

Canonizations Are Not Infallible



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By

The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ,
The Grace of the God of the Holy Catholic Church,
The Mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Our Lady of Good Counsel and Crusher of Heretics,
The Protection of Saint Joseph, Patriarch of the Holy Family,
The Intercession of Saint Michael the Archangel
and the cooperation of

Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

To Jesus through Mary

*Júdica me, Deus, et discérne causam meam de gente non sancta:
ab hómine iníquo, et dolóso érue me*

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

“But though we, or an angel from heaven [such as an apparent saint],
preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you,
let him be anathema.”
(Galatians 1:8)

“For such false apostles are deceitful workmen,
transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no wonder:
for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light.”
(2 Corinthians 11:13-14)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS.....	7
CANONIZATIONS.....	7
CANONIZATIONS ARE FALLIBLE.....	8
CANONIZATIONS HAVE NO LINK WITH TRADITION	8
POPES CAN INFALLIBLY JUDGE MEN TO BE NOTORIOUS SINNERS BUT NOT SAINTS	8
POPES TEACH INFALLIBLY ONLY ON DOCTRINES OF FAITH AND MORALS.....	9
POPES TEACH INFALLIBLY ONLY ON THINGS REVEALED TO THE APOSTLES.....	9
<i>Saints revealed by God to the apostles are infallibly known to be saints</i>	<i>10</i>
WHAT APPLIES TO HEAVENLY APPARITIONS APPLIES TO SAINTS.....	11
SUMMATION	11
OPPOSING OPINIONS.....	12
LIMITS OF PAPAL INFALLIBILITY NOT INFALLIBLY DEFINED UNTIL 1870	12
POPE BENEDICT XIV'S FALLIBLE OPINION.....	13
IN 1870 POPE PIUS IX AT THE VATICAN COUNCIL ENDED THE DISPUTE	14
BUT SOME STILL CARRY ON THE DISPUTE	14
ONE CAN ONLY BE MORALLY CERTAIN THAT A PERSON IS A SAINT	15
MEN JUDGED AS SAINTS BY THEIR FAITH AND WORKS FROM AVAILABLE EVIDENCE	16
SAINTS WHO WERE NOT SAINTS AND ON PRAYING TO THE DAMNED	19
POPES' RESPONSIBILITY	21
CANONIZED SAINTS IN SAME CATEGORY AS DISCIPLINARY LAWS	21
NOT TO BE VENERATED AS SAINT IF NOTORIOUS EVIDENCE PROVES OTHERWISE	21
LESS THAN NOTORIOUS EVIDENCE NEEDS TO BE INVESTIGATED	22

Abbreviations

- **BC** – *An Essay on Beatification, Canonization, and the Process of the Congregation of Rites*, by Fr. F.W. Faber. Published by Richardson and Son, London, 1848.
- **D.** – *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, by Henry Denzinger. The translation was made by Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum. Nihil Obstat: Dominic Hughes, O.P., Censor Deputatus. Imprimatur: +Patrick A. O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington, April 25, 1955. Published by B. Herder Book Co., 1957.*

Canonizations

Canonization is the process in which the pope judges and declares that a dead person is a saint:

Catholic Encyclopedia, Canonization and Beatification, 1907: "Canonization is a precept of the Roman Pontiff commanding public veneration to be paid an individual by the Universal Church."

Before the canonization process was instituted, local bishops judged and declared certain dead persons to be saints. Because local bishops had judged and declared many persons to be saints who later were exposed as ungodly persons, the process of judging and declaring saints was reserved to the pope only:

Catholic Encyclopedia, Beatification and Canonization, 1907: "For several centuries the bishops, in some places only the primates and patriarchs (August., Brevic. Collat. cum Donatistis, III, xiii, no. 25 in P.L., XLIII, 628), could grant to martyrs and confessors public ecclesiastical honour; such honour, however, was always decreed only for the local territory over which the grantors held jurisdiction... Abuses, however, crept into this form of discipline, due as well to indiscretions of popular fervour as to the carelessness of some bishops in inquiring into the lives of those whom they permitted to be honoured as saints. Towards the close of the eleventh century the popes found it necessary to restrict episcopal authority on this point, and decreed that the virtues and miracles of persons proposed for public veneration should be examined in councils, more particularly in general councils. Urban II, Calixtus II, and Eugenius III followed this line of action. It happened, even after these decrees, that 'some, following the ways of the pagans and deceived by the fraud of the evil one, venerated as a saint a man who had been killed while intoxicated'. Alexander III (1159-81) took occasion to prohibit his veneration in these words: 'For the future you will not presume to pay him reverence; and even though miracles were worked through him, this would not allow you to revere him as a saint unless with the authority of the Roman Church' (c. i, tit. cit., X. III, xlv). Theologians do not agree as to the full import of this decretal. Either a new law was made (Bellarmine, *De Eccles. Triumph.*, I, viii), in which case the pope then for the first time reserved the right of beatification, or a pre-existing law was confirmed. As the decretal did not put an end to all controversy, and some bishops did not obey it in as far as it regarded beatification (which right they had certainly possessed hitherto), Urban VII published, in 1634, a

Bull which put an end to all discussion by reserving to the Holy See exclusively not only its immemorial right of canonization, but also that of beatification.”

The first canonization of a saint by a pope took place in the 9th or 10th century. What follows is a quote from Fr. F.W. Faber’s book *An Essay on Beatification, Canonization, and the Process of the Congregation of Rites* (hereafter BC), 1848:

BC: “* There is a question about the first solemn canonization; some say it was Leo III’s canonization of St. Swibert in 804; Mabillon and Papebroch decide in favour of the canonization of St. Udalrio by John XV. in 993.”

