

WORLD & NATION

Beatified Puerto Rican revived college ministry

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Calling eucharistic devotion a secret to holiness, Pope John Paul II beatified five men and women, including Puerto Rico's first layman and a Canadian woman who founded a religious order.

As 3,000 Puerto Ricans cheered and waved their island's flag in St. Peter's Square April 29, the pope said the newly Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, a lay activist who died in 1963, demonstrates that all Christians are called to pursue sanctity "in a conscious and responsible way."

He said Blessed Mother Marie-Anne Blondin, a Canadian who founded the Sisters of St. Anne in 1850 to educate poor children despite resistance from some church leaders, "is a model of an existence surrendered to love and marked by the paschal mystery."

Dressed in gold vestments that sparkled in the strong sunshine, the pope pronounced a Latin formula of beatification for the five, who include a 20th-century Spanish bishop and two 19th-century Ital-

ian women who founded religious orders.

Blessed Carlos, who died at age 44, reinvigorated campus ministry for Catholic students at the state-run University of Puerto Rico and championed lay people's participation in the church's liturgical life in the years prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Unable to pursue university studies because of an illness that led to colon cancer, "Charlie," as he is popularly known, became a self-taught Catholic intellectual who worked to communicate the vitality and relevance of the Catholic faith to students and professors.

He founded a magazine called *Christian Culture*, lectured informally on liturgical and cultural issues, and translated articles on those topics into Spanish from English and French.

The Puerto Rican pilgrims at the Vatican ceremony included a number of Blessed Carlos' former students, thrilled to see a local layman recognized by the universal church.

The pope said trust in the Resurrection also sustained Blessed Mother Marie-Anne in her struggles to found an order dedicated to educating poor boys and girls in rural 19th-century Quebec. Illiterate until her early 20s, Blessed Mother Marie-Anne won permission from her bishop in 1850 to open coeducational schools, despite church rules that prohibited women from teaching boys.

Though her order, the Sisters of St. Anne, quickly flourished, four years after its founding she was deposed at the hand of an unsympathetic chaplain, with the bishop's approval. She spent most of the rest of her life, without any sign of rancor, assigned to laundry and ironing duties.

"The trials never altered her love for Christ and for the church," the pope said.



Reuters/CNS

A tapestry showing the image of Carlos Manuel Rodriguez hangs from St. Peter's Basilica April 29. The Puerto Rican man and four others were beatified by Pope John Paul II, moving them one step closer to sainthood.

More than 200 Sisters of St. Anne from Canada, the United States, Haiti, Chile and Cameroon attended the beatification ceremony. Sister Mary Ellen King, mother general, said their founder gives the universal church an example of "the strength of a woman who knew the needs of her time and had the heart to respond."

The pope also beatified:

- Bishop Manuel Gonzalez Garcia, 1877-1940, of Malaga and Palencia in southern Spain. Known as the "bishop of the abandoned tabernacle," he made a priority the fostering of devotion to the Eucharist, an example "that continues to speak to the

church today," the pope said.

- Sister Caterina Volpicelli, 1839-1894, founder of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart. Her "surprising apostolic generosity," including the promotion of the laity, was nourished by a "profound eucharistic spirituality," the pope said.

- Sister Caterina Cittadini, 1801-1857, founder of the Ursuline Sisters of St. Jerome of Somasca. "Also for her, the secret was union with the Eucharist," said the pope. That path is valid today for those "who want to transmit the values of Christian culture to the new generations, in this epoch of great social changes," he said.

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McVeigh

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leaders to include that as a special prayer intention at Masses and in other group prayers.

He invited people to join him at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis at 7:30 p.m. May 15 for a special evening prayer service.

In an earlier statement April 2, Archbishop Buechlein called the Oklahoma City bombing "heinous" and said, "Like no

other, the McVeigh case tests the mettle of the emerging Catholic view about the inappropriateness of capital punishment."

He concluded that the church does not question the right of the state in principle to impose the death penalty. "Yet we must oppose the death penalty because the circumstances of our day do not warrant it," he said.

He quoted the pope's 1995 statement that, with modern developments in the penal system, the cases in which the execution of an offender would be necessary "are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."

Only one death-row prisoner in the United States is known to have received clemency as a direct result of a papal appeal. On his 1999 visit to St. Louis, the pope publicly denounced the death penalty as "cruel and unnecessary" and privately asked Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan to

show clemency to death-row inmate Darrell Mease.

Carnahan commuted Mease's sentence to life without parole, saying he granted the pope's request "because of a deep and abiding respect for the pontiff and all he represents."

When President Bush was governor of Texas, however, he rejected several papal requests to halt executions in his state — including the controversial 1998 execution of Karla Faye Tucker, a woman some regarded as an exemplary model of a reformed prisoner.

Another key federal official in the McVeigh case, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, as governor of Missouri in 1991, did not act on a papal request to reduce the sentence of Glennon Sweet, who had killed a state trooper. Further court appeals delayed Sweet's execution, but it was carried out in 1998.

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