

70400: Master of Arts in Theology Concluding Research Paper

The Canonization of Saints: History, Process, and Infallibility

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Introduction

Concerning the veneration of saints, the *Code of Canon Law* offers only this brief statement:

To foster the sanctification of the people of God, the Church commends to the special and filial reverence of the Christian faithful the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Mother of God, whom Christ established as the mother of all people, and promotes the true and authentic veneration of the other saints whose example instructs the Christian faithful and whose intercession sustains them.¹

While the *Code of Canon Law* limits itself to this brief passage, there is a great amount of information, history, and literature surrounding the canonical process of declaring a man or woman a saint of the Catholic Church.

The topic of this thesis paper will be the canonization of the saints and more specifically, the infallibility of the canonization of saints. The topic of canonizations is historically and theologically broad but is becoming more pertinent, especially in the United States of America as more and more men and women are presented to the Church as potential saints. One has only to look at the causes of Fulton J. Sheen, Fr. Augustus Tolton, Fr. Patrick Peyton, and Rose Hawthorne, just to name a few. It would be beneficial to the faithful in the United States of America to be aware of this intricate process. This paper seeks to fill that lacuna in the life of the Church in the United States.

The question of infallibility is one that has been and still is contested among theologians and canonists. Indeed, there has been a good deal of recent literature written on this issue. A primary example of the view that canonizations are not infallible comes in the form of Dr. Peter Kwasniewski's recent book compiled of essays by various theologians, on the matter titled: *Are Canonizations Infallible?: Revisiting a Disputed Question*, which I will mention again below.

I have divided this thesis into three main sections. In the first and shortest, I will discuss the historical development of the canonization process. I will begin with the earliest records in Church history of the veneration of the saints, by local popular cults – the earliest account being the martyrdom of St. Polycarp. From there, I will examine how canonizations began on the local level and were then

¹ *The Code of Canon Law*, c. 1186. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann1166-1190_en.html#TITLE_IV.

taken over by the local ordinaries, especially the bishops of particular dioceses. I will then show how canonizations became part of the jurisdiction and duties of the Roman Pontiff rather than that of a local ordinary.

In the second section, I will discuss the current process as instituted by Pope St. John Paul II by his document *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, and subsequent documents from the Dicastry for the Causes of Saints. I will not go into all of the details of the canonization process but will focus on a few key parts. I will discuss the four ways in which saints can be canonized: 1) martyrdom, 2) heroic virtue, 3) life offering, and 4) equivalent beatification/canonization. Martyrdom and heroic virtue are the two most common in our current age. The discussion of the life offering will be especially pertinent, since Pope Francis added it with his *motu proprio* on the offering of life in recent years, though so far, no one has been canonized using this specific basis. Though it is more rare, equivalent or equipollent beatification/canonization, where the pope beatifies or canonizes someone from ancient Church history, is also important to be aware of, especially with it being used by recent popes such as Benedict XVI and Francis. I will also write on the canonization process in general, focusing on the stages of canonization: 1) servant of God, 2) venerable, 3) blessed, and 4) saint. These will be important to understand, especially when I discuss the infallibility of canonizations in the third section.

In the third and final section of the paper, I will discuss whether or not canonizations are infallible. Each of the previous sections is necessary to provide background for this specific question. This topic is contended among theologians (saints and doctors of the Church included). The arguments from Sacred Scripture, St. Thomas Aquinas, St Robert Bellarmine, and the Council of Trent, will be used. I will also offer a nuanced position in favor of canonizations being infallible. I will argue that they fall under the “secondary object” of infallibility rather than the primary object. The way in which the Church has determined the sanctity of her members, even from the Old Testament and Apostolic times, is by miracles. Miracles will therefore play a prominent role in the preceding sections regarding the canonization process. By continuing to canonize saints based on approved miracles, the Church is

safeguarding and expounding the deposit of faith and therefore canonizations would fall under the realm of the secondary object of infallibility.² Brief examples from the lives of the saints that help illustrate important points will be given throughout the various sections.

Part I: History of the Canonization Process

The process by which the Church venerates the saints did not drop from Heaven. It had to develop through the ages of the Church, as did many other things. Our historical examination here will not go into every detail but will use broad brushstrokes to touch on the most important points and areas of development.

In the early centuries of the Church, those who were venerated by local groups of devout faithful Christians were initially the martyrs. As the early Church was persecuted by the civil authorities, more and more Christians were killed, and therefore stories of their lives and sanctity spread. One such story is the martyrdom of St. Polycarp in the second century around 150 AD. According to historians, it is the earliest account of members of the Church venerating the relics of a martyr and thus viewing him as a saint.

After St. Polycarp is stabbed to death and his body is burned by the Roman officials and Jewish instigators in Smyrna, the account reads as follows:

So we [the Christian community] later took up his bones, more precious than costly stones and more valuable than gold, and laid them away in a suitable place. There the Lord will permit us, so far as possible, to gather together in joy and gladness to celebrate the day of his martyrdom as a birthday, in memory of those athletes who have gone before, and to train and make ready those who are to come hereafter.³

Here, a few things should be noted. The first is that the faithful gather up the bones of Polycarp and put them to rest in a suitable place. This shows evidence of veneration of relics at a very early time in Church history. Second, they honor Polycarp on the day of his death by visiting his place of burial. This shows early evidence of what we would consider a saint's "feast day." Finally, they do this, not out of mourning, but as a way to help strengthen the faith of those who may be called to a similar martyrdom.

² See *Code*, c. 750 §2.

³ Cyril Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (Touchstone, 1996), 156.

This account gives us the very foundation for what will later become the liturgical celebration of the feast day of saints.