It is certain, then, that all those who were declared saints by local bishops and hence not by papal canonizations were not infallibly declared saints because local bishops judged and declared them to be saints and local bishops do not have the charism of infallibility—only the pope does! The question, then, is, Can the pope infallibly judge and declare a dead person to be a saint? The answer is, No!

Canonizations Are Fallible

Canonizations have no link with Tradition

In 1870 the Vatican Council infallibly defined that supernatural revelations which constitute the object of the Catholic faith ended with the death of the last apostle and that the pope could only infallibly define these revelations on faith and morals. Therefore the charism of papal infallibility applies only to doctrines on faith and morals that were revealed to the apostles. Consequently, the process of canonization cannot be infallible because it has no link with Tradition, no link with the revelations given to the apostles. The canonization process was unknown to the apostles and all the popes until the 9th or 10th century when popes started to canonize saints. Thus canonizations are not subject matter for papal infallibility because the process of canonization was not part of the revelations given to the apostles. (See in this book [Popes teach infallibly only on things revealed to the apostles](#), p. 9.)

Popes can infallibly judge men to be notorious sinners but not saints

During the canonization process when judging and declaring a person to be a saint, the pope does not teach but judges. He is judging the sanctity of a person. The pope cannot infallibly judge that a living or dead person is sanctified because that person may have secretly embraced heresy or secretly committed some other mortal sin, even if just by thought: “*Who can understand sins? from my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord.*” (Ps. 18:13) “*Prove me, O God, and know my heart: examine me, and know my paths. And see if there be in me the way of iniquity: and lead me in the eternal way.*” (Ps. 138:23-24) “*For I am not conscious to myself of anything. Yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*” (1 Cor. 4:4)

The only infallible judgment a pope can make regarding the condition of a person’s soul is that a person is not in a state of grace when the person’s original sin or mortal sin is notorious. Those notoriously guilty of original sin are pagans, apostate Jews, Moslems,

etc. Those notoriously guilty of mortal sin are those whose mortal sins and guilt are known to the public. Not only the pope but also all Catholics can infallibly make these same judgments and are bound to when the situation presents itself. This type of judgment is known as a factual judgment and is infallible because it deals with the violation of dogmas of faith or morals that come from the revelations given to the apostles and infallibly defined by popes. But factual judgments cannot be made regarding the sanctity of a person because that person may have concealed his mortal sin from others.

Popes teach infallibly only on doctrines of faith and morals

The question, then, is, Cannot the Holy Ghost reveal to the pope the sanctity of a dead Catholic so that the pope could infallibly judge and declare a person to be a saint? In other words, does the charism of papal infallibility include judgments regarding the sanctity of dead persons? The answer since the Vatican Council of 1870 is a firm and infallible no! In 1870, the Vatican Council infallibly declared that the only subject matter on which the pope can teach infallibly is *doctrines* of faith and morals and not on *judgments* regarding the sanctity and credibility of apparent saints or heavenly apparitions:

*Vatican Council, Definition of Infallibility, 1870: "We teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks *Ex Cathedra*, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consensus of the Church, irreformable."*¹

The canonization of a saint does not deal with a dogma of faith or morals but with the pope judging the personal sanctity of a person. Hence the Holy Ghost does not infallibly assist the pope in determining the personal sanctity of a person. If the pope were able to infallibly judge the sanctity of a person and hence infallibly make saints, the Vatican Council of 1870 would have said so. But it did not! Therefore, the pope was not given the charism to infallibly judge the sanctity of a person.

Popes teach infallibly only on things revealed to the apostles

The Vatican Council also infallibly defined that supernatural revelations that constitute the object of the Catholic faith ended with the death of the last apostle:

Pope Pius X, *Lamentabili Sane*, 1907: "Condemned proposition #21. Revelation, constituting the object of Catholic faith, was not completed with the apostles." (D. 2021)

The Vatican Council also infallibly decreed that the pope could only infallibly define revelations on faith and morals that had been transmitted to the apostles:

¹ Vatican Council (hereafter VC), 1870, sess. 4, chap. 4.

Vatican Council, 1870: “The Roman Pontiffs, too, as the circumstances of the time or the state of affairs suggested, sometimes by summoning ecumenical councils or consulting the opinion of the churches scattered throughout the world, sometimes by special synods, sometimes by taking advantage of other useful means afforded by Divine Providence, defined as doctrines to be held those things which, by God’s help, they knew to be in keeping with sacred scripture and the apostolic traditions. For the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his revelation, make known some new doctrine, but that, by his assistance, they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles.”²

Therefore the charism of papal infallibility applies only to doctrines on faith and morals that were revealed to the apostles. Consequently, popes cannot infallibly define anything at all that has been revealed since the death of the last apostle: “The Roman Pontiffs... defined as doctrines to be held those things which, by God’s help, they knew to be in keeping with sacred scripture and the apostolic traditions... That...they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles.” Thus every person that died after the death of the last apostle is not subject matter for papal infallibility and hence cannot constitute an object of the Catholic faith because the saintliness of that person could not have been revealed to the apostles. That is one reason every heavenly apparition and message since the death of the last apostle, no matter how true it may be, cannot be infallibly approved by the pope.

