Once Condemned, Rosmini Now Beatified

Rome, Nov. 19, 2007 (CWNews.com)

Father Antonio Rosmini Serbati, a 19th-century Italian theologian whose works were once condemned by the Holy See, was beatified on November 18.

Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, the prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presided at the beatification ceremonies, which were held in Novara, Italy.

Born in 1797 in what was then a part of the Austrian empire, Antonio Rosmini was ordained to the priesthood in Padua, and gained a wide reputation as a theologian and writer. Moving to Rome, he founded the Institute of Charity and gained in influence until his ideas provoked heavy opposition. In 1887, 32 years after Father Rosmini's death, the Holy Office formally condemned a set of 40 propositions derived from his written works.

That condemnation stood until 2001, when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - the successor body to the Holy Office - found that the controversial elements of Rosmini's works on the partnership of faith and reason were "idealistic and not ontological" and lifted the condemnation. The Congregation noted that the works of Rosmini had contributed to the teachings of the magisterium, notably the encyclical Fides et Ratio by Pope John Paul II.

At the same time, the 2001 document cautioned that Rosmini's works were marked by "great audacity and courage" that at times could be characterized as "reckless daring." His written works remain "a matter of theoretical debate," the document said, and readers today were encouraged to read the original Vatican condemnation of those works to gain a fuller perspective.

That 2001 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. On the day of Rosmini's beatification, Cardinal Ratzinger - now Pope Benedict XVI - told his Angelus audience that he was celebrating the Church's recognition of "a great priest and an illustrious man of culture" whose great contribution to Christian thought was "what he himself called 'intellectual charity' - in other words the reconciliation of reason with faith."