

John Paul II hailed by Vatican commission

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Vatican City - Cardinals and bishops have voted to recognise the "heroic virtues" of the late pope John Paul II, moving him a step closer on the path to sainthood, Vatican sources said on Tuesday.

The 15-strong commission of cardinals and bishops that studied the case are not allowed to speak on their deliberations, but the sources said their vote was in favour of John Paul II, who was pope from 1978-2005.

Current Pope Benedict XVI must validate the commission's decision before Karol Wojtyla can be proclaimed as "venerable".

The final stage before beatification is the examination of the "miracle" attributed to John Paul II for the unexplained healing in 2005 of a French nun who suffered from Parkinson's disease.

Medical and theological panels will look at the case, which will then be considered by the bishops and cardinals commission before Benedict XVI again has to authorise their decisions.

If all these stages are met, John Paul II's beatification will follow, which could take place in October 2010 to mark the anniversary of the Polish pope's election on October 16, 1978.

Should this happen, Karol Wojtyla will have been beatified a year faster than Mother Teresa (1910-1997), beatified six years after her death.

Benedict XVI set in motion the process of beatification for John Paul II just two months after his predecessor's death on April 2, 2005. - AFP

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