Saints revealed by God to the apostles are infallibly known to be saints

The only saints who are infallibly known to be saints are those who were revealed as saints before the death of the last apostle. God Himself and not a pope judged these men to be saints. And God revealed that these men were saints to the apostles, who were entrusted with the testimonies of God from the Old and New Testament eras. In this case the pope can infallibly *teach* that these persons are saints, but he is not making a *judgment* but simply defining something that God revealed to the original apostles. Hence this infallible act of the pope is not a judgment but a definition. The pope does not judge the sanctity of the person but merely defines that the person is a saint—it is God who judged the person to be a saint! And it is God who revealed to the apostles that this person is a saint. Hence these saints constitute an object of the Catholic faith. And when a pope infallibly defines that they are saints, these dogmas then become part of the deposit of the Catholic faith. For instance, God revealed to the apostles, as recorded in the Bible, that Abraham, Moses, Elias, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist are saints. It is God who judged and revealed them to be saints, and it is God who revealed to the apostles that they are saints. The pope, then, infallibly teaches as a dogma of faith that these persons are saints; but he has not judged their sanctity.³

² VC, sess. 4, chap. 4; D. 1836.

³ Historical facts revealed to the apostles also constitute the object of the Catholic faith, and hence popes can infallibly define a historical fact and thus make it a dogma of faith. For instance, God revealed to the apostles, as recorded in the Bible, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem; therefore this historical fact constitutes an object of the Catholic faith. And popes have infallibly defined as a dogma of faith that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and hence this dogma is part of the deposit of the Catholic faith.

What applies to heavenly apparitions applies to saints

All supernatural revelations from God since the death of the last apostle are known as private revelations because they are not and can never be part of the deposit of faith. Hence all of the apparent heavenly apparitions since the death of the last apostle fall into the category of private revelations. Because these apparent heavenly apparitions were not revealed to the apostles, all of the popes and theologians agree that the pope cannot infallibly judge the credibility of these apparent heavenly apparitions. The most the pope can do is declare that Catholics can assent to these heavenly apparitions with human faith but not with the Catholic faith and propose them to Catholics for pious belief:

Catholic Encyclopedia, “Revelation, Private,” 1912: “There are two kinds of revelations: (1) universal revelations, which are contained in the Bible or in the depositum of Apostolic tradition transmitted by the Church. These ended with the preaching of the Apostles and must be believed by all; (2) particular or private revelations which are constantly occurring among Christians. When the Church approves private revelations, she declares only that there is nothing in them contrary to faith or good morals, and that they may be read without danger or even with profit; no obligation is thereby imposed on the faithful to believe them. Speaking of such revelations as (e.g.) those of St. Hildegard (approved in part by Eugenius III), St. Bridget (by Boniface IX), and St. Catherine of Siena (by Gregory XI), Benedict XIV says: ‘It is not obligatory nor even possible to give them the assent of Catholic faith, but only of human faith, in conformity with the dictates of prudence, which presents them to us as probable and worthy of pious belief.’ (De canon., III, liii, xxii, II)”

The nature of an apparent heavenly apparition and message is the same as the nature of an apparent saint and his teachings. Hence the process in determining the credibility of each is the same. Both were revealed after the death of the last apostle; both involve apparent heavenly beings; both involve apparent miracles; and both are judged according to the orthodoxy of the message or teaching and other good fruits produced. Hence what applies to one regarding infallibility must then apply to the other. All the popes and theologians agree that the pope was not given the charism to infallibly judge the credibility of an apparent heavenly apparition, and hence they should also conclude that neither was the pope given the charism to infallibly judge the credibility of an apparent saint. Pope Benedict XIV should have made this conclusion when giving his opinion that canonizations may be infallible. (See in this book [Pope Benedict XIV’s fallible opinion](#), p. 13.) What applies to one must apply to the other because the principle is the same!

Summation

Papal infallibility cannot include the canonization of saints on three counts:

(1) because popes can only infallibly define things that come from the supernatural revelations given to the apostles, and thus all persons who have died since the death of the last apostle are not subject matter for papal infallibility;

(2) because popes can only infallibly *teach* doctrines that deal with faith and morals, and hence the Holy Ghost does not promise the pope infallible assistance when the pope *judges* the sanctity of a person;

(3) because popes cannot infallibly judge a man to be holy by a factual judgment, as they could with a notorious mortal sinner, because of the possibility that the man was a secret mortal sinner or the man's public mortal sins were concealed from them. And, most importantly, God did not promise the pope infallibility in the matter of discovering the secret sins of another or the public sins of another that are unknown to the pope. God the Holy Ghost promises to help the pope to infallibly know things that he could not otherwise know with certainty only on matters that deal with faith and morals that were revealed to the apostles.

Opposing Opinions

Limits of papal infallibility not infallibly defined until 1870

From the time of the first pope, St. Peter, it is a dogma that the pope can infallibly teach on faith and morals. No Catholic ever questioned that the pope can infallibly define doctrines on faith or morals. However, some popes and theologians extended papal infallibility to include disciplinary laws because they believed that the pope could not make bad or harmful disciplinary laws. A mere look at the history of the papacy proves that this is not true because popes have made bad and harmful disciplinary laws. (See my book *The Solemn and Ordinary Magisterium: Error - Popes' disciplinary decrees cannot be bad or harmful.*) Before the Vatican Council of 1870, some popes and some theologians, including Fr. Faber, believed that all of the popes' disciplinary laws, which are part of ecclesiastical laws, are infallible:

BC, p. 110: "Faith, morals, and general discipline are laid down in theology as the three great provinces of her infallibility. . . . Theologians reply that there are three kinds of faith, *human*, which rests on human authority, and as such is uncertain and obnoxious to error; *divine*, which rests on divine authority, and is infallible immediately and of itself; and ecclesiastical faith, which rests on the authority of the Church defining anything with the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, through which she is preserved from the possibility of error; and this faith is infallible with a participated and borrowed infallibility, inferior in degree to divine faith, but with a certitude raising it far above human faith. If therefore anything be shown to be *de fide ecclesiastica* it is not only entitled to our acceptance, but it even overrules all opposition, as a man, though not formally a heretic, would, to use the common phrases, be rash, scandalous, and impious, if he asserted the contrary; and inquiry would show that an immense proportion of what is involved in hagiology is at least and most certainly *de fide ecclesiastica*."