After the Edict of Milan was issued in 313 AD, when Constantine allowed Christianity to be legal, many churches and buildings began to spring up, especially over the tombs of the martyrs. Martyrs were then venerated by their local communities and eventually, “from the the fourth century the cult of martyrs began to lose its local character and become universal. The martyr did not belong to a determined church but belonged to the whole Christian world.”⁴

Another important development to mention, is that of the cult of the confessors – that is, those who were not martyred but lived holy lives of virtue and self-sacrifice, practiced austere penance, or were persecuted by exile. This cult was obviously able to develop as persecutions began to dissipate with the legalization of Christianity. The confessors were composed primarily of monks, bishops, and ascetics.

From all this it can be seen that the initial way of canonization was by “popular canonization,” that is, the local communities and eventually pilgrims would be the ones to promote the cult of a given martyr or confessor. As Yves Beadoin points out in William Woestman's collection of essays, *Canonization: Theology, History, Process*, “There was no special inquiry, no tribunal, and no judgment. It was in fact a popular canonization, and the Church has always required this element, i.e., a spontaneous reputation of sanctity.”⁵

As time went on, however, this popular canonization was not to last as the only thing necessary to declare someone a saint. Beadoin notes that “From the sixth to the twelfth century the Church recognized canonization by the bishop as the ordinary and legitimate form of canonization.”⁶ He also notes that during this time the remains and locations of the bodies of many martyrs and saints were found based on the miracles and visions of various people. A good example of this comes from St.

4 William H. Woestman, O.M.I., Ed. *Canonization: Theology, History, Process* (Faculty of Canon Law Saint Paul University Ottawa, 2014), 29.

5 Woestman, *Canonization*, 32.

6 Woestman, *Canonization*, 32.

Augustine's *Confessions*, in which St. Ambrose is given a vision as to the whereabouts of the remains of two saints. The scene is a dramatic one and worth quoting at length:

At this time you [God] revealed in a vision to the aforementioned Ambrose, your bishop, where the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius were hidden...When they had been exposed to the light of day and dug up, and were being transported with due honor to the Ambrosian basilica, some people hitherto tormented by unclean spirits were restored to health as confession was wrung from these same demons...A certain citizen of Milan, very well known in the city, who had been blind for several years, became aware of the riotous joy of the people and inquired the reason for it...He was led to the basilica and begged to be admitted, so that he might touch with his handkerchief the funeral bier of your holy ones, whose death was precious in your sight. He did so, and applied the handkerchief to his eyes: they were immediately opened.⁷

Why this change in the system? What was wrong with popular canonizations? Donald Prudlo writes that “Leaders in the Church began to realize that not all of these saints were worthy of the title, for various reasons. In some cases, the clergy desired a more refined view of Christian holiness, while in others it deplored an excess of popular credulity or found problems in the saint's life or cult that generated suspicion.”⁸ The bishops had to intervene in the canonizations process due to abuses that were taking place. Such abuses included the veneration of heretics and the adoption of pagan beliefs like that of *apotheosis*, the belief that the dead became gods. Numerous local councils of bishops, notably the council of Mainz in 813, reserved the right to canonize to the local bishop or ordinary.

The bishops' process, established at Mainz, was to investigate the life, legends, and, in particular, the miracles attributed to the supposed saint in question. After this, the bishop would issue a decree “permitting the *elevatio et translatio*. This was a juridical act. Finally, there was the liturgical act of the *elevatio et translatio* of the person's body.”⁹ This meant that, once a saint was recognized, his or her body could be moved to a more suitable place of veneration, such as a church.

The final stage of the historical development of the process of canonization is its reservation to the papacy. Papal reservation of canonizations developed due to a number of historical circumstances.

7 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions* trans. Maria Boulding, OSB, (New City Press, 2019), 167-168,

8 Donald Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood: Canonization and the Origins of Papal Infallibility in the Medieval Church* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 16.

9 Woestman, *Canonization*, 33.

For the sake of space, two main reasons will be given here.

The first was because of, yet again, abuses taking place within local dioceses. The most cited example here is when Pope Alexander III had to intervene with the King of Sweden in his letter *Audivimus*, which rebuked the king for venerating a man who died while drunk in 1179.¹⁰ A second reason was because of the growing preeminence of the Church of Rome. Rome could claim the authority of the greatest of Apostles, Sts. Peter and Paul. The doctrines of Papal Primacy and Infallibility were also developing and becoming more clear. Prudlo explains:

Confirmation of a local cult by the chief bishop of Christendom was far more significant than a mere translation by the town ordinary. In an age of increasing communication and travel, international recognition was something highly desirable for a locality and its saints. Rome guaranteed universality and orthodoxy, and holiness in that period was becoming closely linked with both of these notions.¹¹

Canonizations were initially reserved to the Roman Pontiff with the decretals of Pope Gregory IX in 1234. That being said, “In practice, the bishops tolerated the popular cult of new saints until 1634. Between 1234 and 1634, insofar as we know, there were very few formal canonizations with a Mass and office by bishops. . . We do know of at least 600 cases of popular cult that were tolerated by the bishops between 1234 and 1634.”¹² In 1634, Pope Urban VIII issued a Bull that universally reserved beatifications and canonizations to the Holy See.¹³ Indeed, this is still the case nowadays. While the official decrees of beatification are often read in local dioceses during a Mass, the decree ultimately comes from the Holy Father: “The definitive approval of the cause belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff who is the only one who can grant a limited cult (beatification) or order an universal cult (canonization) to a servant of God.”¹⁴

As with canonizations done by bishops, there was a twofold act with papal canonizations: one juridical and the other liturgical. Before a decree was given by the pope, an investigation was made into

¹⁰ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Beatification and Canonization” published in 1907, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02364b.htm>; Woestman, *Canonization*, 36-37; Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood*, 33.

¹¹ Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood*, 15.

¹² Woestman, *Canonization*, 34.

¹³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Canonization”; Woestman, *Canonization*, 34-35; Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood*, 15.

