

# Catholic officials seek permission to exhume Cardinal Newman's body

LONDON – Catholic officials have applied for permission to exhume the body of a 19th-century cardinal whose cause for sainthood is expected to soon progress to beatification.

They want to transfer the remains of Cardinal John Henry Newman from a grave in a small cemetery in the suburbs of Birmingham, England, to a marble sarcophagus in a church in the city where they can be venerated by pilgrims.

A July 14 statement said that the Archdiocese of Birmingham was now in direct contact with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Sir Suma Chakrabarti, to obtain the necessary permission to exhume Cardinal Newman's body.

"One of the centuries-old procedures surrounding the creating of new saints by the Catholic Church concerns their earthly remains," said Father Paul Chavasse, provost of the Birmingham Oratory and postulator of Cardinal Newman's cause.

"These have to be identified, preserved and, if necessary, placed in a new setting that befits the individual's new status in the church," he said in the statement issued by the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

He said the Vatican had advised the archdiocese that this would be the normal course of action.

"We hope that Cardinal Newman's new resting place in the Oratory church in Birmingham will enable more people to come and pay their respects to him, and perhaps light a candle there," he said.

Father Chavasse added that he felt certain that many people would "surely wish to honor this great and holy man." He said the government decision on the exhumation was expected in the "near future."

Cardinal Newman's cause took a step forward in April when Vatican medical consultants ruled that an inexplicable healing in August 2001 was a result of his intercession. Deacon Jack Sullivan of Marshfield, Mass., had been suffering from a serious spinal disorder but was cured after praying to the cardinal.

The cause is now being studied by a committee of theological consultants. If they decide that the healing was a miracle it will mean that Cardinal Newman can be beatified and declared "blessed." A second miracle is needed for his cause to progress to canonization.

Peter Jennings, spokesman for the Birmingham Archdiocese, said in the archdiocesan statement that the cause was making swift progress and he expected Pope Benedict XVI to issue a decree announcing Cardinal Newman's beatification "sometime during December this year."

Before he became a Catholic at age 44, Cardinal Newman was a Church of England priest who led the Oxford movement in the 1830s to draw Anglicans to their Catholic roots.

He was respected as a philosopher and a theologian, and Pope Benedict is said to have taken a keen interest in his cause.

The London-born cardinal founded the English community of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and died in his room at Oratory House, Birmingham, in 1890 at the age of 89. More than 15,000 people attended his funeral.