Hence some popes and theologians, including Fr. Faber, also extended papal infallibility to include the canonizations of saints:

BC, pp. 126-27: "Is it *de fide* that the Church is infallible in the decree of canonization? This is an open question in the Catholic schools. . . . They who maintain the affirmative argue as follows:

“1. He is a heretic who asserts that the pope can err in making laws for the universal Church; now the canonization of a Saint is such a law; and as no one is a heretic who does not deny what is de fide, this must be de fide.”

But some popes and theologians did not believe the popes’ disciplinary laws and canonizations are infallible:

BC, pp. 126-27: “6. Is it de fide that the Church is infallible in the decree of canonization? This is an open question in the Catholic schools. They who maintain the negative argue as follows:

“1. St. Thomas [*Quodlib.* 9. 16.] places the judgment of the Church in canonization as something between a judgment in matters of faith and a judgment on particular facts; and therefore it would follow that the infallibility of the decree is a pious belief, but nothing more, inasmuch as it only pertains to the faith *reductive*.

“2. It is de fide that the Church is infallible in the common doctrine of morals; but it is not so certain that the canonization of Saints pertains to the common doctrine of morals.

“3. The Church has never defined her infallibility in this matter to be de fide, neither can we collect it from her practice.

“4. The great names of Suarez, Vasquez, Canus, Raynaudus and the doctors of Salamanca, are found on this side of the question.”

BC, pp. 131-32: “7. Is it de fide that the canonized Saint is really a Saint? Those who maintain the negative side in the last question argue thus:

“1. If the infallibility of the Church in canonization is not de fide, a fortiori it is not de fide that each canonized Saint really enjoys the beatific vision: for, first, it is plainly not a matter of *immediate* revelation, and, secondly, if the Church’s infallibility in this respect is not de fide itself, the glory of any particular Saint is not a matter of *mediate* revelation.

“2. Nothing can be put by the Church among the dogmas of faith which is neither implicitly nor virtually revealed: now the sanctity of anyone in particular is neither implicitly nor virtually revealed. This is denied by those who take the affirmative side, in their third argument quoted in the last question. Supposing however the present objection valid, it will, as its own partisans are careful to assert, by no means follow that cultus could be denied with impunity to any Saint, just as adoration could not be refused at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, although it is not de fide that that particular Host is consecrated.”

Pope Benedict XIV’s fallible opinion

Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) was not sure if canonizations are infallible so he teaches they are at least *close* to infallible, *close* to dogma:

Pope Benedict XIV, 18th century: “If anyone dared to assert that the Pontiff had erred in this or that canonization, we shall say that he is, if not a heretic, at least temerarious, a giver of scandal to the whole Church, an insulter of the saints, a favorer of those heretics who deny the Church’s authority in canonizing saints, savoring of heresy by giving unbelievers an occasion to mock the faithful, the assessor of an erroneous opinion and liable to very grave penalties.”⁴

⁴ Quoted by Tanqueray, "*Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae Fundamentalis*," (Paris, Tournai, Rome: Desclee, 1937) new edition ed. by J.B. Bord, Vol. I. p. 624, footnote 2.

Pope Benedict XIV is not sure that canonizations are infallible because he teaches that those who do not believe canonizations are infallible may not be heretics—“if not a heretic, at least temerarious.” That means Pope Benedict believes they may not be heretics! It is pointless for a pope to pretend to bind Catholics to something he himself is not sure of. If he were sure that canonizations are infallible, he should have said with firmness and conviction that it is heresy to deny that canonizations are infallible and hence anyone who denies this dogma is a heretic and under anathema. (See my book *The Solemn and Ordinary Magisterium: Errors of Pope Pius XII’s Humani Generis*.)

And even if Pope Benedict did teach that it is heresy to believe canonizations are not infallible and bound Catholics to believe canonizations are infallible under pain of anathema, his teaching would still be fallible because the pope was not given the charism of infallibility to canonize saints but only to teach doctrines on faith or morals that were revealed to the apostles, as this was infallibly taught after his pontificate by Pope Pius IX during the Vatican Council in 1870. However, before the Vatican Council in 1870, both opinions were allowed: (1) canonizations are not infallible and (2) canonizations are infallible. After an examination of both arguments, Fr. Faber concurs that both opinions are allowed:

BC, pp. 128-29: “It seems then *probable* that it is de fide that the judgment of the Church in canonization is infallible; but beyond this assertion of a strong probability we must not venture to go, especially seeing such great names for the negative opinion. It is safer to conclude with the wise and learned Lambertini, that each opinion should be left in its own probability, until a judgment shall issue from the Holy See; for when we are treating of setting up a dogma of faith, says the same careful theologian in another place, we must wait for the judgment of the Apostolic See, the mother and mistress of the other Churches, and of the chief pontiff, to whom it exclusively belongs to make definitions of faith, before we venture to brand with the infamous note of heresy those who follow an opposite opinion.”

In 1870 Pope Pius IX at the Vatican Council ended the dispute

Considering all the facts and protected by the Holy Ghost, Pope Pius IX during the Vatican Council in 1870 infallibly settled the dispute regarding the extent of papal infallibility. Pope Pius IX infallibly decreed that the only subject matter for papal infallibility is doctrines on faith or morals and only doctrines on faith or morals that were revealed to the apostles. Hence papal infallibility does not extend to disciplinary laws, canonizations of saints, approval of religious orders, approval of heavenly apparitions and messages, or anything at all that has been revealed since the death of the last apostle. (See in this book [Popes teach infallibly only on things revealed to the apostles](#), p. 9.)

