



## **International Movement We Are Church**



### **The INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT WE ARE CHURCH (IMWAC) critically reflects on the canonization of John Paul II**

(Press release 24 April 2014)

“The whole system of canonizations is now questionable and its democratization is essential”, says Dr. Martha Heizer, chair of the International Movement We are Church (IMWAC). “The reform of the canonisation process should now be added to the other reforms of governance, transparency and accountability Pope Francis has started and that are essential if the Catholic Church is to become the ‘Light of the World’.”

IMWAC believes the process of canonisation needs to be democratised and become less a politicised instrument of Vatican policy. The canonisation of both Popes, with most of the rest of recently deceased Popes already on the canonisation ladder, glorifies the absolute nature and infallibility of the Papacy at the expense of the rest of the People of God.

The Church has a tradition of celebrating the lives of Christian people who have lived lives of outstanding virtue and of martyrdom by adding them publicly to the calendar of the Saints. However there has been a disproportionate emphasis in this tradition in the canonisation of catholic clergy and nuns.

We Are Church recalls from the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) the universal call to holiness of all the People of God as proclaimed in Lumen Gentium: “each in her /his own way is called by the Lord to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect” (Lumen Gentium, Chapter 11).



### Reservations about the hasty canonisation

While we praise and rejoice in the human and holy lives of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II, the undue haste in the canonisation of the latter is a cause of concern. IMWAC believes that the reforms of Vatican 2 were almost abandoned in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II (see the annexed IMWAC statement of 16.1.2011).

The Apostolic Constitution “Divinus Perfectionis Magister” of 25 January 1983 by Pope John Paul II introduced changes to the canonisation process which reduced the traditional time frame from fifty to five years or less between the death of a person and her/ his nomination for Sainthood whilst it also abolished the ‘Devil’s Advocate’. Both radical changes resulted not only in the increase of canonisations but also less attention being given to contra-indications against a person being speedily canonised. These changes allowed Pope John Paul II to be canonized in record time with no Devil’s Advocate to argue against his inaction against clerical sex abuse and his public support for the sex abuser Fr. Maciel, founder of the Legionaires of Christ.

Does it mean that once a cleric is elected Pope that sainthood becomes a corollary of the role or is it the case that only saints are elected Popes? This situation is against the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

Moreover, we must continue to examine the relationship between popular piety and the radical Gospel message of Jesus. The glittering pomp and glory of the medieval Catholic Church will again appear in St Peter’s Square next Sunday and will be in contradiction to the lives of the majority of the people of God who live in poverty, marginalization and rejection. This Church of the poor is espoused by Pope Francis and we offer him our support as he attempts to reform this Church of pomp into one of solidarity with the poor, a church that will reflect the reign of God where the last shall be first.

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