¹⁴ Woestman, *Canonization*, 177. See also *Divinis Perfectionis Magister* #15.

the life and miracles of the individual. This investigation became more and more complicated and thorough with time. The liturgical celebration also developed and included the *elevatio et translatio* and usually a Mass. Beaudoin notes that “The procedure continued to develop and become more demanding and longer. Consequently, there was a decrease in the number of canonizations.”¹⁵

In 1588, Pope Sixtus V issued a papal bull, *Immensa Aeterni Dei* which created the Sacred Congregation of Rites which dealt with the regulation of the Causes of Saints as well as Divine Worship. One of the major players in the field of formalizing the canonization process was Pope Benedict XIV, who wrote a seminal work while he was Cardinal Prospero Lorenzo Lambertini, detailing how the process should be investigated, *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione*. In the Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1917, and compiled primarily by Pietro Cardinal Gasparri, there were 143 canons regulating beatifications and canonizations.¹⁶ Canon 1999 noted that “only the Congregation of the Sacred Rites is competent in these causes.”¹⁷

In 1969, Pope Paul VI issued *Sacra Rituum Congregatio* which split the dicastery in two, creating the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Pope John Paul II then issued his Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* in 1983, which restructured the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and was quickly followed by *Normae servandae in inquisitionibus ab Episcopis faciendis in Causis Sanctorum*, in English, *Rules To be Observed in Diocesan Investigations into the Causes of the Saints*, published on February 7, 1983.¹⁸ This document reformed the structure of canonizations, and it provides the basic framework that we still have today. The 1983 Code of Canon Law has only one canon concerning canonizations, as does the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, since the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has its own norms

¹⁵ Woestman, *Canonization*, 38.

¹⁶ See *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, Edward Peters, cur., (Ignatius Press, 2001), Canons 1999-2141, pg. 647-681.

¹⁷ *The 1917 Code*, 647.

¹⁸ See Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, “The Department”: <https://www.causesanti.va/it/dicastero-delle-cause-dei-santi.html>.

regarding the process.

From all that has been said so far, what can be seen in the canonization process is a movement from locality to universality in regards to the recognition of saints. The process also continued to become more and more formal and detailed. Popular cult was the initiator of the formal canonization process and continues to be an aspect of it today. Miracles also have played, and continue to play, an important role in determining the sanctity of an individual. Having surveyed, then, the history of the canonization process, I will now turn to the process as it exists today.

Part II: The Current Process

Among the many aspects of the current canonization process, I will limit myself to some general preliminary remarks, and then I will discuss the methods for presenting canonizations and the steps in the process.

There are four stages to the canonization process. They are as follows: 1) servant of God, 2) venerable, 3) blessed, and 4) saint. The process of canonization is usually one that takes many years and is complicated. When the process for canonization begins, at least five years must have passed between the death of the one presented for canonization and the beginning of the process. The pope, however, has the authority to dispense with this waiting period. A recent example of this is when Pope Benedict XVI dispensed with the waiting period for the cause of Pope St. John Paul II. There are two levels to the process, one diocesan and the other on the level of the Holy See.

On the diocesan level, a petitioner must present the cause to the competent authority, usually the bishop of the diocese in which the person died. The bishop then must set up a tribunal in which to investigate the life, virtues, and even martyrdom (if applicable) of the person presented. The writings of the person being investigated, both published and unpublished, must be examined by theologians to ensure that they contain nothing contrary to the Faith. The first stage in the process, then, is when a local ordinary declares a person to be a “Servant of God” after the investigation has been made and positive answers having been given regarding the person's life and writings: “The Catholic whose cause

of beatification and canonization has been initiated is called Servant of God.”¹⁹

The next stage in the process is being declared “venerable” by the Holy See. Once the bishop and the diocesan tribunal have finished their investigation, all the gathered materials are sent to the Dicastry for the Causes of Saints. The postulator puts together a “positio” which tries to prove that the servant of God fulfilled the requirements for one of the four modes of canonization. (These will be discussed and listed below.) It is then examined by a group of theologians:

If the majority of the theologians are in favor, the cause is passed on for examination by cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation [now Dicastry]. If their judgment is favorable, the prefect of the Congregation presents the results of the entire course of the cause to the pope, who gives his approval and authorizes the Congregation to draft a decree declaring one Venerable...²⁰

The third stage is beatification. For beatification, one approved miracle is necessary in the cases of heroic virtue and the offering of life. Martyrs receive an automatic beatification without a miracle because they heroically witnessed to the Faith and a miracle is not necessary to prove their holiness. Their life, however, must be investigated (again by the local ordinary) in order to prove that they indeed died a martyr's death. The Holy See makes a thorough investigation into the supposed miracle. Again, if approved, the pope issues a decree declaring the venerable a “blessed.” His or her veneration, however, is limited to the local diocese or region.

The final stage is canonization. Here, yet another approved miracle (or in the case of martyrdom, the very first one) is needed. Again, the pope would issue an official decree proclaiming the blessed a “saint.” Whereas a blessed can only be venerated in a local region, a saint is venerated by the Universal Church. The current Code of Canon Law also notes that it is only those whom the Church has beatified or canonized that can be publicly venerated: “It is permitted to reverence through public veneration only those servants of God whom the authority of the Church has recorded in the list of the

19 Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Instruction for Conducting Diocesan or Epharcial Inquiries in the Causes of Saints, *Sanctorum Mater*, (May 17, 2007), art. 4, §2, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints/documents/rc_con_csaints_doc_20070517_sanctorum-mater_en.html. Hereafter abbreviated as *SM*.

20 The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Public Affairs: Saints” <https://www.usccb.org/offices/public-affairs/saints>.

saints or the blessed.”²¹ Privately, those servants of God who have not yet been beatified or canonized may be venerated in the hope of their intercession via a miracle as well as future canonization. If the Church, however, were to condemn a servant of God as unworthy of continuing his or her canonization process, then private veneration should cease. The official list of blessed and saints who can be venerated publicly is in a liturgical book called the *Roman Martyrology*.