But some still carry on the dispute

However, even after the Vatican Council in 1870, some still argue in vain that canonizations are infallible by trying to link the sanctity of an individual person to a doctrine of morals, which is an impossible task. The saints that are infallibly known to be saints are known as such because God revealed this to the apostles, and hence their infallible sainthood is a dogma of faith in what God has told us about the sanctity of the saint and thus does not pertain to a dogma dealing with morals. Moral dogmas deal with the moral commandments and not with individual persons.

And even more impossible is their task of linking a saint who died after the death of the last apostle with the supernatural revelations given to the apostles, which revelations alone constitute the object of the Catholic faith and hence the only subject matter for papal infallibility. (See in this book [Popes teach infallibly only on doctrines of faith and morals](#), p. 9.)

These are the same men who still wrongly believe that papal disciplinary laws are infallible in spite of the clear words of the Vatican Council that limit papal infallibility to topics dealing with faith or morals that were revealed to the apostles. These men have idolized the popes and given the popes more power than God gave them. There have been very many bad popes in the history of the Catholic Church who did not enforce existing good laws and made many bad laws, without which there would be no great apostasy—just as there were many bad popes, religious leaders such as Caiphaz, during the Old Covenant era. (See my book *Bad Popes*.)

One Can Only Be Morally Certain That a Person Is a Saint

Men cannot have infallible certainty that a canonized saint is truly a saint. The most certainty that one can have that a canonized saint is a saint is a moral certainty, which means one is certain based upon all of the available evidence but not infallibly certain because of the possibility of hidden evidence or motives that prove the person could not be a saint:

Catholic Encyclopedia, Certitude, 1908: “Moral certitude is that with which judgments are formed concerning human character and conduct; for the laws of human nature are not quite universal, but subject to occasional exceptions. It is moral certitude which we generally attain in the conduct of life, concerning, for example, the friendship of others, the fidelity of a wife or a husband... Though almost any detail in these events may be made a subject of dispute, especially when we enter the region of motives and try to trace cause and effect, and though almost any one of the witnesses may be shown to have made some mistake or misrepresentation, yet the occurrence of the events, taken in the mass, is certain... The term *moral certitude* is used... to include an assent in matters of conduct, given not on purely intellectual grounds of evidence, but through the virtue of prudence and the influence of the will over the intellect, because we judge that doubt would not be wise. In such a case, we know that an opinion or a course of action would be right as a rule, let us say, in nine cases out of ten, though we cannot shut our eyes to the possibility that the particular case which we are considering may be the exceptional case in which such a judgment would be wrong. ...In such a case we are not certain, but only judge it wise to act as if we were certain, and put doubts aside because useless.”

The moral certainty that a canonized saint is a saint is based upon all of the available evidence that shows that the apparent saint held the Catholic faith, led a holy life, bore good fruits, and did miracles. However, there is always the possibility of hidden evidence and motives that would prove the person to be a heretic or immoral and hence not a saint. And thus the miracles attributed to this apparent saint were from the Devil or based on false testimony.

Men judged as saints by their faith and works from available evidence

A pope judges a Catholic to be a saint based upon all of the available evidence which taken together shows that the person held the Catholic faith, lived a holy life, bore good fruit, and did miracles. All these things must exist for a person to be a saint. For instance, if apparent miracles and everything else necessary to make a saint exist except orthodoxy in faith (meaning the person was a heretic), then that person cannot be a saint because he is not Catholic. Moses warns that signs and wonders can come from the Devil and hence teaches that one proof of a true saint or true prophet is not only apparent miracles but also what he believes and teaches:

“If there rise in the midst of thee a prophet or one that saith he hath dreamed a dream, and he foretell a sign and a wonder, and that come to pass which he spoke, and he say to thee: Let us go and follow strange gods, which thou knowest not, and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hear the words of that prophet or dreamer: for the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or not.” (Deut. 13:1-3)

Catholic commentary on Deut. 13: “Ver. 1. *If...a prophet, or even an angel from heaven*, as S. Paul (Gal. i. 8,) says on a similar occasion, (C.) should work a miracle, and afterwards adduce it in proof of a false religion, believe him not. The Jews and Christians had already received such convincing proofs from God, of the truth of what they had been taught, that they had reason to conclude either that the miracle was false, or that the person who would persuade them to embrace a different religion had fallen, after God had honoured him with miraculous powers: or, in fine, that if he were an impostor at the time when he exercised that power, like the magicians of Egypt, or Balaam, the miracle was either not wrought in confirmation of what he preached, or at least it was eclipsed by some greater miracle in favour of the truth. Whether God will ever suffer a real miracle which may seem to countenance error, or not, this appears to be unquestionable, that he will never *deny himself*, or, in a contest of miracles, permit falsehood to gain the victory. If the magicians performed wonderful works, they were forced at last to confess their inferiority, and yield to Moses. Ex. viii. 18. 19. Miracles are generally a proof of the truth of any doctrine; but when the doctrine is already established, as in this case of the unity of God, (v. 2) it may be adduced with propriety as a criterion of miracles. Truth can never be in contradiction to truth. The light of reason suffices to evince that there is but one God. The same truth had been repeatedly confirmed by miracles, particularly during the last forty years, during which God had manifested his power over all nature, in the sight of all the Hebrews, and had trampled on the idols of the Gentiles. If therefore any person should attempt by his dreams or predictions, to invalidate this most fundamental and undeniable article, his testimony could not be received. H. —The Jews, in vain, allege this passage against the religion of Jesus Christ. He did not subvert, but fulfilled the law; so far was he from endeavouring to persuade them to abandon the true God. C. —If he had not come to act in this manner, the law would have contained in itself the seeds of dissolution, by *falsely* holding forth the expectation of a future Messiah, who would bring all things to perfection. C. xviii. 15. Gen. iii. 15. and xlix. 10, &c. Hence when he really appeared, the Jews desired him to prove his mission by a miracle, as he did repeatedly. Mat. xii. 38. Jo. viii. 40. and x. 25. —*A dream*, of a mysterious kind, like those of Joseph and of the prophets. H.”

