

De Patronis constituendis

ON PATRON SAINTS

(Notitiae 9 [1973] 263-266; Acta Apostolicae Sedis 65 [1973] 276-279)

1. A patron in the liturgical sense of the term means the Blessed Virgin Mary, a saint, or a blessed who because of an ancient tradition or lawful custom is celebrated as a protector, that is, as an advocate before God.
2. A patron is distinct from the title or titular of a church, a religious congregation, or a community, even though the term “title” implies patronage.
3. There are patrons of:
 - a. *places* (a nation, region, diocese, state, city or town, parish);
 - b. *religious families*;
 - c. *moral persons, sodalities, institutes, and organizations*, ecclesiastical and civil.

CHOICE OF A PATRON

4. The *Blessed Virgin Mary*, under any title received in the liturgy, *the angels*, and *the saints* may be chosen as patrons. The blessed may not, without a special indult of the Apostolic See (CIC can. 1278). The choice of a Divine Person is always excluded (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, 24 Jun 1970, no. 28).
5. There may be only one patron. It is lawful, however, to choose two or more saints as patrons if they are listed together in the calendar.

In the past for special reasons another saint has sometimes been taken as a secondary patron. From now on as a rule there is to be only one.
6. Patrons of places are to be chosen by the clergy and faithful, that is, by those to be placed under the saint’s protection.

Patrons of religious families, moral persons, sodalities, institutes, and organizations are to be chosen by those involved, that is, by the members who make up the respective groups (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 30).

The choice of a patron is to be made either by ballot or vote or by petition or the collection of signatures.

APPROVAL

7. Choice of a patron requires the approval of the competent authority: the *bishop* for a diocese; the *conference of bishops* for an ecclesiastical province, a region, or a nation; the *provincial chapter* for a province of religious and the *general chapter* for an entire religious institute. In the case of moral persons, sodalities, institutes, or organizations that are international the matter is to be submitted to the Holy See.

CONFIRMATION

8. The choice and approval of a patron require confirmation by the Congregation for Divine Worship (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 30).
To obtain this confirmation the following documents must be sent to the Congregation:
 - a. petition of the local ecclesiastical authority or, where applicable and possible, of the civil authority;
 - b. *acta*, petitions, lists of signatures that endorse the choice and are evidence of it, as well as a report expressing the reasons for the choice;
 - c. proof that the competente authority has approved the choice.
9. Confirmation is granted through a decree of the Congregation and, in the case of patrons of a more extensive geographical area, also by means of an apostolic letter in the form of a brief.
10. The *cultus* and devotion toward a patron already formally established or accepted from time immemorial may have ceased in the course of time or it may happen that nothing certain is known about the saint. In such a case a new patron may be chosen after thorough deliberation. The requirements already laid down are followed (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 33).

LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF A PATRON

11. A liturgical celebration belongs only to patrons duly chosen or accepted by immemorial tradition. No special liturgical right belongs to other saints who are called patrons only in a wide sense, purely out of devotion (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 29).
12. The celebration of the patron of a city or town, of a moral person, an institute, or an organization is observed with the rank of *solemnity*. Such a solemnity has *precedence* over all feasts in the General Calendar or in a particular calendar and over a Sunday of the Christmas season or a Sunday in Ordinary Time.
The celebration of the patron of a diocese, province, region, or nation and the patron of a province of religious is observed with the rank of a *feast* (see General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar no. 59). As pastoral reasons may suggest, however, for example, when the patron has great devotion for the faithful, the celebration may have the rank of a solemnity (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 8). The patron of a place or of a wider area must be celebrated even by religious (see General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar no. 52; Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 16) and those who have all their own calendar.
13. In their own right religious institutes may celebrate with the rank of a solemnity either their patron or their title or their founder who is a saint. But, in special circumstances they may petition that a second one of these celebrations have the rank of a solemnity.
14. Secondary patrons formally established in the past are to be celebrated with the rank of an obligatory memorial (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 16).
15. The following are no longer to be honored as patrons: those established in the past because of peculiar historical circumstances; those chosen in the past either because

of some extraordinary event, for example, a plague, war, or other disaster, or because of a special, but now extinct *cultus* (see Instr. *Calendaria particularia*, no. 32).