

Pope Francis Alters Centuries' Worth of Tradition With One Order

Pope Francis made one of the most significant changes in centuries to the Roman Catholic Church's saint-making procedures on Tuesday, adding a new category for people who give their lives to save others.

Until now the procedure which could lead to sainthood—known as a “cause”—was limited to three categories. The cause starts after a person's death.

The first is martyrdom, where a person is killed out of hatred of Christianity. The second is if a person has lived an exceptionally virtuous Christian life. The third, little used, regards people who have had the reputation of holiness for many years after their death.

The Vatican said the pope had issued a decree adding a fourth path. It would apply to people who had led a good Christian life and done something to save others that they know would result in certain and relatively quick death.

One example would be that of Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest in the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz during World War II.

Kolbe offered to take the place of a fellow prisoner who had been condemned to death by starvation as part of collective punishment for a prison escape. The Nazis killed Kolbe with a lethal injection of carbolic acid.

Kolbe's sainthood cause began in 1955 under the previous rules, and he was made a saint in 1982.

Those candidates for sainthood whose causes will in future start under the new category of offering their own life would

still have to have two miracles attributed to their intercession.

The Catholic Church posthumously confers beatification, and later sainthood, on people considered so holy during their lives that they are now believed to be with God and can intercede with Him to perform miracles.

Miracles are usually the medically unexplained healing of someone. {eoa}

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