Catholic commentary on Deut. 13: “Ver. 2. *To pass*. The completion of a prophecy does not always prove, that the person who uttered it was a true prophet. Chance, a knowledge of natural causes, &c. may enable an impostor sometimes to hit upon the

truth. God may also, for reasons known to himself, declare what will come to pass by the mouth of a false prophet, or of a wicked man, as he did by Balaam and Caiphas. Judas wrought miracles before his apostacy. C. —Yet if any who had been so highly favoured, should attempt to enforce by their preceding miracles, any false doctrine, let him be anathema. Gal. i. 8. —*Not.* The Hebrews had incontrovertible proofs of the existence of one God. They could not therefore acknowledge any other. H. —Novelty in religion is a mark of idolatry or of heresy. W.”

St. Paul warns that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light in order to deceive not only non-Catholics but also Catholics. To appear to Catholics as an angel of light, Lucifer would obviously appear to be a saint; hence St. Paul says that Satan appears as an apostle of Christ, as a Catholic, but is in reality a false apostle:

“For such false apostles are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no wonder: for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as the ministers of justice, whose end shall be according to their works.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

St. Paul tells Catholics how to not be deceived by these apparent saints, these false apostles of Christ who transform themselves into saintly Catholics, into angels of light. He compares their splendor to that of an angel from heaven in which no human saint, no matter how great, could appear more splendorous in signs and wonders. Yet St. Paul says to not let the splendor, the signs and wonders, the apparent miracles, no matter how great they are, be your only guide in determining the sanctity of the messenger. Just like Moses, St. Paul says that if the messenger, the apparent saint, denies just one dogma, he is anathema and thus cannot be a saint: “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.*” (Gal. 1:8)

##*Original Rheims Commentary* on Gal. 1:8: “8. *Or an angel.*] Many worthy observations are made in the Fathers writings, of the earnest admonition of the Apostle, and much may we gather of the text itself, first, that the credit of any man or Angel for what learning, eloquence, show of grace or virtue soever, though he wrought miracles, should not move a Christian man from that truth which he hath once received in the Catholic Church: of which point Vincentius Lirensis excellently treateth. *li. cont. profan. hares. Navitates.* ... This curse or execration pronounced by the Apostle, toucheth not only the Galatians, or those of the Apostle’s time, that preached otherwise than they did, but it pertaineth to all times, preachers, and teachers, unto the worlds end. And it concerneth them (as Vincentius Lirensis saith) that preach a new faith, or change that old faith which they received in the unity of the Catholic Church. *To preach anything to Christian Catholic men* (saith he) *besides that which they have received, never was it lawful, never is it, nor never shall it be lawful To say anathema to such, it hath been, and is, and shall be always* ##*behooful.*”

Orthodoxy in faith, then, is necessary to be Catholic and hence to be a saint, no matter how many apparent miracles a person did or how virtuous he appeared to be. There are many historical accounts of men who were thought to be saints and who appeared to do miracles but were later proved to be evil and under the power of Satan:

BC: “[p. 86] St. Antiochus tells us of a monk on Mount Sinai, famous for chastity, who had a vision in which he saw the souls of the Apostles and Saints in dense darkness, and the souls of the Jews in shining light. Whereupon he apostatized from Christianity and became a Jew, because he prized his false vision above the analogy of the faith...

“[p. 91] St. Francis discovered the real character of the friar who was in the enjoyment of a great reputation for sanctity. The Saint was told by the monk’s superior that his subject had a miraculous *attrait* for silence; but no sooner did the holy patriarch learn that the man carried it so far as to abstain from sacramental confession, than he discerned the delusion, and predicted the end of the wretched apostate.”

St. Teresa of Avila, by William Thomas Walsh, 1943: “There had dwelt for forty years in Córdoba, in the Convent of Saint Isabel of the Angels, of the Order of Saint Clare, a nun on whose growing reputation for holiness the supernatural seemed to have set the seal of approval. Faithful Catholics made long pilgrimages to ask for prayers and to carry away as relics little objects she had touched. Priests and nuns believed in her sanctity. Members of the royal family went to beg for her intercession with heaven. The beautiful and pious Empress Isabel, wife of Charles V, sent her as a gift the robes in which her infant son (Philip II) had been baptized at Valladolid in 1527. Stories were told of her dreadful fasts and long vigils. Finally it got abroad that she had received from our Lord the precious favor of the *Stigmata* — wounds in the hands and feet and side, like His — and Magdalena let it be known that she no longer required any food except the consecrated Host in daily Communion.

“Now, such things have happened beyond any doubt in the history of Christendom. The Church has accepted the evidence as to Saint Francis of Assisi and many others, and in our own day is investigating reports of eyewitnesses concerning Teresa Neumann of Bavaria. But it is no secret in Vatican City that in the long conflict between Christ the King and His enemy the Prince of this World there have been true mystics and false mystics; there have been genuine stigmatists and deluded fanatics or paranoiacs; glorified persons who truly subsisted on the Sacred Host as Saint Catherine of Siena did for twenty years, and frauds who for profit or admiration pretended to do so. In all such matters the Church moves slowly and skeptically, sparing no pains to expose hysteria or deceit. And of all the agencies of investigation available for the purpose in that period, one of the most useful was found to be the Inquisition. Somehow this tribunal became suspicious of Magdalena de la Cruz and began making inquiries.

