



The canonization of Pope Paul VI is an error for the Church. His pontificate must be evaluated by history.

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We Are Church International (WAC) and European Network Church on the Move (EN-RE) strongly oppose the canonization of Pope Paul VI, and the recent trend to quickly canonize many who serve as Popes. The rush to canonize Popes soon after their death which began late in the twentieth century contrasts strongly with prior Catholic tradition, which wisely allowed the passage of decades or even centuries to reveal both the personal character and impact of the papacy of each individual who served in that position. It also seems to be creating an idolatry of the papacy, again in violation of Catholic tradition and values. Many of our colleagues from other Christian denominations note that the trend also frustrates efforts to increase ecumenical collegiality. This concern must be taken seriously.

Considering these concerns, WAC and EN-RE call for a reexamination of the entire process of canonization. We believe that the process must be conducted with transparency, that Popes should not be considered for sainthood until at least 100 years following their deaths, and that every member of the Church should have the opportunity to voice their support for or concerns about any candidate for sainthood.

On the specific case of Pope Paul VI, WAC and EN-RE believe that his early work advocating for peace, increasing globalization, expanding interfaith collaboration, making liturgy more engaging of the laity, and raising up the voices of members of the church in Latin America must be balanced with the centralization of Vatican power, the damage done to the church by his promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*, and his insistence on obedience to ecclesial authority. It will take more time, we believe, for the church to understand whether his papacy advanced the Gospel agenda in our church and our world. In addition, the church must be able to consider archival records and testimonials that address his personal characteristics and determine if he truly embodies the qualities that deserve to be honored by the bestowal of sainthood.

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We Are Church International (WAC) founded in Rome in 1996, is a global coalition of national church reform groups. It is committed to the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church based on the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the theological spirit developed from it.

The European Network Church on the Move (EN-RE) is a spontaneous convergence of organizations - associations, communities, informal groups and networks - of European Christians who are in majority Catholic, sharing

(1) the vision of a Church prophetic, ecumenical, liberating, supporting, loving, which neither excludes nor discriminates and which follows on the steps of Jesus the liberator

and

(2) the will to work, respecting cultural and religious diversity, for peace, justice, freedom, human rights and democracy, including in the Catholic Church (Cf Declaration of rights and freedoms in the Catholic Church, European Network 1994)

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Pronouns: *She, her, hers*

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