

Vatican considers two Albertans for sainthood

Two giants of Catholic history in Alberta continue to be considered for possible sainthood by Pope Francis.

Most Rev. Vital Grandin was the first bishop of the newly erected diocese of St. Albert in 1871 and was instrumental in the establishment of the Catholic Church in Western Canada. Brother Anthony Kowalczyk worked with indigenous and Métis people in Alberta. Both were members of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Their names grace Frere Antoine Catholic Elementary School in Edmonton, Grandin schools in Edmonton, St. Albert and Calgary, as well as communities and buildings.

“Let’s continue to promote the advancement of these causes by our prayers,” Archbishop Richard Smith wrote in his blog Wednesday, after meeting with the head of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican.

Archbishop Smith and his counterparts from Western and Northern Canada are in Rome on a weeklong *ad limina* visit.

Both Bishop Grandin and Brother Anthony are considered venerable, meaning they have lived heroic virtues. Candidates are required to have two miracles attributed to them before being declared a saint.

Bishop Grandin was born at St. Pierre de la Cour, France, on February 8, 1829. He was ordained a priest on April 23, 1854. Following his ordination, he was sent to the Metis settlement at St. Boniface, Manitoba, before travelling to Alberta. Bishop Grandin died in 1902.

Brother Anthony Kowalczyk, or Frere Antoine, was born in Dzierzanow, Poland, on June 4, 1866. He came to Canada in 1896 and died in Edmonton on July 10, 1947. Brother Anthony was trained as a blacksmith. He lost an arm because of an accident in a mission sawmill at Lac La Biche.

Brother Anthony served as the custodian at College St. Jean in Edmonton from 1911 to 1947, and spent his final years there as a gardener and handyman.