“Arrested and questioned at last, she made a confession so appalling that the Holy Office committed her to prison for life, not only to protect Catholics from being deceived and corrupted, but to help the miserable woman turn from her crimes and (as she finally did) to die a good Christian.

“Magdalena de la Cruz confessed to being a secret devil worshiper. At the age of seven, she said, she was induced by the devil to pretend to be very holy and to simulate the Crucifixion. At eleven, she made a pact with two *demonios incubos* called Balbán and Pitonio, who used to visit her by night under various forms — as a black bull, a camel, a Jeronymite friar, a Franciscan, and so on. Inspired by these foul paramours of darkness, she inflicted wounds on her hands, feet and side, in imitation of those of Christ; she became very skillful at all sorts of legerdemain, and she could feign trances in which she seemed to be insensible to the prick of needles. For ten to twelve years she pretended to live on the Sacred Host, until it was discovered that she had food hidden in her cell.”⁵

⁵ *St. Teresa of Avila*, by William Thomas Walsh. *Nihil Obstat*: H. B. Ries, Censor Librorum. Imprimatur: + Moses E. Kiley, Archbishop of Milwaukee, January 5, 1943. Chap. 9, pp. 109-113.

Saints Who Were Not Saints and On Praying to the Damned

One proof that not all those who were venerated as saints are actually saints is Clement of Alexandria (+ c. 215). He was venerated as a saint until the 17th century, was commemorated with a feast day, and was listed in the *Roman Martyrology* as a saint. The Universal Church venerated him as a saint in the Roman Martyrology. When Pope Clement VIII discovered heresy in Clement's writings, he removed him from the Roman Martyrology and took away his title as saint:

Catholic Encyclopedia, Clement of Alexandria, 1908: "Clement has had no notable influence on the course of theology beyond his personal influence on the young Origen. His writings were occasionally copied, as by Hippolytus in his 'Chronicon', by Arnobius, and by Theodoret of Cyrus. St. Jerome admired his learning. Pope Gelasius in the catalogue attributed to him mentions Clement's works, but adds, 'they are in no case to be received amongst us'. Photius in the 'Bibliotheca' censures a list of errors drawn from his writings, but shows a kindly feeling towards Clement, assuming that the original text had been tampered with. ... Down to the seventeenth century he was venerated as a saint. His name was to be found in the martyrologies, and his feast fell on the fourth of December. But when the Roman Martyrology was revised by Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) his name was dropped from the calendar on the advice of Cardinal Baronius. Benedict XIV maintained this decision of his predecessor on the grounds that Clement's life was little known, that he had never obtained public cultus in the Church, and that some of his doctrines were, if not erroneous, at least suspect."

Clement's true heart was the heart of a philosopher and not the heart of a Catholic. This caused him to fall under the wrath of the jealous God and into heresy. Other so-called saints were removed from the Roman Martyrology and Roman Breviary, two books approved by the popes who ordered them to be read by the Universal Church. These men were venerated as saints in heaven by popes and the Universal Church, yet these so-called saints were actually ungodly men who were damned to hell. This fact defeats the argument that God would never let Catholics pray to a saint in heaven who was actually an evil human who is in hell. One reason Fr. Faber believes canonizations are infallible is that if they were not infallible he believes that the sanctity of the Church would be attacked and the cultus of the saints destroyed:

BC, pp. 121-22: "2. The opposite opinion [RJMI comment: that canonizations are not infallible] would subvert all the cultus of the Saints, because if it could be once admitted that the Church had erred in any particular instance, every body might doubt of the legitimacy of the cultus of any, even the most distinguished Saints... 4. The opposite opinion would destroy the note of sanctity of the Church, for it would admit that she could pay religious cultus to the damned, God's enemies and the companions of the devil."

Those of the opposing opinion (that canonizations are not infallible) sufficiently answer these arguments:

BC, p. 124-26: "1. The church in the canonization of Saints rests on human testimony... 2. Many have been honored as Saints who were not so... 3. The Martyrologies are proposed to the whole Church [RJMI comment: and they contained saints who were not saints]... 4. Many of the names of Saints have been struck out of the Roman Breviary... 6. There is no need to bring infallibility into this question; because the inconvenience of a person being revered as a Saint who is not one... for cultus is an act of practical virtue, namely religion, and requires

therefore for its regulation a judgment practically, but not of necessity speculatively, true, just as there is no inconvenience in a Host, prudently supposed to be consecrated but in reality not so, being adored... 7. There may be an error in relics exposed to public veneration without any such grave consequences being supposed to flow from the mistake: why will not the same hold in regard to Saints proposed for public veneration?"

Catholics cannot know with infallible certainty that a particular dead Catholic is in purgatory, yet this does not deny the dogma or existence of purgatory nor the sanctity of the Church. Likewise, just because Catholics cannot know with infallible certainty that a canonized saint is a saint does not deny the dogma or existence of saints nor the sanctity of the Church. If a Catholic prays for a dead Catholic who he thinks is in purgatory but is actually in hell, his prayers do not go unheard or unanswered. God will use his prayers for some other soul in purgatory. Likewise, if a Catholic prays to a saint who is not a saint but is in hell, his prayers will not go unheard or unanswered. God will have a true saint hear and answer his prayers. Think of all the Catholics in the history of the Church who have prayed to saints who were not saints, such as Clement of Alexandria!

