVI the canonization of Blessed Pedro Calungsod, the Philippines' Visayan martyr who was killed while doing missionary work in Guam in 1672.

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The Pope and the Holy See will now evaluate the recommendation of the cardinals, particularly the authenticity of a miracle, which is a requirement for the formal declaration of sainthood.

“The (congregation) has no further questions,” said Msgr. Ildebrando Leyson, a key lobbyist for the slain teenage catechist in the lengthy process of sainthood.

“Only the Holy Father can declare if there is a miracle (made through Calungsod’s intercession or not). We are hoping that Blessed Pedro Calungsod will become a saint,” said Leyson, who is vice postulator of the cause of Blessed Pedro Calungsod.

Calungsod was beatified in Rome on March 5, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Text messages of the advancement of Calungsod’s case circulated widely last week among devotees, including one in Italian.

Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma confirmed the report in a text message to the *Cebu Daily News*.

Leyson said the Pope would have the final word and that the decision may come late this year or early next year.

The approval itself would have to be made in a mass traditionally held in St. Peter’s Square, where the Pope would issue a document or “bull of canonization” that would recognize Calungsod as worthy of public worship in the entire Catholic Church.

Many devotees hope to see Calungsod, who is held up as a role model for youngsters, canonized and joining fellow Filipino San Lorenzo Ruiz among the Church’s pantheon of saints.

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It took six years before Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, the first Filipino saint, was elevated to sainthood.

Ruiz and 15 companions were beatified by Pope John Paul II on Feb. 18, 1981.

He was canonized six years after.

## **Iloilo teenager**

Calungsod, a teenager born and raised in Iloilo City's Chinese district of Molo and later moved to Cebu to preach Christianity, was among the first to serve on a mission organized by Fr. Diego de San Vitores to the Ladrones Islands, now known as Guam, in the Western Pacific, Marianas, on June 16, 1668.

Trained by the Jesuits, Calungsod mastered catechism and learned how to read, write and speak in Visayan, Spanish and Chamorro.

Some natives in the island resented the work of missionaries, who faced physical danger.

On April 2, 1672, Pedro and Fr. Diego were speared with a cutlass by two villagers in Tumhon, Guam, for catechizing and baptizing the natives.

One of the killers was the father of the baby they baptized against his will.

An influential Chinese quack doctor named Choco had started rumors that the baptismal water used by the missionaries was poisonous after some sickly infants who were baptized died.

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The bodies of Calungsod and the priest were thrown into the sea.

Little is known of Calungsod other than his mention in documents of Fr. De San Vitores, a Spanish priest.

Like beatification, a miracle should be attributed to the intercession of Calungsod for him to be declared a saint.

The miracle can only be declared valid by the Pope.

Fr. Leyson said accounts of possible miracles attributed to Calungsod were scrutinized by a group of experts, including medical doctors.

Cebu Archbishop Emeritus Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, the postulator for the cause for Calungsod's sainthood, earlier revealed that he submitted a case to the Vatican about a female patient in a Cebu hospital in 2003 who suffered cardiac arrest and was declared brain dead.

The woman returned to life after her family prayed through Calungsod's intercession.

The cardinal refused to reveal the woman's name, saying only that she is working in Cebu.

The cause for sainthood was passed on to a group of theologians who verified that the possible miracle was made through Calungsod's intercession.

The group then endorsed it to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

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The congregation recently voted unanimously and passed on Calungsod's cause to Pope Benedict XVI.

"Only the Holy Father can declare if there is miracle or not. The three groups that conducted the investigation before him can't force the Holy Father to canonize Calungsod," Leyson said.

Leyson said the group of medical experts, theologians and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints helped the Holy Father in deciding on Calungsod's cause.

He declined to talk about the possible miracles attributed to Calungsod.

"If the process is over, we will talk about it," Leyson said.

Calungsod's feast day is celebrated every April 2.