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# NEWS

## Popes John XXIII and John Paul II become saints in canonisation at Vatican

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**Photo:** Pilgrims began arriving in St Peter's Square days before the canonisation ceremony. (Reuters: Max Rossi)

**Map:** Holy See (Vatican City State)

Popes John XXIII and John Paul II have been made saints in a historic double canonisation ceremony at Vatican City attended by up to 1 million faithful.

Pope Francis read the formal proclamation at the canonisation mass, which was also attended by former Pope Benedict XVI, who resigned last year.

"We declare and define blessed John XXIII and John Paul II to be saints and we enrol them among the saints, decreeing that they are to be venerated as such by the whole church," Francis said in his formal proclamation in Latin.

Relics of each man - a container of blood from John Paul II and skin from John XXIII - were placed near the altar.

The historic event was billed by Italian media as "four popes Sunday" and is the first time that a living pope and a surviving former pope co-celebrated a mass.

#### **Video: The life and times of Pope John XXIII**

The crowd was so large it stretched back along all of Via della Conciliazione, the half kilometre-long, broad boulevard that starts at the Tiber River. Even its bridges were packed with faithful.

The overwhelming majority in the crowd were Poles who had travelled from their home country and immigrant communities as far afield as Chicago and Sydney to watch their most famous native son, John Paul, become a saint.

Hundreds of red and white Polish flags filled the square and the streets surrounding the Vatican, which were strewn with sleeping bags, backpacks and folding chairs.

It was one of the biggest crowds since John Paul II's beatification in 2011.

Cheers and applause rang out across St Peter's Square after the historic double canonisation as many in the crowd fixed their gaze on huge tapestries of the two popes on the facade of the basilica behind Francis.

John XXIII, who reigned from 1958 to 1963 and created the modernising Second Vatican Council, and John Paul II, the Pole who reigned for nearly 27 years, played leading roles on the world stage.

But while both were widely revered, there has also been criticism that John Paul II, who only died nine years ago, has been canonised too quickly.

#### **Video: The life and times of Pope John Paul II (ABC News)**

Groups representing victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests also say he did not do enough to root out a scandal that emerged towards the end of his pontificate and which has hung over the church ever since.

The controversy did nothing to put off the rivers of Catholic faithful.

"It is a great joy, an immense joy, because there is happiness everywhere and this is not an empty happiness," said Guillemette Chevalier, from France.

"Here we have found the joy of being together in the church around two extraordinary men ... who give meaning to our lives. It is true happiness."

Families and other pilgrims had waited for more than 12 hours along the main street leading to the Vatican before police opened up the square at 5:30am.

Some people said they had managed to sleep on their feet because the crowd was so thick.

The mass, which began under a light rain, was also attended by former Pope Benedict, who last year became the first pontiff in six centuries to step down.

Benedict walked with a cane and was dressed in white vestments.

About 850 cardinals and bishops were celebrating the mass with the Pope, and 700 priests were on hand to distribute communion to the huge crowd.



**Photo:** Pope Francis swings incense during the canonisation ceremony in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. (Reuters: Max Rossi)

**AFP/Reuters**

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