

## **Pope Names Fourteen New Saints Resource.**

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Pope Francis has created a new group of saints, canonising 14 individuals including the "martyrs of Damascus", killed in Syria during the Ottoman Empire and symbols of Christian persecution.

Francis presided over the canonisation ceremony in Saint Peter's Square in the presence of thousands of Catholic faithful from around the world.

"We enrol them among the saints, decreeing that they are to be venerated as such by the whole Church," he proclaimed, after reciting each name.

Canonisation is the final step towards sainthood in the Catholic Church, following beatification.

Three conditions are required, most crucially that the individual has performed at least two miracles. He or she must be deceased for at least five years and have led an exemplary Christian life.

Among the group are 11 individuals known as the "martyrs of Damascus", who have become saints some 160 years after their death.

In May, Pope Francis announced he would also canonise Italian teenager Carlos Acutis

The eight Franciscan friars and three lay Maronites, all siblings from a monastery, were assassinated by Druze militants in July 1860 in the Syrian capital, then under Ottoman rule.

They were beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1926.

Damascus is home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, but its Christian population has dwindled to only about 2% today, according to the Vatican.

Many citizens, Christian and otherwise, have left the city since the start of Syria's civil war in 2011.

The martyrdom of the Damascus group canonised "is not very different from the situation of many Christians in the Middle East today", wrote Vatican News, the official news portal of the Vatican.

The other three individuals, who died early in the 20th century, founded religious communities.

They are Italian missionary Giuseppe Allamano, Italian nun Elena Guerra and the Canadian Marie-Leonie Paradis.

In May, Pope Francis announced he would canonise Italian teenager Carlos Acutis.

The London-born adolescent spent his life spreading his faith online, earning the moniker "God's Influencer", before dying from leukaemia in 2006.

The date of that canonisation has not yet been set but it could take place in 2025, the Church's Jubilee year, when more than 30 million pilgrims are expected to descend on Rome.