



Friends of Hecker

*A Newsletter from the Paulist Fathers
about the Cause of Father Isaac T. Hecker*

Postulator: Father Paul Robichaud, CSP

Vice Postulators: Father Ron Franco, CSP; Father John Foley, CSP

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Message from the postulator

Mary's month

As Catholics we associate the month of May with the Blessed Virgin Mary. May devotion began in the 16th century and became universal in practice through the efforts of the Jesuits in the 17th century. Servant of God Isaac Hecker had a special devotion to Mary the Mother of God. As our main article recounts at two critical moments in his life, both in Rome in 1857 and New York in 1859, Father Hecker prayed to the Blessed Mother for guidance and assistance; and in both cases his prayer was answered.



This is the first issue of what we hope will be a regular newsletter to keep you informed about Father Hecker's Cause and to introduce you to his life and teaching. We also want to hear from you. If you are aware of an answered prayer which you believe came through the intercession of our Servant of God, please let us know. If you are praying for a special intention through Father Hecker, tell us and we will invite our readership to pray with you. As postulator of his Cause, I will offer a special monthly mass for Father Hecker's Cause and I will be happy to include your prayer intentions. You can reach us at HeckerCause@paulist.org.

Father Hecker believed that the Paulist family and its mission was the special work of God. In this month of May, let us pray to the Mother of God, in the words of Father Hecker that God will grant each of us the grace to accomplish the special work God has given each of us to do. God bless you.

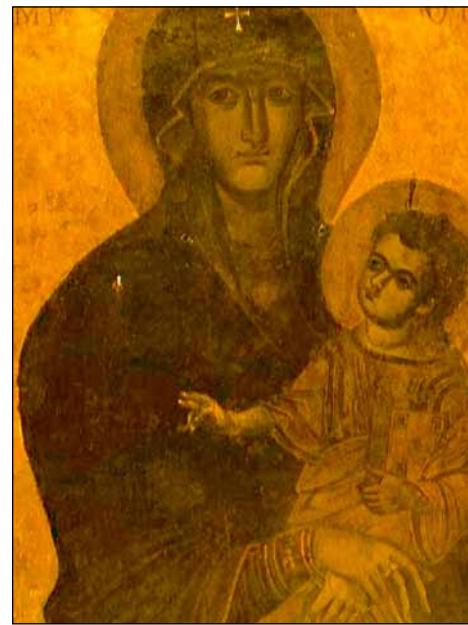
Father Paul Robichaud, CSP
Postulator of the Cause

Hecker: 'Father Mary'

Isaac Hecker had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As a missionary he loved teaching the morning instruction on a parish mission. Here you would find a mixed collection of people. The class often included Catholics who had left the practice of the church or who had been baptized as infants but thereafter had received very little catechetical instruction and hoped to make their first communion. Sometimes there were non-Catholics who were interested in learning more about the Catholic church. Hecker loved instructing them and one of the things he would always teach was a class on praying the rosary. He prayed it so often that he was often called "Father Mary" by his Redemptorist brothers.

On a visit to Rome in August 1857, when he came to argue for an English speaking house for his fellow American Redemptorists, he was expelled. Leaving the motherhouse, he walked up the street to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major; the first church in the world dedicated to the Mother of God. At the end of one stage of his life and at the beginning of another, he went before the great icon of the Mother of God – *Salus Populi Romani*, the patroness of the people of Rome – and dropped to his knees in prayer. Hecker would pray often before the great icon during the next few months in Rome, asking the protection and aid of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In March of 1858 Blessed Pius IX released Isaac and his companions and commissioned them to evangelize America.

In 1859 Hecker faced another crisis as it seemed impossible to cover their promised workload. It required at a minimum two priests to care for the new parish of Saint Paul the Apostle in Manhattan and three priests to



Paulist file
The icon *Salus Populi Romani* in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, Rome.

staff the proposed mission preaching schedule. Yet there were only four Paulists. Convinced as always that his new community was the work of God, he both celebrated Mass and prayed fervently to the Mother of God "to send at least one vocation to help us out in our present difficulties." Within a short time he received as he described it, "a providential answer" to his prayer in the visit of Father Robert Tillotson, a 34-year-old American born priest who had joined Blessed John Henry Newman's community in England. Tillotson was on a trip to visit his parents in New York City and discovered Hecker and his Paulists. Within weeks Tillotson asked Newman to release him to become the fifth Paulist. Father Hecker believed that the Mother of God played an important part of the founding of the Paulists. In this month of May, devoted to Mary, let us like Father Hecker, as for her protection and assistance.



