

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Canonized Saints

(Jerry Fite)

More than one million people gathered last week to hear the declaration of the “beatification” of the late Pope John Paul II. Why such interest? In Catholicism, “beatification” is the next to the last step to one be canonized as a saint. Previous to the declaration, the tomb of John Paul II was opened and the casket exhumed fulfilling the “*declaration of non-cultus*” in proving to Catholic authorities that the tomb has not been tampered with in any way suggesting some connection with a cult. To prove John Paul II has moved into Heaven, a miracle must be attributed to him. Pope Benedict greeted a nun, Marie Simone-Pierre who said she recovered from Parkinson’s disease after praying to John Paul. Pope Benedict declared this a miracle since there is no known cure for the disease. According to Catholic doctrine, at least one more miracle is required for John Paul to be canonized as a saint.

Does any of this sound like New Testament teaching regarding “saints”? According to Catholic doctrine, one must have

been dead for at least five years before even being canonized as a saint. According to the New Testament, Paul wrote “*to the saints that are at Ephesus*” (*Ephesians 1:1*). These individual saints had to be alive, because they were to *read* what Paul wrote to them and *understand the will of God* (*Ephesians 3:1-4*).

In the New Testament, the calling of the gospel of Christ was what was heeded making one a saint, not the declaration of a Pope. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, wrote to those “*called to be saints*” (*I Corinthians 1:2*). They were “*sanctified*” when they were “*justified*” from their sins which took place simultaneously when they were “*washed*” or baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (*I Corinthians 6:11*). Men and women who “*called upon the name of the Lord*” in baptism were “*sanctified in Christ*” along with Paul (*I Corinthians 1:2, Acts 22:16*).

In the New Testament, miracles were a sign confirming the gospel message and making a clear declaration that the one

speaking or writing that message was truly God’s spokesman (*Mark 16:20, Acts 2:22, 2 Cor. 12:12*). But where does God tell us in the Canon of New Testament Scripture where one must do two miracles before being canonized as a saint? Such is the doctrine of man, not the doctrine of Christ, the faith once and for all time delivered to us (*2 John 9, Jude 3*).

Living a life characterized by not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh in this life is what identifies one as saint in the New Testament (*Ephesians 5:3*), not being dead for at least five years, exhumed, venerated and performing a minimum of two miracles

In Catholicism, John Paul is well on his way to being canonized as a saint. Catholics can venerate him by bowing before his statue or having a day proclaimed in his honor. But saints in the New Testament refused to have men bow before them with any form of worship (*Acts 10:25-26*), never were prayed to after departing this life, and had no holy day declared in their honor.