



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Decree of Acceptance of Petition

June 24, 2022

On October 28, 2021, Brother Philip Smith, the postulator for the cause of canonization for Brother Columba O’Neill, lodged a petition with the diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. In accord with *Sanctorum Mater*, Art 36, the joint petitioners, namely, the Congregation of Holy Cross, Midwest Province of Brothers and United States Province of Priests and Brothers, have officially requested that the cause for canonization of Brother Columba O’Neill be formally opened on the ground of a life lived out of heroic virtue. This cause is considered an ancient cause since the majority of proofs are documentary rather than oral testimonies.

As Bishop of Fort Wayne- South Bend, and before accepting the *libellus*, I hold the responsibility of verifying that an authentic reputation for holiness and of intercessory power has developed among the people of God, in accord with *Sanctorum Mater*, Art. 25 and of giving my reasons in summary form within this decree.

With such in mind, I have thoroughly examined and prayerfully discerned the content of the petition and all the accompanying documents which describe and explain the life of Brother Columba O’Neill. I hereby accept the above-mentioned petition for the following reasons:

1. There is abundant documentary evidence in the libellus of Brother Columba’s reputation for holiness among his fellow religious and the laity, including students at the University of Notre Dame, people in the local area, Illinois, and beyond.
2. Brother Columba’s sincere and deep devotion and complete trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary were profound, reminiscent of Saint Andre Bessette’s deep devotion to Saint Joseph.
3. Brother Columba’s religious life of poverty, chastity, and obedience was truly exemplary.
4. Brother Columba’s life was a testimony of what it means to live Jesus’ injunction: “Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.” His simple and child-like faith and his meekness and humility are evident in his letters and in the testimony of his superiors and his brothers in religious life.

5. Brother Columba's faithfulness to his duties as a religious brother, his humble work as a cobbler at Notre Dame, his fidelity to prayer, and his countless hours making Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary badges, seeing and corresponding with hundreds of people suffering and in need and praying for them are evidence of his heroic sanctity.
6. Brother Columba's reputation for sanctity was widespread during his life, was evident at his funeral by the large numbers who came to view his body and ask for his intercession and continued for many years after his death.
7. There is abundant testimony in the *libellus* of Brother Columba's reputation of intercessory power – reports of cures and favors granted to those who received Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary badges from him and followed his prayer instructions and for whom he prayed.
8. Brother Columba's saintly character was revealed in his ardent love for Jesus and Mary and in his love and care for the multitudes of people who came to see him or wrote to him.
9. Testimony shows that Brother Columba was unfailing in the exercise of the cardinal and theological virtues, in purity and integrity of life, and in his witness to the love and humility of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Such witness, if officially recognized by the Church, would help and inspire the people of God in responding to the call to holiness through loving trust and humble confidence in Jesus and Mary and through love of neighbor, especially those who are suffering or in need. His witness would help invigorate renewed devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary among the faithful. His witness would also highlight the vocation of the religious brother and inspire more vocations.

Signed in Fort Wayne:

June 24, 2022
Solemnity of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus

r Kevin C. Rhoades
Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

[Signature]
Very Reverend Mark A. Gurtner
Chancellor