

Vatican declares Pembroke church deacon's cure a miracle

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NEW YORK —

John Sullivan of Marshfield said it was a miracle that healed him from crippling back pain. Now a panel of Vatican theology experts has agreed.

America magazine reported this morning that experts have verified the Plymouth District Court clerk magistrate's healing came from the intercession of the late Cardinal John Henry Newman.

The panel's vote clears the way for Pope Benedict XVI to beatify Cardinal Newman. The pope can then declare the cardinal a saint if he's credited with a second verified miracle.

Sullivan, a deacon at St. Thecla's Church in Pembroke, prayed to the 19th century British cardinal several years ago, after back surgery didn't cure his ailment. He couldn't be reached for immediate comment.

The Rev. James Martin, the America editor who reported the Vatican decision, said Sullivan's case is impressive because the Vatican sets a high standard to accept miracles.

A miracle must be determined to be instantaneous and medically verifiable, and the result of prayers from a single saint or religious figure. The healed person had to be in no other treatment at the time, and not suffer from the illness or condition again.

"That bar is a lot higher than most of us would set it," the Rev. Martin said.

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