Charlene model of Christianity

November 1, All Saints Day, has long been a special day for Acadiana residents. Traditionally Catholic, the Acadians have been faithful to the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when the Church officially recognizes the observance of this day when 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Saints are the equivalent of faith heroes for Catholics — people who struggled through life's hardships, trials and tribulations, but who through their actions in time of crisis or by their exemplary lives, are believed to live now in the presence of God. However, it is not necessary to have been officially declared a saint to be one, and so many Catholics, believing in the Communion of Saints whereby we on earth may pray for the dead, and they for us, find themselves praying often to dear departed ones, whose lifestyle while here on earth seemed saintly and holy.

Charlene Richard

Charlene Richard

faithful began praying to Charlene for intercession, seeking their prayers for help. And as the years have passed, the number of believers has also grown.

Now, 29 years later, the phenomenon continues — stronger than ever. Word of the “saint” from Louisiana has spread beyond the boundaries of Acadiana, beyond Louisiana, even beyond the country.

As belief in Charlene’s intercessory prayers has increased, the tomb of the young girl has become somewhat of a shrine. Visitors who come to pray leave behind various articles which they have placed on the tomb: rosaries, coins, candles, notes containing petitions and prayers, photographs of loved ones for whom they pray.

While many priests in the Diocese of Lafayette profess personal devotion to Charlene, there has as yet been no official church statement or inquiry in conjunction with what is becoming a cult, or following, of the young girl.

A book on the life and death of the young girl, entitled “Charlene, A Saint from Southwest Louisiana?” was published in 1979. Although 5,000 copies of the volume, which contains a foreword by Bishop Gerard L. Frey, were printed, the book has been out of print for more than five years. Requests for the book are still being made.

In response to public interest, Barbara Lenox Gutierrez, author of the original “Charlene” book, has written a second volume which is currently available in area bookstores. Entitled “Charlene,” it contains two parts: “A Saint from Southwest Louisiana?” which is the text of the original book, and “The Saga Continues” — personal testimony of the experiences of people who believe that Charlene is a saint and how and why she has influenced their lives.

(Editors note: To order “Charlene” by mail, send check or money order for $10.95 to Charlene, 111 Bocage Circle, Lafayette, LA 70503.)