There are currently four ways to establish a person's qualification for canonization: 1) heroic virtue, 2) martyrdom, 3) the offering of life, and 4) equipollent or equivalent beatifications/canonizations. A servant of God may be brought forward in order to prove either heroic virtue or martyrdom, according to *Sanctorum Mater*, the *Instruction for Conducting Diocesan and Eparchial Inquiries in the Causes of Saints*, which states:

The cause of beatification and canonization regards a Catholic who in life, in death and after death has enjoyed a reputation of holiness by living all the Christian virtues in an heroic manner; or enjoys a reputation of martyrdom because, having followed Christ more closely, he has sacrificed his life in the act of martyrdom.²²

It describes the reputation of martyrdom as “the opinion that has spread among the faithful about the death endured by the Servant of God for the Faith or for a virtue connected to the Faith.”²³ Later, it states that “the Inquiry must be instructed 'on the life, the martyrdom and the reputation of martyrdom and of intercessory power.’”²⁴ Here, a few things should be noted. As we saw earlier, martyrs were among the first to be elevated and venerated by popular canonization by the people. This was primarily because many had witnessed or knew eyewitnesses to the martyrdom. Intercessory power is also a key factor in this regard. Intercessory power primarily refers to “the opinion that has spread among the faithful about the graces and favors received from God through the intercession of the Servant of God.”²⁵ Again, as we saw above, miracles are a way in which one's holiness, place in Heaven, and intercessory power is known. Examples of martyrs are quite numerous, the best being the Apostles

21 *Code*, c. 1187.

22 *SM*, art. 4, §1.

23 *SM*, art. 5, §2

24 *SM*, art. 31, §2

25 *SM*, art 6.

themselves; St. Paul being beheaded in Rome as well as St. Peter being crucified upside down because he judged himself unworthy to die in a similar manner as our Lord. Others accounts of martyrdom include those of St. Stephen as well as the Holy Innocents.

Along the same lines as martyrdom there is the second mode of canonization, heroic virtue: “The reputation of holiness is the opinion that has spread among the faithful about the purity and integrity of life of the Servant of God and about the virtues practiced by him to an heroic degree.”²⁶ Woestman offers Benedict XIV's definition of a heroically virtuous life where one practices virtue “without difficulty. Promptly, and happily beyond the common way for a supernatural purpose, and thus without seeking human advantage, with self-denial and subjection of one's own feelings.”²⁷ Dr. Jeannine Marino helps to clarify this idea and writes that the Church looks for the “unceasing” practice of the virtues in a person's life, while adding that

A heroically virtuous life does not mean that the candidate for canonization was perfect. Rather, it means that through concrete actions, day in and day out, the person did what was expected of him or her given the person's state in life, and that the person performed those tasks motivated by his or her faith and hope in Christ, and his or her love of Christ.²⁸

It should be noted that virtue here is not only limited to the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, but rather extends also to the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. Examples of saints canonized based on heroic virtue are also numerous. Such include St. Anthony of Egypt, St. Padre Pio, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta – all who lived lives of heroic virtue but in different ways. Here the ascetics and confessors of the early Church would also be included.

A third mode of canonization, and one that is less common, is what is known as equipollent or equivalent beatification/canonization. Dr. Marino writes about this process:

The process of equivalent beatification was used throughout the medieval period for cases involving ancient blessed. Ancient blessed are saints whose public cult was tolerated and even promoted, but who were not officially beatified or canonized by the

²⁶ *SM*, art 5, §1.

²⁷ Woestman, *Canonization*, 57.

²⁸ Jeanine Marino, “Do not be Afraid of Holiness” (GE 32): Sanctity, Holiness, and Canonization,” *Canon Law Society of America Proceedings* 85 (2022), 321-322.

Apostolic See. Urban VIII allowed for a special canonization procedure in order to “regularize” these ancient blessed.²⁹

Dr. Marino notes that Pope Benedict XVI used this method in 2012 to canonize St. Hildegard of Bingen since she was already venerated as a saint but was not yet formally canonized.³⁰ Indeed, Pope Francis has used equivalent canonization for a number of saints during his pontificate, the most recent being the Martyrs of Compiègne.³¹

According to various sources, there are three main criteria that are supposed to be examined for an equivalent beatification. The first is a reputation of holiness, either that of heroic virtue or martyrdom. The second is that there has been and is a cult surrounding the servant of God. The third and final criterion is that there must be miracles associated with his or her intercession.³²

Dr Marino notes that “The process of equivalent beatification used in the Middle Ages was incorporated in its entirety into the 1917 Code of Canon Law. It was the only piece of legislation not abrogated in 1983 when the revised canonization norms were promulgated.”³³ There seems to be some ambiguity surrounding which servants of God could fall into this category. Dr. Marino says that “evidence must be submitted that proves that public cult existed for the ancient blessed for at least 100 years prior to 1634.”³⁴ The 1917 Code says that this method can be applied to those who “after the pontificate of Alexander III and before the time established by the constitution of [Pope] Urban [VIII], had a cult by tolerance, the positive approval of the Roman Pontiff can be petitioned.”³⁵ The Catholic Encyclopedia says only that this can happen to someone from a “remote period of time.” In reference to who may be considered as an ancient cause, *Sanctorum Mater*, in footnote 47, cites the 1917 Code and says “The Servant of God who, after the pontificate of Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) and before the

29 Marino, *Do Not Be Afraid*, 327-328.

30 Pope Benedict XVI, “*Litterae Decretals De peracta Canonizatione aequipollente Hildegardis Bingensis*,” May 10, 2012: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. 104, <https://press.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/2012/novembre2012.pdf>.

31 Sean Pilcher, “Pope Francis announced an ‘equipollent’ canonization this week. What’s that?” (*The Pillar*, December 20, 2024): <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/pope-francis-announced-an-equipollent>.

32 This list comes from the 1917 Code as well as the entry of Canonizations in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

33 Marino, *Do Not Be Afraid*, 327

34 Marino, *Do Not Be Afraid*, 328.

35 *The 1917 Code*, 678.

time established by the constitution of Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644), is *ex tolerantia* an object of cult according to the Decrees of Urban VIII can be considered an *ancient Blessed*. . .”³⁶

In practice, however, Pope Francis has not seemed to follow any specific date or year in which a line is drawn when it comes to equivalent canonizations. For instance, St. Francois de Laval (d. 1708) and the Martyrs of Compiègne (d. 1794) do not fall into the years listed above. It seems then, that the Holy Father, the Supreme Pontiff, is the one who determines whether a certain cause is considered to be ancient or not and can be processed as an equivalent beatification/canonization.

