

Jared Nelson

Professor Restrepo-Mesa

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The Politics of Catholic Canonization: Making a Saint in *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*

In our world today, there are approximately 1.3 billion Catholics. But how strong are the beliefs of every Catholic person? According to Miguel de Unamuno, one of the most renowned Spanish writers and philosophers of the 20th century, the answer to this problem is not as easy as we think. The novel, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* explores the goals of some saints on earth. In the narrator's writings, Don Manuel's stories show why he deserves to be a saint. Don Manuel's work in his village is very impressive and even converted a radically obstinate atheist to believing in God. The narrator and almost all the citizens were helped by Don Manuel, but his life was not completely what it seemed. It is revealed near the end of the novel that Don Manuel did not believe in God or an afterlife. The reason for this saint's actions were to give people hope in a mortal life. Therefore, Don Manuel was a good man and led his community to become faithful followers of Christ. However, he was not a perfect Christian, and he had many fundamental doubts about his religion.

In *Making Saints*, Kenneth L. Woodward emphasizes the belief in God. The canonization of saints in Catholicism is an extensive process, as every step demands meticulous research, beginning with the bishop extending to the papal office. Through this process, the Church

determines whether a person meets every criteria of sainthood, including strong faith in Jesus Christ. He also displays the criteria when he writes: “Here the proofs are organized as variations on two themes: love of God as identification with Christ in his sacrificial passion and death, and love of others as inspired by the Incarnation of God as the child Jesus.” This quote raises the question: Who has the right to be acknowledged as a saint by the Catholic Church, keeping account of personal beliefs such as those seen in Don Manuel? Through the interpretation of *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, it is clear Miguel de Unamuno prioritizes selfless works and transformative action over concrete faith in God; thus, he claims anyone should have the ability to be canonized, regardless of their ideologies.

References

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