Paulist file

Servant of God, Father Isaac T. Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers.

Who was Father Hecker?

Isaac Thomas Hecker was born in New York City on December 18, 1819, the third son and youngest child of John and Caroline (Freund) Hecker.

Ordained a Redemptorist priest in 1849, he founded the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in New York on July 7, 1858. The society was established to evangelize both believers and non-believers in order to convert North America to the Roman Catholic Church. Father Hecker sought to evangelize Americans using the popular means of his day, primarily preaching, the public lecture circuit and the printing press. He founded the monthly publication, "The Catholic World," in 1865.

Father Hecker's spirituality centered on the action of the Holy Spirit upon the soul and the need to remain attentive to the prompting of the Spirit in the great and small moments of life. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Father Hecker labored to establish a dialogue between faith and

culture, which he believed would lead to an American Catholicism whose vitality and optimism would transform the world.

In the latter years of his life, Father Hecker suffered with dark nights of the soul that varied in intensity; this was combined with the physical problems of a weak heart and leukemia. While emotionally and physically overcome at moments, Father Hecker remained faithful through his sure belief in the Holy Spirit.

On December 22, 1888, as the Paulist community gathered around his bed in prayer, Father Hecker raised his hand, making the Sign of the Cross in blessing, and died.

Father Hecker was named a Servant of God by Edward Cardinal Egan during a Mass at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in New York City on January 25, 2008, marking the opening of the 150th anniversary year of the Paulist Fathers and the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle.

Become a friend of Father Hecker!

Anyone can become a friend of Father Hecker and receive our newsletter. All you have to do is ask. If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, simply provide us your email address at HeckerCause@paulist.org. If you prefer to receive this newsletter by postal mail, please write to us at the address below and enclose a check for \$5 for postage made payable to Office of the Cause of Father Hecker. If you would like to make a donation toward Father Hecker's cause for canonization, please make your check payable to Office of Financial Development, Cause of Father Hecker. Be sure you include Father Hecker's name on the check to distinguish what fund you are donating towards. Mail all correspondence to the address below.

Friends of Father Hecker will not only receive the newsletter but will be remembered in a monthly Mass of prayer for Father Hecker's cause for sainthood.

Mailing address is : Office of the Cause for Father Hecker, 3015 Fourth Street NE, Washington, D.C., 20017

Hecker writes!

O Mary, mother of God and of us, bring us to your blessed feet that we may see the face of your Son, Jesus. Through you my Mother, I expect all the graces necessary to accomplish the designs of Almighty God in my created world. Through your most powerful aid, I expect the strength to overcome all enemies and obstacles to my vocation. You alone found favor in the sight of God; intercede for me merciful Queen and dearest Mother. Require me to love you more and more. My heart and its affections, my mind and all its thoughts; my body and all its parts I consecrate to you, now and for all eternity, to your honor and praise. Amen"

*From Hecker's Spiritual Notebook,
1854*



Paulist file

The Paulist Fathers gathered at St. Paul's College in Washington, D.C. in 2008 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the community.

About the Paulist Fathers

The Paulist Fathers began in July of 1858 when four former Redemptorist missionaries formed a new religious movement around the vision of Father Isaac Thomas Hecker. The four Redemptorists Isaac Hecker, Augustine Hewit, George Deshon and Francis Baker were all converts. Hecker had come to believe that Protestant America, if approached in the right manner would become Roman Catholic. The four had over the last seven years engaged in the preaching of parish missions, a form of Catholic revival preaching that reconciled lapsed Catholics and encouraged practicing Catholics to deepen their faith. Protestants often attended these events as the spouses or friends of Catholics or just of curiosity, as these preachers were Protestants become Catholics.

Isaac Hecker began to take a special interest in the presence of Protestant participants and it served to deepen his belief that America could become Catholic.

During the years 1860 -1960 the Paulist expertise was to operate on the boundaries that separated Catholics and Protestants in America. Using every form of modern media of their time, they explained the church to the larger Protestant culture with the clear goal of conversion. Wherever Catholics met Protestants, the Paulists tried to be present. Paulists came to state university campuses; created trailer missions into the rural American South, the very heartland of Protestant America; built Catholic Information Centers in American cities where Protestants worked and shopped. Wherever Catholics met Protestants, the Paulists were present to make Catholics proud of their heritage, to renew their faith and reconcile them to the church and always to instruct if not convert Protestants.