The most recent avenue for canonizations was added by Pope Francis on July 11, 2017 with his Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio*, *Maiorem Hac Dilectionem: De Oblatione Vitae* – On the Offer of Life. Pope Francis roots the offering of life in Sacred Scripture citing the words of Jesus: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13) The Holy Father then continues by noting the criteria for the offering of life:

- a) a free and voluntary offer of life and heroic acceptance *propter caritatem* [because of charity] of a certain and untimely death;
- b) a nexus between the offer of life and premature death;
- c) the exercise, at least as ordinarily possible, of Christian virtues before the offer of life and, then, unto death;
- d) the existence of a reputation of holiness and of signs, at least after death;
- e) the necessity of a miracle for beatification, occurring after the death of the Servant of God and through his or her intercession.³⁷

Most of the points listed above by Pope Francis are self-explanatory. The first two are the main focus of the offering of life. For the first criterion, the servant of God must be motivated by charity and must freely offer his life for another as Dr. Marino writes, “The Servant of God must have spontaneously offered himself or herself because of Christian charity to save another's life.”³⁸ The second criteria is “focused on proving the fact that death would not have occurred if the Servant of God did not

³⁶ SM, footnote 47.

³⁷ Pope Francis, “Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio On the Offering of Life,” *Maiorem Hac Dilectionem* (July 11, 2017), art. 2: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20170711_maiorem-hac-dilectionem.html.

³⁸ Marino, *Do Not Be Afraid*, 325.

deliberately offer his or her life out of charity.”³⁹ Recently, in February of 2025, Pope Francis has used this method, for the first time since its institution in 2017, for two servants of God in order to declare them venerable: Salvo D'Aquisto and Fr. Emil Kapaun.⁴⁰

Our focus will be on the life of Fr. Emil Kapaun as an example of the offering of life. Fr. Kapaun was a military chaplain from Kansas who ministered to soldiers in the Korean War. In 1950, China entered the war and attacked Fr. Kapaun's regiment. He went around anointing the wounded soldiers and helping where he could. He was given the opportunity to retreat to safety but refused and decided to help those who were injured. Eventually, his regiment was captured and he and his soldiers were marched off to a prison camp in Pyoktong. On the nearly 100-mile march, Fr. Kapaun tirelessly helped those who could not walk and encouraged soldiers to help those who could not walk because they would be shot otherwise. Even in the prison camp, where everyone was malnourished and treated poorly, Fr. Kapaun served his soldiers and, when he himself became ill, the Chinese moved him to the hospital, which the soldiers knew was only a place where they let people slowly die. Fr. Kapaun willingly went and said that he would pray for his soldiers once he made it to Heaven.

Having briefly noted Fr. Kapaun's story, it would be well to see how it fits into the offering of life. First, Fr. Kapaun had the opportunity to remove himself from the situation but chose to stay and help nurse the wounded. Clearly, then, Fr. Kapaun voluntarily offered his life out of charity for his fellow soldiers, knowing that death was probable. Second, there was a good deal of time between his decision to stay with his regiment and his premature death, due to the harsh living conditions and lack of medical aid, in Pyoktong.

Although not canonized by this method, another saint that could have fallen into this category would have been St. Meinrad. St. Meinrad was a Benedictine Monk in the 9th Century who lived as a hermit in Switzerland. Many people came to him for spiritual advice and would bring him gifts which

³⁹ Marino, *Do Not Be Afraid*, 325.

⁴⁰ “Cause for Sainthood,” Venerable Emil Kapaun Diocese of Wichita Kansas, February 24 2025, <https://frkapaun.org/cause/>.

he promptly gave to those in need. Two thieves heard of St. Meinrad and decided to rob him of his supposed treasures. St. Meinrad had been given a premonition about the two men and knew that his death was imminent. Instead of running away, out of charity, he invited them in to pray with him and offered them some of his food and clothing. Not being satisfied, they beat him and then strangled him to death. In concluding his life of St. Meinrad, Fr. Martin Dusseau, OSB, writes, “From the moment of his death, Meinrad was held to be a saint and martyr. The monks from Reichenau retrieved Meinrad's body from the hermitage and buried it at the monastery. On October 6, 1039, his main relics were reinterred at his hermitage. About this time, Pope Benedict IX added Meinrad to the list of saints.”⁴¹

St. Meinrad has been traditionally viewed as a martyr and especially a martyr of hospitality based on how he treated his killers. Based on his premonition about his killers, he clearly knew the danger of inviting them in and being hospitable. Again, like Fr. Kapaun, he could have removed himself from the situation. Also, it should be noted that St. Meinrad was not being persecuted because of his faith. In this sense, then, he does not fit neatly into the defined category of martyr. He does fit, however, very neatly into the category of the offering of life.

Though summed up here in a few pages, the canonization process is a long, expensive, and complicated one. It usually takes many years before a saint is officially canonized. As I have shown above, there are numerous ways in which to investigate the canonization process of a servant of God. From what has been seen, the process of canonization has developed and will continue to develop. While the particulars or accidents of the process may develop with time, the core substance has not.

Part III: The Infallibility of Canonizations

In this third and final section, I will now directly treat the issue of the infallibility of canonizations. One of the most discussed and debated issues surrounding canonizations are whether or not they are considered to be infallible. For instance, William Diem has written a strong case against the Church having the authority infallibly to declare someone is in Heaven. He also thinks that “although one may-

41 Martin Dusseau, OSB, *The Life and Death of St. Meinrad, Martyr*, https://saintmeinrad.mycampus-app.com/ftpimages/1611/download/download_2656744.pdf?_=1741378360635.

