



In many cultures and countries, the faithful have developed deep devotion to pious figures who, despite not being officially canonized, are considered "popular saints." From the widely venerated Padre Pio in his time to historical figures known for their great charity, these people inspire the faith of thousands. However, a question often arises: **Why doesn't the Church canonize all these 'popular saints'?**

The answer lies in the **rigorous process** by which the Church examines cases of sainthood. This is not an arbitrary process or a simple public acclamation. Over the centuries, the Church has developed a **theologically sound and scientifically demanding** method to declare someone a saint.

In this article, we will explore **what the canonization process entails, why miracles and heroic virtues are required, and how this rigorous approach strengthens our faith.**

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## 1. What Is a 'Popular Saint,' and Why Isn't Popular Devotion Enough?

Throughout history, many religious figures have been the object of popular devotion without being officially recognized by the Church. These individuals may have been **great missionaries, martyrs, people of deep prayer, or examples of charity**. However, **popularity alone is not proof of certified sainthood**.

The Church, as Mother and Teacher, does not rely solely on popular fervor. Its role is to ensure that **models of sainthood are truly worthy of imitation**, not just because of their exemplary lives, but because they have shown clear signs of being in the glory of God.

This is why the **rigorous canonization process** requires:

- **A reputation for holiness and evidence of heroic virtues**
- **A thorough examination of the person's life and writings**
- **Scientifically verified miracles**

Canonization is not just a human recognition; it is a declaration that the person intercedes for us before God and that their example is safe to follow.



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## 2. Why Does the Church Require Proof of Heroic Virtues?

The first step in the canonization process is verifying **heroic virtues**. But why is this so important? Because sainthood is not just about being a good person—it means living a life **completely devoted to God in an extraordinary way**.

### What Are Heroic Virtues?

A saint does not merely practice faith, hope, and charity as any good Christian should; they do so **consistently, extraordinarily, and in difficult circumstances**. For example:

- **Heroic faith:** Total trust in God despite suffering, like St. Thérèse of Lisieux in her illness.
- **Heroic hope:** Absolute certainty in God's promises, like St. Maximilian Kolbe in Auschwitz.
- **Heroic charity:** Love to the extreme, like St. Francis of Assisi with the poor.

The Church meticulously examines every detail of the candidate's life. While many 'popular saints' may have done good, **not all have demonstrated these virtues in a heroic degree**.

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## 3. Why Are Miracles Required? The Scientific Rigor of Canonization

One of the most fascinating and rigorous aspects of the canonization process is the requirement for **miracles**. It is not enough to be virtuous; **the Church demands supernatural proof of the candidate's intercession**.

### Why Does the Church Require Miracles?

1. **To confirm that the candidate is in God's glory:** A miracle is a divine intervention that proves the person enjoys the beatific vision and can intercede for us.



2. **To distinguish between a great role model and a true saint:** Many people live exemplary lives, but only those marked by divine signs are canonized.

## The Scientific Process Behind Miracles

For a miracle to be recognized, it must meet extremely strict conditions:

- **It must be scientifically inexplicable:** An extraordinary event is not enough; medical and scientific analysis must rule out any natural explanation.
- **It must be instantaneous, complete, and lasting:** A healing, for example, must be immediate, not the result of medical treatment, and with no relapses.
- **It must be attributed to the candidate's intercession:** It is not enough for a miracle to occur; it must be proven that the person in question was specifically invoked.

Cases are reviewed by **ecclesiastical tribunals and impartial medical committees**. Not every extraordinary event qualifies as a miracle—in fact, **most cases are dismissed**.

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## 4. Why Does This Rigor Strengthen Our Faith?

Rather than being an obstacle, this level of scrutiny **is a guarantee for our faith**. The Church cannot declare saints lightly because its mission is to lead us with certainty to the truth.

If saints were canonized without strict criteria, we would risk:

- **Taking as models people who did not truly live according to the Gospel**
- **Accepting natural phenomena as miracles, weakening the credibility of faith**
- **Reducing sainthood to popularity or sentimentalism**

The Church's rigor is, therefore, a blessing. **When the Church declares someone a saint, we can be certain that their life was exemplary and that they truly intercede for us in heaven.**

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## 5. Application to Our Lives: How to Live Holiness Daily

What can we learn from this process for our own spiritual lives?

- **Holiness is not about fame but daily faithfulness.** We do not need to be 'popular' to be saints; we simply need to love God in the ordinary.
- **Miracles exist, but true faith is not about seeking signs.** Believing in God does not depend on witnessing miracles but on trusting in His will.
- **The Church is our sure guide.** In times when there are so many ideologies and confusing beliefs, following the Church's criteria protects us from error.

Each of us is called to be a saint, even if we are never canonized. The real challenge is not waiting for recognition but **living our faith with authenticity and trust in God.**

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### Conclusion

The Church does not canonize all 'popular saints' because sainthood requires much more than public devotion. **Heroic virtues and scientifically verified miracles** are necessary as clear signs of heavenly glory.

This rigorous process is not a barrier but a guarantee. It reminds us that **holiness is real and attainable but requires a life of total dedication to God.**

Instead of worrying about who is canonized or not, we should ask ourselves: **How am I living my own path to holiness?**