



Benedict to expedite sainthood process for Pope John Paul II

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Pope John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, at age 84.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Pope expected to approve "heroic virtues" of John Paul II, declare him "venerable"
- Two confirmed miracles must be attributed to John Paul before he becomes saint
- Usually, process begins five years after death, Benedict OKs early start for John Paul

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Rome, Italy (CNN) -- Pope Benedict XVI is expected to sign a decree on Saturday that will put his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, a step closer to sainthood.

The Diocese of Rome's press office said Friday that the pontiff is expected to approve the "heroic virtues" of John Paul II and then declare him "venerable."

A miracle attributed to his intervention will have to be verified for the late pope to be declared "blessed," or beatified.

A second miracle would have to be confirmed for him to then be officially canonized, or made a saint. John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, at age 84. Several months after his death, his successor said he had dispensed with rules that normally impose a five-year waiting period before beatification.

The rule is intended to allow time for evidence and witnesses supporting the sainthood cause to be prepared, as well as to wait for emotions to dissipate after death. But John Paul himself set a precedent in 1999 when he granted a dispensation and let Mother Teresa's sainthood cause begin two years after her death.

CNN's Hada Messia contributed to this report.