

# Do Religious Organizations Have God's Authority to Declare Sainthood?

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The Roman Catholic Church teaches that it does not create saints. Instead, it claims to recognize them and the individual granted a saint-hood must first be canonized by the Catholic Church, and believed to be in heaven (The Catechism of the Catholic Church – from the Knights of Columbus website).

Canonization is a process involving an investigation into a candidate's life which is undertaken by an expert within the Roman Catholic system. This includes at least two miracles being directly attributed to the candidate after he/she has gone to heaven. Once completed, this expert's report is given to the bishop of the area for further study. The final documentation is then forwarded to "The Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome." After a final review by this body, the case is presented to the pope, who decides whether or not to proceed with canonization.

In his book entitled "Making Saints," author Kenneth L. Woodward states the following,

A saint is always someone through whom we catch a glimpse of what God is like – and of what we are called to be. Only God makes saints, of course. The church merely identifies from time to time a few of these for emulation. The church then tells the story.

A saint may be designated as a patron saint of a particular cause or profession, or invoked against specific illnesses or disasters (Patron Saints, Catholic Encyclopedia -1913).

Relics (bodily remains as well as personal belongings) of supposed saints are respected in a similar manner as holy images and icons (idols). The practices of past centuries in worshipping the relics of saints, for the purpose of being healed, is taken from the beginnings of the Roman Catholic Church, but has its origin in various ancient pagan religions long before the time of Christ. In order to justify this practice, the Catholic Church has twisted the meaning of 2Kings 13:20-21 and Acts 19:11-12 (cf. 2Pet. 3:16). In reality, the practice of worshipping the remains of so-called saints has its origin in the veneration of the dead, which has many variations among ancient pagan societies.

To summarize, this teaching is based on the belief that the deceased, often family members, have a continued existence and possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living. This form of deception is the reason that Satan wanted to use the remains (relics) of Moses. If he had Moses' remains, he could use them in his idolatrous systems of worship, which would have caused the nation of Israel to break the first and second commandments (cf. Ex. 20:3-5),

But Michael the archangel, when the Adversary, doubting (i.e. whether Moses had the right to an honorable burial because he committed murder; cf. Ex. 2:12-14), was disputing about the body of Moses, did not presume to bring a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The belief that a human religious organization can identify one of Almighty God's saints, let alone bestow saint-hood on them, is quite preposterous (cf. 1Sam. 16:7; 2Cor. 11:15). Nonetheless, this false doctrine will be examined in this study.

The first point that needs to be examined, regarding the Roman Catholic definition of what a saint is, relates to the false doctrine of heaven and hell (see study: Did The Early Church Teach That Christians Went Directly To Heaven After Death, While Sinners Went To Hell?). The teaching that mankind can continue to live after death in a different form (i.e. spirit-body) is based on the first lie that was presented to Eve. This lie is entrenched in most societies and religions around the world. It is none other than the doctrine of the immortal soul, which claims that people will continue to live after physical death, only in a different form,

And the serpent (symbol of Satan) said to the woman (Eve), 'You will not surely die.' (Gen. 3:4; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

This false statement from the Adversary is addressed many times in scripture, and in every instance Satan's lie is refuted, and this proves that his goal was to deceive and destroy both Adam and Eve by leading them to sin (1Jn. 3:4; Rom. 6:23a),

You are from the father, the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. That one is a man-killer from the beginning, and was not standing in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks from his own, for he is a liar and the father of *lies* (Jn. 8:44; RNT).

...The soul who sins shall die (Eze. 18:4b).

The soul who sins shall die ... (Eze. 18:20a).

For the wages of sin is death ... (Rom. 6:23a).

Every human being is mortal (Ps. 146:3; 2Cor. 4:11) and must have immortality granted to him or her in order to possess everlasting life (Rom. 2:7; 1Cor. 15:53-54). Rather than continuing to live in a spirit-form after death, every human being will wait for the return of Jesus Christ when two resurrections commence progressively (Rom. 8:11; Rev. 20:4-6). This waiting is compared to sleep, which is a very important metaphor because it shows that each dead person is not conscious or alive in the spirit realm,

And after he (Christ) said these *things*, he said to them, '**Lazarus, our friend, has fallen asleep; but I go that I may awaken him.**' 12 Then his disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep he will be delivered.' 13 Now **Jesus had spoken concerning his death**, but those thought he spoke concerning the slumber of sleep. 14 Then Jesus said to them in boldness, '**Lazarus is dead!**' (Jn. 11:11-14; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Behold, I (Apostle Paul) tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (remain dead), but we shall be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (cf. Mt. 24:31). For the trumpet will sound (announcing Christ's return), and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1Cor. 15:51-52; cf. 1Cor. 11:30; 1Thes. 4:14; 5:10; Ed. notes in parentheses).

