



# Devasahayam Pillai

## Why in News

Devasahayam Pillai, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Hindu convert to Christianity, would be the **first Indian layman** (a non-ordained member of the Church) **to be made a saint**.

- Pope Francis will canonize Blessed Devasahayam Pillai, together with six other Blesseds, during a Canonization Mass in St Peter's Basilica in Vatican on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.
- Vatican City is the **seat of the Roman Catholic Church**.



## Key Points

- He was **born on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1712** in the village of Nattalam **in Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari District**.
- **Known as Nilakanda Pillai before embracing Christianity**, he grew up in an upper caste family of temple priests.
- He went on to serve **in the court of Travancore's Maharaja Marthanda Varma**. It was here that **he met a Dutch naval commander**, who taught him about the Catholic faith.
- He **became a Catholic in 1745**. Pillai **took the Christian name Lazarus**, but later **came to be known as Devasahayam (God's help)**.
- He then faced the wrath of the Travancore state, which was against his conversion.
- **On 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1752**, just seven years after he became a Catholic, Devasahayam was **shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest**.
  - Since then, he has widely been **considered a martyr by the Catholic community in South India**.
  - His body is at Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral in the Diocese of Kottar (Tamil Nadu).
- The Church is of the view that **his preaching of equality of all people despite caste differences** eventually led to his martyrdom.
- He was **first approved for sainthood in February 2020** for **"enduring increasing hardships"** after he decided to embrace Christianity.

## Categorisation of Religion

### ▪ About:

- The world's primary religions fall into two categories:
  - **Abrahamic religions:** Christianity, Judaism, and Islam
  - **Indian religions:** Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and others.

### ▪ Christianity:

- **Christianity is the largest**, with more than two billion followers.
- Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and is approximately 2,000 years old.
- Its largest groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the Protestant churches, and its sacred text is the Bible.
- Over the centuries, Christianity grew in numbers as it spread around the world, often through missionaries and colonizers.

[Source: IE](#)

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