News



Pope Francis celebrates the canonization Mass of Sts. Artemide Zatti and Giovanni Battista Scalabrini at the Vatican in this file photo from Oct. 9, 2022. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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As doctors were preparing to certify the brain death of a Brazilian man in 2010, members of a local Catholic charismatic prayer group began to pray for a miracle.

Pope Francis recognized the healing of the man, "Paulo G.," in Uberlandia, Brazil, as the miracle needed for the canonization of Blessed Elena Guerra, an Italian nun who founded the Oblates of the Holy Spirit.

The pope signed the decree April 13, but the Vatican has not announced a date for the canonization of the nun who, in 1959, was the first person beatified by St. John XXIII.

The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints posts brief biographies and descriptions of recognized miracles on its website. For beatification, the Vatican requires either proof that the candidate was a martyr or a miracle attributed to the candidate's intercession with God. Another miracle is required for canonization.

Elena Guerra was born in Lucca, Italy, in 1835 and, according to the dicastery website, she developed "a very special devotion to the Holy Spirit" after receiving the sacrament of confirmation at the age of 8. In 1882, she founded the community that would become the Oblates of the Holy Spirit.

Later, "saddened to find that most Christians neglected devotion to the Paraclete," the website said, she wrote a pamphlet called "Pious Union of Prayers to the Holy Spirit" to spread devotion to the Spirit, especially in the days leading up to Pentecost.

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As for the miracle, the dicastery said that Paulo was trimming a tree April 5, 2010, when he fell close to 20 feet, suffering a severe head injury. Five days after undergoing a craniotomy and decompression, a CT scan indicated a worsening of his condition, and doctors began the process to certify brain death. For 10 days

members of a charismatic prayer group prayed to Blessed Guerra to intercede with God for the man's healing, and he began responding.

Less than six weeks after the accident, he was released from the hospital. His checkups, first performed monthly and then annually, continued to show he was in good health and suffered no "alterations" from the trauma, the dicastery said.

Francis also recognized the martyrdom of a priest and a layman killed in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, clearing the way for their beatification. Father Gaetano Clausellas Ballvé spent 20 years caring for residents in a home for the elderly. Antonio Tort Reixachs was married and the father of 11 children; he was arrested and shot for hiding priests and religious in his home.