

Derry Nun Path To Sainthood Resource.

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Family 'proud' as Derry nun starts on path to sainthood.

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Sister Clare Crockett died in an earthquake in Ecuador in 2016.

By Shane Ó Curraighín North West Correspondent

A Derry nun who died in an earthquake in South America almost nine years ago is on the path towards sainthood after a special ceremony in Madrid.

Several hundred people gathered in Derry to watch a screening of the ceremony, while a large delegation from the northwest made the trip to Spain.

Sister Clare Crockett from Long Tower in Derry died after a school in which she had been teaching music in Playa Prieta, Ecuador, collapsed on 16 April 2016.

The 33-year-old nun, who had done pastoral care, hospital chaplaincy and missionary outreach in Spain, USA and Ecuador, was trying to lead several people from the school as the 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck.

Sr Clare worked as an actor before she joined the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother in Spain at 18 years of age in 2001. She took her perpetual vows in 2010.

She turned down a chance to present on children's TV channel Nickelodeon to become a nun.

She said friends were in disbelief when she declared she was going to be a nun while holding a "beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other". She ultimately took her Holy Orders with the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother order.

Her motto in life was "all or nothing" and she has previously been associated with fertility miracles. The opening of the cause for the beatification of Sister Clare took place in the Cathedral of Alcala de Henares in Madrid.

The ceremony is the first step towards sainthood. More than 100 people from Derry made the journey to Madrid for the ceremony.

Brunswick Movie bowl in Derry screened the ceremony.

Fr Michael Canny, Vicar General of the Derry Diocese, said since her death devotion to Sr Clare has grown throughout the north west.

"I do chaplaincy work in the hospital, and I see so many bedsides with pictures of Sr Clare."

Aisling McCorkell, along with her cousin Caroline Ward, visited Sr Clare's grave ahead of the ceremony.

Ms McCorkell said she would not be quite holy but "levitated towards Sr Clare in her faith".

Ms Ward said she has prayed to the Derry nun while studying for exams.

Annie Mullan from Claudy in Co Derry - who also visited Sr Clare's grave this afternoon - believes the Derry nun will be "an amazing saint; a saint for our times and a saint for young people."

Carmel Moore from Derry was among several hundred people who attended the screening of the ceremony.

"Five years ago, I was very sick. My daughter went to Sr Clare's grave to pray for me, and I got better. It was all down to Sr Clare".

Seana McCafferty said there is a great sense of pride in the city.

"Sr Clare is our local little Derry girl and we are so proud," he said.

While three stages remain before canonisation Gemma McGalloway said "she's already a saint" to the people in her community.

Sr Clare's sister, Shauna Gill, said they are "nervous, excited and very proud" of her.

"It's great for our town. She's one of our own. We didn't even think she would become a nun, now she's on the way to becoming a saint."

Ms Gill said the family is "very proud and excited".

She said the ceremony will see her sister declared as a "servant of God".

"There's four steps to becoming a saint, so this is the first one.

"Clare's life will be investigated before we can move on.

"No one knows how long it can take, 10 years, 20 years, two years, it depends on how fast things move.

"Nobody has been through this in our lifetime, so nobody knows what to expect or what's going to happen."

A sainthood process cannot normally start until five years after a person's death.

The request for canonisation is the first of four steps; following this the title Servant of God is awarded.

A formal report is then reviewed by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

If successful, the candidate is declared 'Venerable'.

The third step is beatification, and the final stage is canonisation.

Additional reporting: PA