

South Africa's 1st Saint?

Diocese Sends Case for Benedict Daswa to Rome

TZANEEN, South Africa, JULY 17, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The first case for a South African native saint was advanced as officials concluded a diocesan inquiry into the life and death of Servant of God Benedict Daswa.

A press release from the South African bishops' conference reported Monday that the inquiry was completed at the beginning of July, and the final documents sent to the prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, Archbishop Angelo Amato.

These documents, which will be brought to Rome by Archbishop James Green, South Africa's apostolic nuncio, include over 850 pages of testimonies about Daswa.

He was born in 1946 to a traditionalist family in a small Lemba tribe, an ethnic group claiming common descent and some similar traditions as Jewish people.

Benedict Daswa lived among the Venda people in the Limpopo province, the northernmost region of the country.

He was preparing to be a primary school teacher when he converted to Catholicism.

In his new faith life, he saw a conflict between Catholic beliefs and the witchcraft present in his culture.

Thus, Daswa took a strong stance against it, both privately and publicly, stating that witchcraft led to the killing of innocent people.

He openly rejected using "muti" or "medicine" derived from natural substances and used for "protection against evil or for success in sports and other activities."

The bishops' conference stated that this stance eventually led to his death.

Benedict was stoned and bludgeoned to death on Feb. 2, 1990, a few days after refusing to give money for witchcraft causes.

The conference stated that all evidence shows that Daswa led a holy life and was martyred for the faith.

Now, it continued, five years after the initiation of the diocesan inquiry, prayer cards will be prepared to encourage people to pray for Divine favors through his intercession, which will further his cause for beatification.

A biography is being produced to make the Servant of God more widely known.

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