For (King) **David**, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, **fell asleep, was buried** with his fathers, **and saw corruption** (underwent decay) (Ac. 13:36; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

For the living know that they will die; but **the dead know nothing**... (Ecc. 9:5a; emphasis added).

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for **there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave** where you are going (Ecc. 9:10; emphasis added).

Based on these scriptures, it is a farce to claim that a saint is a human being who died and is now in heaven interceding on behalf of those who pray to Almighty God. Scripture states that no human has gone to heaven, and there is no mediator between man and God, except Jesus Christ,

And **no one** has ascended into heaven except the one having descended out of heaven (Christ), the **Son of Man** (Jn. 3:16; RNT; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

For **there is** one God and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus** (1Tm. 2:5; emphasis added).

So based on scripture, no human being has gone to heaven and no one, except Jesus Christ, is a mediator who intercedes on behalf of those who have repented of sin and are living a new life in accordance with God's law and commandments (cf. Jn. 14:13; Rom. 6:4; Rev. 12:17). Consequently no resurrected human beings, referred to as saints, exist in the heavenly realm at this time.

It is also important to consider who Almighty God considers saints. First, they are those He has called (Jn. 6:44, 65). After they are called, God reveals aspects of His truth that help them understand they are guilty of sin (Rom. 2:4b; 1Jn. 3:4). At this point they are faced with a decision regarding whether they are willing to ask for forgiveness, combined with a deep desire to start obeying the law and commandments of Almighty God (Ac. 2:36-38). If they are willing, the next step is to have their past sins forgiven and start a new life, which begins symbolically through the water of baptism (see studies: Baptism; cf. Rom. 6:4). Part of this ceremony involves the repentant individual receiving the promise of God's Holy Spirit, which is to assist them in living a new life apart from sin (Rom. 3:31; 6:1-2, 4, 15; 7:7, 13). When they come out of the water and have hands laid on them, they become members of Christ's body, which is not an incorporated church (see study: How to Identify the Body of Christ Today). From this point forward, God refers to these repentant individuals as "saints" providing they continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and strive to overcome sin throughout the rest of their lives (2Pet. 3:18; Ac. 5:32b; Mk. 13:13b),

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, **to the saints who are in Ephesus**, and faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:1; emphasis added).

To me (Paul), who am less than the least of all saints... (Eph. 3:8a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

... **to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi** (Php. 1:1b; emphasis added).

What is interesting about these last three scriptures is they reveal that God has His true saints living on earth. Therefore, Almighty God does not need some man-made religious organization telling Him who His saints were after they have died. He knows who they are because He granted them His Holy Spirit when they repented and were baptized.

As God's saints believe they need to obey the law and commandments, including God's seventh-day Sabbath and appointed Holy Days (cf. Lev. 23:2, 4, 37, 44), the Roman Catholic Church would not acknowledge them as being genuine Christians. As a consequence, the Catholic system would not entertain the idea of bestowing sainthood upon them,

He who says, 'I know him (God),' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1Jn. 2:4).

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us (true saints), that we should be called children of God! Therefore **the world** (including the Roman Catholic Church) **does not know us**, because it did not know Him (1Jn. 3:1; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Based strictly on the criteria used by the Roman Catholic Church to determine whether someone is a saint, it could be said confidently that not one of the individuals declared to be a saint by the Roman Catholic Church would qualify according to God's standards. They might have been individuals involved with charitable deeds, and may have been well-known within their religious community. Some may even have cast out demons or performed great works of evangelism, but these activities alone do not describe a saint,

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of my Father, the one in the heavens.<sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many powerful works?'<sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, **depart from me you workers of lawlessness!**' (Mt. 7:21-23; RNT; cf. 1Jn. 3:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

As difficult as it is in this present evil world (Gal. 1:4), a true saint strives to live by every word of God (Mt. 4:4) until the end of their life. They understand that their reward will come at a future time when the dead are resurrected and judged,

Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and speak all kinds of evil against you, on account of me.<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be very glad, for your reward in the heavens are great, for so they persecuted the prophets before you (Mt. 5:11-12; RNT).

For **the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father** with his angels; and **will then give to everyone according to his practice** (conduct, obedience; cf. Jas. 2:21-26) (Mt. 16:27; RNT; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added).

The nations were angry, and **your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants** the prophets and **the saints**... (Rev. 11:18a; emphasis added).

So it should be apparent from scriptures describing God's true saints that they are not likely to be acknowledged by the Catholic system. However, they are recognized by Almighty God, which is what really matters. A true saint will receive his or her reward in the resurrection when Jesus Christ returns to judge this world. His judgment will be based on the law and commandments of his heavenly Father (Mt. 19:17; Jas. 2:12; Rev. 20:12).

Here is the perseverance of **the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus** (Rev. 14:12; emphasis added).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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