The Paulists entered campus ministry in 1907-1908 in two locations, the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Texas at Austin. They did so to safeguard the faith of young Catholics who enrolled in these institu-

tions. Because the Paulists were specialists in dealing with Protestants, they were perfectly suited to serve as chaplains to state universities.

The 1940s also produced the downtown Catholic Information Center. Like the state university campus, the inner city was a venue for Paulist missionaries. The 1940s and especially the 1950s, saw a tremendous interest in religion which led to a significant increase in church attendance. There were a large number of inquirers. Here in the center city Paulists could create a model based on the Christian Science Reading Room, complete with a storefront library, classroom and offices. This provided a non-threatening environment for a Protestant inquirer to drop in, take home literature, have questions answered, and perhaps sign up for a class before they left.

Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) for the promotion of Christian unity and the reform and renewal of the Catholic Church. The Paulists had from their founding preached renewal. Originally, it was directed to lapsed Catholics who came out to their parish missions. Now, the entire American church was being called to renewal.

Today the Paulists are committed to evangelization of the unchurched, reconciliation of alienated Catholics, and ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. These Paulist mission directions are consistent with the vision of Father Isaac Hecker and flow from the call of the Second Vatican Council. Paulists preach the call to come and explore Catholicism as did the first Paulists. They seek to invite, reconcile and renew alienated Catholics and communicate the Gospel through the means of their age. We invite you to explore some of our Paulist history and to visit other sections of our website to learn what ministries contemporary Paulists are presently involved in. Whether past or present, the spirit and vision of Father Hecker is very much alive today.



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Edward Cardinal Egan of New York opened the cause for sainthood of Paulist Founder Father Isaac T. Hecker on Jan. 25, 2008 at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in Manhattan. Father Hecker's tomb is in the background.

Inside the cause: How saints are made

On Jan. 25, 2008, Father Isaac Thomas Hecker was declared a Servant of God by Edward Cardinal Egan, then Archbishop of New York. This was the first step in opening his cause for sainthood.

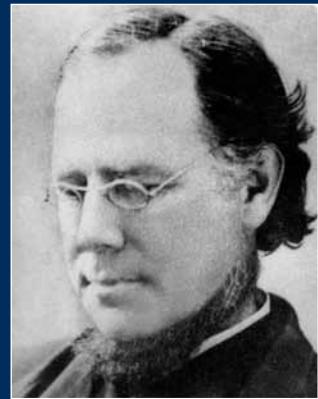
The process for canonization happens in two distinct stages. In this first stage of the process, two different investigations will take place. Under the direction of the Archbishop of New York, Father Hecker's life, ministry and writings will be examined to certify that he indeed lived a life of heroic virtue and continues to have a reputation for holiness. At the same time, the postulator of the cause seeks out a miracle that can be confirmed by the church as an example of his heavenly intercession. This second investigation is to discover whether God has indeed performed an extraordinary act and that it can be ascribed to the intercession of Father Hecker.

If the diocesan investigation is positive, all documentation will be forwarded to the Congregation of the Saints in Rome. This begins the second stage of the process. If the congregation's inquiry is positive on Father Hecker's reputation for holiness, he will be declared "Venerable." If the miracle is confirmed by the Congregation, then the Cardinal Prefect will ask the Pope to declare Father Hecker "Blessed." A second miracle is required for sainthood, and, when confirmed by the Congregation, Father Hecker can be canonized as a saint.

How can you help? First, you can pray the accompanying prayer for Father Hecker's intercession. Second you can invite family and friends to learn more about Father Hecker and to pray with you. Please report all favors received to the Office of the Cause of Father Hecker in Washington D.C. Our office can make available material on Father Hecker including reliquary cards.

Won't you help us spread the good news about Father Isaac Hecker? Won't you learn more about him, his vision, his life and his spirituality? Won't you ask God through Father Hecker's intercession that God perform an extraordinary act of help and healing?

We need your help!



Prayer for the Canonization of Father Isaac T. Hecker, CSP

Heavenly Father, you called your servant Isaac Thomas Hecker to preach the Gospel to the people of North America and through his teaching, to know the peace and the power of your indwelling Spirit. He walked in the footsteps of Saint Paul the Apostle, and like Paul spoke your Word with a zeal for souls and a burning love for all who came to him in need. Look upon us this day, with compassion and hope. Hear our prayer. We ask that through the intercession of Father Hecker your servant, you might grant us (state the request). We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Please report all favors received to:
Office of the Cause of Father Hecker
3015 Fourth Street N.E.
Washington D.C. 20017-1102
heckercause@paulist.org**