The sanctity of the Church and the dogma on the Holy Eucharist are not denied when Catholics adore a piece of bread while thinking it is the Holy Eucharist because the priest only pretended to consecrate the bread and wine. And the sanctity of the Church and the dogma on relics are not denied when Catholics venerate a relic of a damned pagan while thinking it is a relic of a saint. And the sanctity of the Church and the dogma on the poor souls in purgatory are not denied when Catholics pray for souls that are in hell while thinking these souls are in purgatory. Likewise, the sanctity of the Church and the dogma on the saints are not denied when Catholics pray to a damned human while thinking he is a saint in heaven. In all these things Catholics are wrong regarding facts but not dogmas. They are not denying dogmas and incur no sin or fault. And all these things do not deny the sanctity of the Catholic Church any more than bad Catholics do or heretics who hide within the bosom of the Catholic Church:

Pope Pius X, *Communium Rerum*, On St. Anselm of Aosta, 1909: 15. But with no less severity and sorrow have We been obliged to denounce and to put down another species of war, internal and domestic, and all the more disastrous the more hidden it is. Waged by unnatural children, nestling in the very bosom of the Church in order to rend it in silence, this war aims more directly at the very root and the soul of the Church."

Think of how many Catholics are thought to be good Catholics when in fact they are secret mortal sinners. Think of how many are thought to be Catholic when in fact they are not Catholic at all because they are secret heretics. Think of how many infiltrators entered the Catholic Church and fooled priests, bishops, and even popes. This is just more proof that the pope was not given the charism of infallibility to judge the sanctity of persons or else he would be able to detect the infiltrators and cast them out of the Church.

Let us consider papally approved heavenly apparitions. Honoring these apparitions, popes made feast days and Masses that Catholics celebrate worldwide. Yet not one of these apparitions is known to be true with infallible certainty and hence could be false. Yet this does not make the pope or Catholics guilty for honoring an apparition that came from Satan since they had good reason to believe it came from heaven. (See in this book [What applies to heavenly apparitions applies to saints](#), p. 11.)

Popes' Responsibility

Based upon the evidence presented to and viewed by the pope, one can say that a canonized person is a saint. But if evidence exists that the pope did not know about which proves the person could not be a saint, then the person is not a saint. As long as the pope was not culpably ignorant of this evidence, he incurs no guilt or fault. However, if the pope knew about the heretical or otherwise mortally sinful evidence against the person and did not investigate it or suppressed it or secretly consented to it, then the pope is certainly at fault and shares in the mortally sinful guilt of the person. This applies also to popes who did not sufficiently investigate the supposed saint when they had reason to suspect that he may have believed in heresy or may have been immoral. And if the pope secretly consented to the heresy taught by the person, then the pope would be an occult (secret) heretic. This would not cause him to lose his office because a pope only loses his office if he publicly teaches heresy or becomes insane or voluntarily resigns. (See my book *A Public Heretic Cannot Be the Pope*.)

Canonized Saints in Same Category as Disciplinary Laws

Not to be venerated as saint if notorious evidence proves otherwise

Catholics are bound to venerate canonized saints just as they are bound to obey disciplinary laws. The only time a Catholic is not bound to obey a disciplinary law is if that law is sinful, harmful, a near occasion of sin, scandalous, or otherwise erroneous and wrong:

Summa de Ecclesia, quoting St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621): “Although it clearly follows from the circumstances that the Pope can err at times, and command things which must not be done, that we are not to be simply obedient to him in all things, that does not show that he must not be obeyed by all when his commands are good.”

St. Robert Bellarmine, S.J.: “Just as it is lawful to resist the pope that attacks the body, it is also lawful to resist the one who attacks the souls or who disturbs civil order, or, above all, who attempts to destroy the Church. I say that it is lawful to resist him by not doing what he orders and preventing his will from being executed.”⁶

St. Catherine of Siena († 1380): “Alas, Most Holy Father! At times, obedience to you leads to eternal damnation.”⁷

Sylvester Prieras, O.P., († 1523), Theologian: “He [the pope] would certainly be in sin, and it would be unlawful to allow him to act in such a fashion, and likewise to obey him in matters which are evil; on the contrary, there is a duty to oppose him while administering a courteous rebuke. Thus, were he to wish to distribute the Church’s wealth, or Peter’s Patrimony among his own relatives; were he to wish to destroy the church or to commit an act of similar magnitude, there would be a duty to prevent him, and likewise an obligation to oppose him and resist him. The reason

⁶ *De Romano Pontifice*, Lib. II, Ch. 29.

⁷ Letter to Pope Gregory XI.

being that he does not possess power in order to destroy, and thus it follows that if he is so doing it is lawful to oppose him. It is clear from the preceding that, if the pope by his commands or by his actions is destroying the church, he may be resisted and the fulfillment of his commands prevented. The right of open resistance to prelates' abuse of authority stems also from natural law."⁸

The same applies to canonized saints. The only time a Catholic is not bound to venerate a canonized saint is if the Catholic has notorious evidence that proves the apparent saint was an apostate or a heretic or immoral. In these cases the Catholic would be bound to not venerate the saint, to warn others, and to present the evidence, if possible, to his bishop and the Apostolic See. (See my books "*A Public Heretic Cannot Be the Pope*: Popes can make bad disciplinary laws and be resisted" and "*Solemn and Ordinary Magisterium*: Error - Popes' disciplinary decrees cannot be bad or harmful.")

Less than notorious evidence needs to be investigated

In the case in which there is less than notorious evidence that shows an apparent saint was an apostate or heretic or immoral, the saint must still be presumed to be a saint pending an investigation into the authenticity of the evidence.

⁸ Dialogus de Potestate Papae.