I think-hold that the Church *could* err in canonizing, one may not hold that the Church *has* erred in any given canonization without thereby incurring the censure of temerity. One will never have an objectively sound reason to deny the sanctity of any particular saint.”⁴² This seems, to me, to be a rather dangerous argument in that it is a slippery slope from *could* err to *has* erred. While discussing Melchior Cano's view of infallibility regarding canonizations, Eric Kemp aptly describes my concern:

Moreover, if we call into question one decree of this kind [decree of canonization] we shall certainly be able to question the sanctity of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and the rest, and to say that they are damned, and if the Church is allowed to have erred in such cases it is not a far cry to explode all canonizations since the time of Clement, and what more foolish or shameful could be said than this?⁴³

His main concern is that someone in hell could be raised to the heights of glory and venerated in the Church. It also seems to me that such a view is simply an easy “out” for not wanting personally to celebrate the feast of a saint whom the Church has put into its calendar because one does not agree with everything the saint said or did during this life. Another example comes from Dr. Peter Kwasniewski's book on the subject mentioned in the introduction. The book has twelve contributors, including theologians, priests, and teachers. In his preface, he writes

The authors who agreed to participate in this joint project do not necessarily hold one and the same opinion on the matters under discussion, although it would be fair to say that nearly all of them reject the widespread idea that canonizations conducted by a pope are always and everywhere infallible and must be considered and accepted as such by the faithful.”⁴⁴

My purpose here is not to respond directly to Diem's arguments, nor those presented in Kwasniewski's book, but rather to offer another, and I would argue, better way, of understanding the infallibility of canonizations.

From the outset of my discussion, it should be noted that the Church has not definitively taught regarding this subject matter and therefore I defer to the judgment of Holy Mother Church if She should make such a determination in this case. I will not cite every source but will try to turn to those

42 William Diem, “The Infallibility of Canonizations: A Revisionist History of the Arguments,” *Nova et Vetera*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2019), 680-681.

43 Eric Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (Hyperion Press, Inc., 1979), 156.

44 Peter A. Kwasniewski, *Are Canonization Infallible?: Revisiting a Disputed Question* (Arouca Press, 2021), x.

that are most often cited and those considered the most authoritative.

The majority opinion among theologians and canonists is that canonizations are indeed infallible. Dr. Kwasniewski writes, “For a long time now, the majority position among Catholic theologians has been that canonizations conducted by a pope should be considered infallible and/or inerrant.”⁴⁵ The Catholic Encyclopedia also notes this majority opinion: “Is the pope infallible in issuing a decree of canonization? Most theologians answer in the affirmative.”⁴⁶ This is, however, a qualified infallibility. It is not considered a primary object of infallibility, which is directly a part of the Deposit of Faith but a “secondary object, whatever is required to defend and expound upon the deposit.”⁴⁷ Ludwig Ott offers an even more precise definition: “The secondary object of the Infallibility is truths of the Christian teaching on faith and morals, which are not formally revealed, but which are closely connected with the teaching of Revelation.”⁴⁸ Ott writes further that

The canonization of saints, that is, the final judgment that a member of the Church has been assumed into eternal bliss and may be the object of general veneration. The veneration of the saints is, as St. Thomas teaches, 'to a certain extent a confession of the faith, in which we believe in the glory of the saints' (Quodl. 9, 16). If the Church could err in her opinion, consequences would arise which would be incompatible with the sanctity of the Church.⁴⁹

While Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger issued a note in 1998 regarding the concluding formula of the *Professio Fidei*. In it, he says that canonizations definitively fall under this category of the secondary object:

With regard to those truths connected to revelation by historical necessity and which are to be held definitively, but are not able to be declared as divinely revealed, the following examples can be given: the legitimacy of the election of the Supreme Pontiff or of the celebration of an ecumenical council, the canonizations of saints (*dogmatic facts*), the declaration of Pope Leo XIII in the Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae Curae* on the invalidity of Anglican ordinations...⁵⁰

45 Kwasniewski, *Are Canonizations Infallible?*, ix.

46 *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Canonization.”

47 Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Sapientia Press by Ave Maria University, 2007), 74.

48 Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Tan Books, 1974), 299.

49 Ott, *Fundamentals*, 299.

50 Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the *Professio Fidei*.” June 29, 1998. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1998_professio-fidei_en.html

Avery Cardinal Dulles admits that theologians commonly believe canonizations fall into this camp but proceeds to write “Although the common teaching of theologians gives some support for holding infallibility in these cases, it is difficult to see how they fit under the object of infallibility as defined by the two Vatican councils.”⁵¹ The question then arises as how to reconcile canonizations with the current understanding of the doctrine of infallibility. Clarification on this issue is needed since it seems hard to reconcile canonizations with the secondary object of infallibility. One begins to ask how the canonizations of saints “defend and expound” upon the Deposit of Faith? How do they closely connect to the teachings of Revelation?

My solution or rather solutions to this problem are miracles. My argument is that miracles are the key to understanding how canonizations can be considered as secondary objects of infallibility. They are the way we can definitively know, and how the Church can rule, that a historical person is in Heaven. As we have seen above, miracles were a major part of the history of canonizations, from popular to papal ones. We also have another source for miracles being attributed to the saints: Sacred Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

There are three primary examples in Sacred Scripture. Two regarding the prophet Elisha in the Old Testament and one regarding St. Paul in the New Testament. The first instance comes from the Second Book of Kings:

He [Elisha] gripped his own garment, tore it into two pieces, and picked up the mantle which had fallen from Elijah. Then he went back and stood at the bank of the Jordan. Wielding the mantle which had fallen from Elijah, he struck the water and said, 'The LORD, the God of Elijah—where is he now?' He struck the water: it divided, and he crossed over. (2 Kings 2:12-14)

After Elijah is taken up into Heaven in a fiery chariot, he is able to intercede miraculously for Elisha. He does this through the relic of his cloak that Elisha picks up. As Elisha prepares to cross the Jordan River, he asks God to manifest Himself. God does so by splitting the Jordan in half when Elisha strikes

⁵¹ Dulles, *Magisterium*, 78.

it with the cloak he is wielding.

