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Church says N.Y. woman is source of Blessed Marianne Cope's miracle

Renee K. Gadoua Religion News Service | Dec. 22, 2011

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- A 65-year-old woman from Chittenango, N.Y., was inexplicably healed of pancreatitis in 2005, Catholic leaders say, and is the source of the second miracle that will make Blessed Mother Marianne Cope a new U.S. saint [1].

"I'm very happy to be here and I thank the Lord," Sharon Smith said Tuesday (Dec. 20) during a news conference at the Syracuse Motherhouse Chapel of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities.

"I'm very happy to be Mother Marianne's vessel for her to become a saint,"
Smith said.

Franciscan leaders said sisters prayed for Cope's intercession on Smith's behalf.

According to The Associated Press, Smith was hospitalized for nearly a year after pancreatitis tore a hole between her intestines and stomach. A stranger in the hospital waiting room told Smith's friend to pray to Cope for help, said Sister Patricia Burkard, general minister of the Franciscan sisters.

The nuns pinned a bag of soil from Cope's Hawaiian leper colony to Smith's hospital gown and began praying. When doctors removed the tubes from Smith's body, one said, "I don't know what you did but you are cured," Burkard told the AP.

Smith is the second person whose miraculous recovery led to Mother Marianne being named a saint. The earlier miracle involved a Syracuse teenager cured of multiple organ failure in 1993.

Pope Benedict XVI made the sainthood proclamation Monday, along with six others, including Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, a 17th-century Mohawk-Algonquin woman who converted to Christianity.

Franciscan officials do not know when the canonization ceremony will be held at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, but it is expected sometime in 2012.

Cope was leader of the Syracuse-based Sisters of St. Francis. She lived in the Syracuse area from 1862 to 1883, when she began her missionary work in Hawaii. She died in Kalaupapa, the leper settlement where she worked 33 years, in 1918.

"Her spirit still lives among us," Burkard said.

Renee K. Gadoua writes for The Post-Standard in Syracuse, N.Y.

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