

What Does God Really Think About Roman Catholics Naming Saints?

In recent days the Roman Catholic Church canonized two popes who lived during the 20th century (Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II).

No doubt both were great men who changed the world for the better. (Pope John XXIII was my favorite pope of contemporary times because of all his reforms with the Vatican, but the present Pope Francis is giving him a run for his money.)

Regarding them being set in officially as saints, what are we who believe the Scriptures to think of this? The Bible teaches us that all who receive Christ are called saints (2 Cor. 1:1) and are automatically part of His priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

The fact of the matter is, all true believers alive today made official sainthood before these two popes were recognized—since their names are already written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:11-15).

Furthermore, it is on the borderline of hubris for men—whether they be former or present popes, cardinals, bishops, etc.—to canonize anyone and establish anyone as a saint. That is not up to men, but only God can tell who a true saint is since He is the One who saved us, knows our hearts and called us to be saints (1 Cor. 1:2).

I also find it very interesting that the secular media is caught up in all the hoopla regarding the events in Rome the past few days. It's almost as if the world is OK with this sort of thing in spite of the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is officially against same-sex marriage, abortion and contraception—perhaps because it is men lifting up other men,

something the world loves to do.

I would find nothing wrong with this process if it was sort of like the baseball Hall of Fame, in which the Roman Catholic Church would officially induct certain popes and saints into some kind of significant fraternity of extraordinary people—similar to the biblical Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11.

But they have gone further than this and have taken it upon themselves to establish sainthood, which makes it seem like all the other believers in Roman Catholicism and beyond who are in Christ are not saints and that the Church thinks it has the right to replace God as the entity that both declares and establishes sainthood.

Of course, this is connected to a larger challenge with the Roman Catholic Church that has to do with the fact that it believes Church canon law and tradition have the same level of authority in the Church as that of Holy Scripture, which potentially opens it up to all sorts of fallacious declarations that do not comport with the Bible.

While I admire the two popes recognized as saints—as well as appreciate all the great things the Roman Catholic Church has done and is continuing to do in the world (especially their stance on traditional marriage and abortion and their compassionate institutions like Catholic Charities)—my ultimate authority is the Bible, not the pope or church tradition.

Although I am a student of church history because previous church councils and the writings of the church fathers helps me grapple with biblical interpretation, unless an ecclesiastical institution can justify a church tradition by the Scriptures, I may respect them but I will not be in complete concord with them.

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