The second example has to do with Elisha's bones:

At that time of year, bands of Moabites used to raid the land. Once some people were burying a man, when suddenly they saw such a raiding band. So they cast the man into the grave of Elisha, and everyone went off. But when the man came in contact with the bones of Elisha, he came back to life and got to his feet. (2 Kings 13:21)

Resurrection from the dead is no small feat. Again, Elisha was able to intercede and bring the man back to life by the relics of his bones.

The last example is about St. Paul: “So extraordinary were the mighty deeds God accomplished at the hands of Paul that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.” (Acts 19:11-12) Even while St. Paul was still living, God worked miracles through his “relics.” Indeed, the Acts of the Apostles contains many accounts of the miracles worked by the apostles or through their relics.

Sacred Scripture, one of the two branches of the Deposit of Faith along with Sacred Tradition, presents miracles as the way in which people can come to know the sanctity of an individual. Should there be any speculation regarding this matter, the Catechism of the Council of Trent clarifies it and is worth quoting at length:

But who would not be convinced of the honor due the Saints and of the help they give us by the wonders wrought at their tombs? Diseased eyes, hands, and other members are restored to health; the dead are raised to life, and demons are expelled from the bodies of men! These are facts which St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, most unexceptionable witnesses, declare in their writings, not that they heard, as many did, nor what they read, as did many very reliable men, but that they saw.

But why multiply proofs? If the clothes, the handkerchiefs, and even the shadows of the Saints, while yet on earth, banished disease and restored health, who will have the hardihood to deny that God can still work the same wonders by the holy ashes, the bones and other relics of the Saints? Of this we have a proof in the restoration to life of the dead body which was accidentally let down into the grave of Elisues [Elisha], and which, on touching the body (of the Prophet), was instantly restored to life.⁵²

Written as a response to the Protestant Reformation and a guide for parish priests, the Catechism of Trent explains clearly and succinctly the importance of miracles in determining sanctity. It even cites

⁵² Pope St. Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (Tan Books, 1982), 372-373.

the above passages mentioned in Scripture and other examples from Tradition as well. While the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not explicitly cite these miracles as proof of a saint's holiness, it does acknowledge that the saints can intercede for us: "They [the saints] contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth...Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world." (CCC, 2683) This intercession on the part of the saints is not limited to prayers for us and our sanctification but also includes the working of miracles.

St. Robert Bellarmine views miracles as a major part of the infallibility of canonizations and sees them as the way in which God confirms the judgment of the Church:

Great miracles that have been diligently examined make the matter evidently believable, as we have shown elsewhere. But saints are not ordinarily canonized by the pope unless they are illumined with great and certain miracles. And it is confirmed, for if we believe without any hesitation that Caesar and Pompey existed because we have it from the common consensus of historians, who themselves were men and could lie, why do we not believe without any hesitation that God himself witnesses the fact through miracles when there is no reason to suspect the contrary?⁵³

Bellarmino cites St. Thomas Aquinas at the end of his defense of canonizations. The Angelic Doctor actually directly responded to this sort of question, that is, whether the Church could err in her canonizations of saints. He writes, "In the Church there cannot be a damnable error. But it would be a damnable error if one were venerated as a saint who was a sinner, because some men knowing his sins or heresy, if it happens thus, could be led into error. Therefore, the Church in such matters cannot err."⁵⁴ And again, in response to one of the objections that states that since one cannot know the state of one's soul the pope cannot certainly know the state of a glorified soul: "It must be said that a pontiff, to whom it belongs to canonize saints, can be made certain concerning the state of someone through inquisition of life and attestation of miracles, and especially through the instinct of the Holy Spirit, who *scrutinizes all things, even the profundities of God* (1 Cor 2:10)."⁵⁵ Here, Aquinas has recourse to

53 St. Robert Bellarmine, *On the Canonization and Veneration of the Saints* (Mediatrix Press, 2019), 98.

54 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet IX*, q. 8, a. 1: <https://aquinas.cc/1a/en/~QIX.Q8.A1>.

55 Aquinas, *Quodlibet IX*.

miracles as a sure proof for the infallibility of canonizations by the Pontiff.

In this way, one sees that the infallibility of canonizations is not a part of the primary object of infallibility but the secondary object. It shows that the Pontiff has the ability, through the examination of miracles, and being guided by the Holy Spirit, to make a declaration about the state of the soul of someone who has died and whether or not they can be venerated as a saint. The Pontiff, therefore, by continuing to canonize saints, expounds upon the Deposit of Faith, in which the method for determining the sanctity of someone is found; that being, miracles worked through their intercession.

Here, a note about miracles in general is in order. Fr. John Hardon, S.J., defines a miracle as “A sensibly perceptible effect, surpassing at least the powers of visible nature, produced by God to witness to some truth or testify to someone's sanctity.”⁵⁶ The point is that miracles stem ultimately from God. He is the One Who works them. In the case of canonizations, it is the saint's intercession that causes God to perform a miracle.

At the Last Supper, Jesus promised that once He had gone, the Holy Spirit would come to guide the Church: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17) And later He states “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.” (John 14:26) If one were to deny that the Holy Spirit was guiding the Church when it comes to miracles, they would be akin to the Pharisees who thought Jesus' authority to heal the demoniac stemmed from the devil himself:

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God

⁵⁶ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (Eternal Life, 2008), 352.

has come upon you. (Matthew 12:22-28)

It seems to follow logically that God would not perform a miracle based on the intercession of someone who was not in Heaven. One can trust, then, that the Holy Spirit guides the Church when it comes to approving miracles and investigating them. This is why miracles have been an integral part of canonizations since their very foundation.

