



MEDIA Advisory

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Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit forming guild to study life of Fr. Gabriel Richard

Announcement marks first step toward possible sainthood for beloved 19th century pastor

Father Gabriel Richard (pronounced rish-ARD), the early 19th century Catholic priest known for authoring Detroit's motto and ministering to the sick during a cholera epidemic while he was pastor at the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit, took his first steps toward possible sainthood on Sunday when it was announced that the parish he served would begin an official study of his life.

Monsignor Charles Kosanke, current rector of the Basilica of Ste. Anne, announced that Archbishop of Detroit Allen Vigneron has granted the parish permission to establish a guild that will study the life and materials of Father Richard. This study will determine if there is sufficient evidence to recommend to Archbishop Vigneron that an official cause for the canonization of Father Richard be opened.

The announcement came Sunday following a historic [Mass of Thanksgiving](#) to celebrate the designation of the church as a minor basilica, a title [granted by Pope Francis](#) in the spring.

“Fr. Richard was a zealous pastor whose missionary heart guided all that he did,” Archbishop Vigneron said. “At a time when we in the Archdiocese are coming to a renewed awareness of our missionary vocation, I am grateful that we are able to raise up Fr. Richard as a model and inspiration for our mission today.”



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Father Gabriel Richard (1767-1832) was a French priest who ministered in southeast Michigan from 1798 until his death in 1832. During that time, he served at Ste. Anne Parish, brought the first printing press to Michigan and founded Detroit's first newspaper, co-founded the University of Michigan, served as a nonvoting delegate of the Michigan Territory to the United States House of Representatives, and preached the Gospel to all – including Protestants and Native Americans.

After an 1805 fire destroyed much of Detroit, Father Richard proclaimed a phrase that would be adopted as the motto for the City of Detroit: “*Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus*,” (“We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes”).

Fr. Richard died while ministering day and night to the sick during a cholera epidemic. His final resting place is at Ste. Anne.

“It is particularly poignant now, amid the difficulties of the pandemic, to be starting on this journey studying the life of a beloved pastor who died while caring for the sick,” Msgr. Kosanke said. “Father Gabriel Richard left an indelible mark on all of Michigan, from the life-saving ministries of his parish to the immeasurable contributions of those who have attended and taught at the University of Michigan.

“This is a significant day not only for the local and universal Church, but also for the broader Michigan community to which Father Richard dedicated his life and priestly service.”

Sunday's announcement marks the beginning of an intricate and uncertain road to possible sainthood. More information about this process, Father Richard, and the Basilica of Ste. Anne is available at [on our website](#).

Notes to media:

- Msgr. Charles Kosake, rector of the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit, is available for interviews about this announcement. For more information or to arrange an



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interview, please contact Holly Fournier, associate director of communications, at fournier.holly@aod.org or (313) 237-5802; or Michelle St. Pierre, business development manager, at stpierre.michelle@aod.org or (313) 805-1408.

- [Detroit Catholic coverage of announcement](#)
- More information about the announcement, Father Gabriel Richard, and the Basilica of Ste. Anne is available [on our website](#).

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