News
Spirituality

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Pope Francis advanced the sainthood causes of three men and two women, including an Italian nun who was brutally murdered by three teenage girls who claimed it had been a satanic sacrifice.

The pope signed the decrees June 19 during a meeting with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. The Vatican published the decrees the same day.

The pope recognized the martyrdom of Sr. Maria Laura Mainetti, a 60-year-old member of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross, who had been killed "in hatred of the faith" when she was murdered June 6, 2000, the sixth day of the sixth month. The three girls had planned to stab her six times each to indicate the biblical "number of the beast."

Born near Milan in 1939, Sr. Mainetti had dedicated her life to helping those excluded by society, particularly drug addicts, juvenile delinquents, the poor and sex workers. Her killers had known Sr. Mainetti from catechism class when they were younger.

When they ambushed and attacked her, she prayed for the girls, asking that God forgive them. The young women were found guilty of murder with reduced sentences because the court determined they were partially insane at the time of the crime.

Except in the case of candidates officially recognized as martyrs, the Catholic Church usually requires a miracle attributed to a candidate's intercession as a condition for beatification. Even for martyrs, a second miracle is required for canonization.

Among the other decrees signed June 19, the pope recognized the miracle needed for the beatification of Jose Gregorio Hernandez Cisneros, a Venezuelan doctor born in 1864. He was a Third Order Franciscan and became known as "the doctor of the poor." He was killed in an accident in 1919 on his way to helping a patient.

The pope also signed decrees recognizing the miracle needed for the beatifications of:

— Bishop Mamerto Esquiu of Cordoba, Argentina. He was born in 1826 and died in 1883.

— Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, founder of the Salvatorians, which includes the men's Society of the Divine Savior and the women's Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior. Born Johann Baptist Jordan in 1848 in Germany, he also founded the Catholic Teaching Society, in which members would defend and proclaim the faith. He died in 1918 in Switzerland.

— Francis also signed a decree recognizing the heroic virtues of Sr. Speranza Elizondo Garcia, also known as Sr. Gloria Maria of Jesus. Born in Durango, Mexico, in 1908, she was elected the superior general of the Congregation of Missionary Catechists of the Poor in 1961 and died in 1966 in Monterrey.

Even though Pope Francis has continued to issue decrees clearing the way for the beatification of sainthood candidates, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, beatification ceremonies that had been scheduled for May, June and September, have been postponed.

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