The Reverend Louis Brisson

(1817-1908)

priest and founder of the institutes of the Oblates & Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales

On December 19, 2011 the Vatican Information Service reported that the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, authorized the promulgation of a decree affirming a miracle attributed to the Servant of God Louis Brisson, French priest and founder of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.

By issuing this decree, the Pope confirms the positive evaluation given by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which is the culmination of three previous studies. First, the fact of a miracle was thoroughly documented (the "Positio Super Miro"). The miracle concerned the 1953 healing of an eight year-old boy in Ecuador whose foot was so badly crushed by a tractor that specialists believed he would never again walk normally. Following a novena of prayers to Fr. Brisson by Oblate Sisters who interacted with the boy's family, and without any physical therapy or orthopedic devices, the boy was healed – and healed so well that he later enlisted in the U.S. Air Force! Based on the "positio" about this case, a committee of physicians studied the medical documentation and concluded (on 2/10/11) that the miraculous healing, which was both unexpected and lasting in duration, could not be attributed to natural causes or to specific medical intervention. Following this medical consultation, a committee of theologians studied the entire matter and concluded (on 6/7/11) that the miracle was attributable to the prayerful intercession of Fr. Brisson.

What this decree means is that Fr. Brisson may now be formally “beatified” after which he will be known as "Blessed" Louis Brisson. Unlike canonization, by which the pope solemnly raises someone to the honor of sainthood to be acknowledged by the universal Church, beatification is an act by which the pope permits a public cult for a servant of God but in a way limited to particular places (e.g., the diocese in which he died) and/or groups (e.g., the religious orders he founded). In the case of Fr. Brisson, the particular Church (diocese) in Troyes, France will likely be the site in which the beatification takes place, at a date and time to be decided by the diocesan Bishop and the Promoter of the Cause, in consultation with the Secretariat of State at the Vatican.
Beatification represents the penultimate stage in the cause of canonization for Fr. Brisson. His cause was initiated in Troyes in 1938, and introduced in Rome in 1964; when the decree on the validity of the process was issued on October 6, 1995, he was then called a “Servant of God.” Then, following the publication of a documented biography in 1998, the heroicity of his virtues was reviewed by a historical commission and by a theological commission and decreed by papal authority on December 19, 2009, after which Fr. Brisson was called “Venerable.” The final stage would be canonization (and his designation as a “saint”), which requires, following the same three-fold process, the documentation and authorization of yet another miracle, this one taking place after beatification.

Once again, this sacred season gives us a special reason to rejoice – in the gift that God has given to the Church and to the world in the life and legacy of Fr. Louis Brisson. And still we pray that his holiness will shine forth in ways that lead to his eventual canonization ... so that we might recognize more worthily his contribution to the Salesian tradition and that we might imitate his example more closely in our own lives.

(Learn more about Fr. Louis Brisson at this link.)

REV. THOMAS F. DAILEY, O.S.F.S.

Director

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