In more recent times, Pope St. John Paul II has confirmed this idea with a brief catechesis on miracles. He begins by noting that “miracles demonstrate the existence of the supernatural order, which is the object of faith.”⁵⁷ Later on he writes

The lives of the saints, the history of the Church and, in particular, the processes for the canonization of the Servants of God, constitute a documentation which, when submitted to the most searching examination of historical criticism and of medical science, confirms the existence of the “power from on high” which operates in the natural order and surpasses it...This saving power of the God-Man is manifested also when the “miracles-signs” are performed through the intercession of individuals, of saints, devout people-just as the first “sign” at Cana of Galilee was worked through the intercession of the Mother of Christ.⁵⁸

For John Paul II, miracles were a sign of the supernatural order as well as a sign of the intercession of the saints. He also cites our Blessed Mother, Mary, as a primary example of the intercession of saints. At Cana, the wine ran out and needed to be replenished. Mary turned to Her Son, Jesus and asked Him to perform a miracle. He did and turned water into wine in order to avoid embarrassment on the part of the hosts. (See John 2:1-12)

I would like to offer a final comment on what I believe is the real cause of suspicion regarding the canonization process. I believe that many Catholics think that canonizations are full-fledged endorsements of a saint's life and works. This, however, is not the case.

What then do canonizations affirm and not affirm? St. Robert Bellarmine defines canonization as follows: “Canonization is nothing other than the public testimony of the Church on the true holiness and glory of some man that is already dead, and at the same time is a judgment and sentence whereby

⁵⁷ Pope St. John Paul II, *General Audience* (January 13, 1988) par. 2: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19880113.html.

⁵⁸ Pope St. John Paul II, *Audience*, par. 7.

honors are decreed to him, which are due to those who reign happily with God.”⁵⁹ Bellarmine points out that the Church is simply saying that this person is in Heaven and that he or she is worthy of veneration. This is not to say that everything he did, said, or wrote was correct. In this regard I believe Fr. Chad Ripperger has a wonderful insight into this matter, writing “Regardless of the human reasons, the papal magisterial act of canonisation infallibly guarantees the person is in heaven and we can have public cult in relation to that person. For this reason, canonisation should not be viewed as a stamp of approval of everything a person taught or did.”⁶⁰

A perfect example is the Angelic Doctor himself. In his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas writes about Mary's sanctification saying, “But the Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed therefrom before her birth from the womb.”⁶¹ The problem for St. Thomas was that he did not have the same understanding of conception or when it took place as modern science has been able to show us nowadays. Later in history, the Church definitively taught on this matter in 1854 with the promulgation of Pope Pius IX's *Ineffabilis Deus*. In it, Pius IX wrote that,

we declare, pronounce and define: The doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God and therefore must be firmly and inviolably believed by all the faithful.⁶²

Thus, even St. Thomas Aquinas, who is considered a great philosopher, theologian, saint, and doctor of the Church, can be wrong about things, even things that are very important and are later solemnly and infallibly declared.

Another good example would be the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. As the story goes, the forty martyrs were Roman soldiers who were Christians. When they refused to worship the false gods of Rome they were put on a frozen lake and stripped naked. As they slowly froze to death one of them

⁵⁹ Bellarmine, *On Canonization*, 89.

⁶⁰ Fr. Chad Ripperger, *Magisterial Authority* (Sensus Fidelium, 2014), 18.

⁶¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae IIIa*, q. 27, a. 2, ad. 2: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q27.A2.Rep2>.

⁶² Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: Dogmatic Definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” December 8, 1854. <https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/18541208-costituzione-apostolica-ineffabilis-deus.html>.

abandoned his position to jump in a hot bath and died because of the shock. One of the guards who saw this and saw the firmness with which the other martyrs remained, stripped himself and joined them.⁶³ Now, the Church venerates that guard as a saint, but it does not condone his conduct as a Roman soldier or the actions of his previous life up until his conversion.

My point, then, is that miracles are given to us as examples of ascertaining the holiness of those of the faithful who have died, based in Divine Revelation, specifically the branch of Sacred Scripture. In this way, the Church has a model by which she has the authority to declare a person to be a saint. God would not have performed miracles based on the intercession of the damned. Much of the Church's Tradition and her holy Doctors also point to miracles as the proof necessary to believe that the Church has not erred in her canonizations. In this way, I have shown how they fall under the secondary object of infallibility and the difficulty Cardinal Dulles envisioned, if it is in reference to the secondary object of infallibility, is put to rest.

Unlike the arguments presented by Diem and the theologians of Kwasniewski's book, my solution to the infallibility of canonizations is one that respects the office of the Papacy and does not tend toward the danger of dissenting from official Church teaching. It does not allow for one to reject canonizations because one does not like the person who was canonized. It also shows that the view that canonizations are not infallible is untenable when presented with the weighty authorities of Scripture, the Doctors of the Church, and the Magisterium itself. My solution also points out that people do not need to agree with everything a saint said or did. They do need, however, to acknowledge that they are in heaven and that people may publicly venerate them. The path to sainthood has many different roads and the road to sanctity for one may not be the same for another.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown how the canonization process has developed through the centuries since the time of Jesus Christ. As has been seen, the process grew out of the devotion of local

63 Alban Butler, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, vol. 1 (Refuge of Sinners Publishing, Inc., 2011), 254-257.

communities to martyrs and eventually included those confessors of the faith and those ascetics whose lives of virtue they desired to emulate. Because of abuses the bishops and eventually the pope himself had to intervene to ensure that the process was safeguarded from falsehood. The process developed and became more and more formalized and centered itself at the Holy See.

The reforms of Pope St. John Paul II helped make the process take less time while continuing to safeguard the essentials of the process. Pope Francis has greatly benefited the Church with his own addition to the development of the process with the offering of life, which, as time goes on, will prove, I believe, to be an effective mode of canonization.

Finally, I have shown the immense importance that the Church places on miracles for canonizations. They have been a part of the process from the beginning and can even be seen in Sacred Scripture. They are the confirmation that the Church needs and indeed has been given by the Holy Spirit, in order to determine whether or not someone is enjoying the beatific vision and can be listed among the saints in Heaven.

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