

Local nun eyed for sainthood

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She would be Toronto's first saint.

This Saturday, the archdiocese of Toronto will officially begin its inquiry into the beatification of Sister Carmelina Tarantino, a chronically ill Italian immigrant who became a nun while she was confined to a hospital bed for 24 years.

"If Sister Carmelina becomes a saint, she would be Toronto's first saint," Neil MacCarthy, spokesman for the archdiocese, said yesterday.

Tarantino, who died at age 55 in 1992, arrived in Canada in 1964 in search of a possible explanation for her illness that had stumped doctors in her native country.

Doctors here suspected she had a rare form of cancer and gave her weeks to live, but she survived, enduring a mastectomy and leg amputation in the process.

In 1977, with the Vatican's approval, she became a nun.

For the last 24 years of her life, Tarantino, who spoke little English, gave counselling and spiritual advice to her legions of mostly Italian visitors seeking help.

MacCarthy said Tarantino's room at the Riverdale Hospital (now Bridgepoint Health) often had a line outside its door.

"She was doing all this work while she was in tremendous pain and discomfort herself," MacCarthy said.

On Saturday at St. Paschal Babylon Parish on Steeles Ave. W., just west of Yonge St., Thomas Collins, archbishop of Toronto, will begin the process of inquiry into Tarantino's cause for beatification.

Beatification, the first step in the process of proclaiming a saint, can only happen after a diocese and the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints has conducted a thorough investigation into the candidate's life. To reach beatification, one miracle must be proven.

For more information about how to submit evidence of a possible miracle by Tarantino, visit archtoronto.org/carmelina.