

# FLORIDACatholic

## PALM BEACH DIOCESE

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## Could a local priest be key to sainthood?

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**PALM BEACH GARDENS** | Formal proceedings are underway in the Diocese of Palm Beach to investigate an alleged miracle that could possibly lead the way to a Carmelite priest's canonization to sainthood.

"I can assure you that the whole Carmelite world is watching this event and praying," said Carmelite Father Mario Esposito, vice postulator of the cause for canonization of Blessed Titus Brandsma. Father Esposito took part in formal openings of the diocesan investigation July 11 at the Pastoral Center in Palm Beach Gardens, with Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito presiding.

Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll, former pastor of St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton, who is a sincere devotee of Father Brandsma, may have the one authentic divine sign needed to bring the priest's cause before Pope Francis for his judgment. Father Driscoll, who continues to serve St. Jude

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## SAINTHOOD

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Parish and is former director of the diocesan Liturgy Office, was diagnosed with the most severe stage of metastatic malignant melanoma cancer 12 years ago. He prayed for healing through the intercession of Father Brandsma. Members of the Carmelite Order, parishioners of St. Jude, friends, family and faithful from around the diocese prayed as well and Father Driscoll is cancer free. If the pope determines that the miracle evidence is clear and that contrary reports are not credible, he may initiate the canonization procedure and Father Brandsma may become one of the Church's next saints.

The solemn opening was attended by Carmelite priests and some parishioners from St. Jude. Other Carmelites serving in the diocese were also on hand, along with diocesan officials. The event, a first for the Diocese of Palm Beach, involved prayers, recognitions, the presenting of documents, signing and sealing of paperwork, and the taking of oaths as part of the strict and important Church proceedings.

"We have such a devotion to Titus Brandsma and all that he represents," said Father Esposito. "Blessed Titus was a true blue, we might say, Carmelite friar. He was shy yet brave, an intellectual able to make himself understood by all kinds of people, and ultimately, when the time came to put his life on the line for Christ, he did so without hesitation."

"This is my first diocesan inquiry regarding an alleged miracle," said Father Glen Pothier, adjutant judicial vicar of the diocesan Office of Tribunal/Canonical Affairs. As part of the diocesan investigation, Bishop Barbarito appointed Father Pothier to serve as episcopal delegate. In this role, he serves as a representative for Bishop Barbarito in the inquiry, and acts "on his behalf," said Father Pothier.

"That does not mean that he (Bishop Barbarito) is not involved. Later, he will attest to the efforts of the tribunal before sending the acts of the case to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome," Father Pothier said about the department of the Roman Curia, which oversees the complex process that leads to the canonization of saints.

Father Pothier explained that as episcopal delegate, he will be coordinating the investigation and keeping the process going in an orderly manner. He will cite the witnesses for interviews as well as other people who are required to be present during the investigation.

The Church meticulously investigates a saint candidate's life and death. Evidence must be presented to convince Church of-

ficials that the candidate, in fact, lived a virtuous life, had faith and had the support and help of God.

Miracles are also evidence that God is working through that person. The miracles required for sainthood are usually medically baffling healings, received in response to prayers addressed to the candidate. In general, two miracles are needed for sainthood: one for beatification and the second for canonization. Martyrs, however, can be beatified without a miracle and need only a supernatural phenomenon and miracle for canonization.

Father Brandsma, a Dutch Carmelite, distinguished teacher, lecturer, journalist and adviser for Catholic editors and newspapers in Holland, was killed by the Nazis, who invaded the country in 1940. He was dedicated to the mission of the Church and put his life on the line defending faith and freedom of the Catholic press. He fought against the promotion of Nazi propaganda in newspapers as required by German law and the spread of Nazi ideology. He also defended the right of the Church to educate students sent to Catholic schools, including non-Catholics. He was arrested in January 1942.

He was eventually sent to Dachau concentration camp in Germany, where he joined 2,700 other imprisoned clergy, most of them Catholic priests. Witnesses at the camp later gave testimony saying that Father Brandsma never hesitated to witness his faith and his love of God, even praying for the guards who tortured him and the nurse who finally killed him.

Six months after arriving at Dachau, he was placed in the camp hospital where he was a subject for medical experimentation. He died July 26, 1942, after an injection of carbolic acid. He was 61.

The nurse who gave him the lethal injection later testified that Father Brandsma had prayed for her. Some reports say that he gave her his rosary and asked her to pray, and that the nurse, a fallen Catholic, experienced a conversion, a miracle in itself that carried a hefty price tag but for the glory of God.

Father Brandsma was declared a martyr of the Catholic Church and beatified in Rome by St. John Paul II in Nov. 1985. Since then, the promotion of his cause for sainthood has been in progress.

"We have been praying as a community. Blessed Brandsma represents the spirituality of our Carmelite order," said Carmelite Father Guy Fiano, parochial vicar at St. Jude, about the holy man of prayer who had a deep relationship with Christ, especially in the silence of his jail cell and up until his death.

According to diocesan officials, the local investigation into



Father Glen Pothier, diocesan adjutant judicial vicar, seals papers during formal ceremonies July 11 at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Palm Beach Gardens. Father Pothier serves as episcopal delegate in the current diocesan investigation into an alleged miracle.



A small group of people, including parishioners from St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton and Carmelite priests from the parish, attend formal ceremonies July 11 at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Palm Beach Gardens. (PHOTOS BY LINDA REEVES | FC)

Father Driscoll's incredible healing of aggressive malignant cancer and good health over the past 12 years — which defies all odds — involves witnesses including medical experts, questions, depositions and document investigation. If the case is deemed by the Vatican to be a miracle that occurred through the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma and approvals come from Pope Francis, the canonization procedure may be initiated.

Father Albert Dello Russo serves as promoter of justice for the investigation. He points out that this case is a first for the diocese and "a great opportunity for catechesis of the faithful."

"I know Father Michael Driscoll as a priest of our diocese, however, I was not familiar with his medical condition or the role of Blessed Titus Brandsma in his cure," ex-

plained Father Dello Russo. "As the promoter of justice, which is a required office in this process, it is my job ultimately to sign off for the Holy See that everything prescribed by law in the process has been faithfully observed ... to see that all the acts (interrogation, testimony, documents) have been gathered in a thorough manner and that the process has included all necessary information, pro and con, for the Holy See, which will allow for a just and unbiased judgment. I will also be involved with the interrogation of witnesses and medical experts, along with Father Pothier. The promoter of justice must be a priest, competent in theology and canon law."

People are asked to continue to pray for Father Driscoll and for the success of the investigation that shines a glowing light not only on the martyr, but on the people here



A framed photo of Blessed Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite priest and martyr, is displayed during ceremonies and the formal opening of the diocesan investigation into an alleged miracle attributed to his intercession.