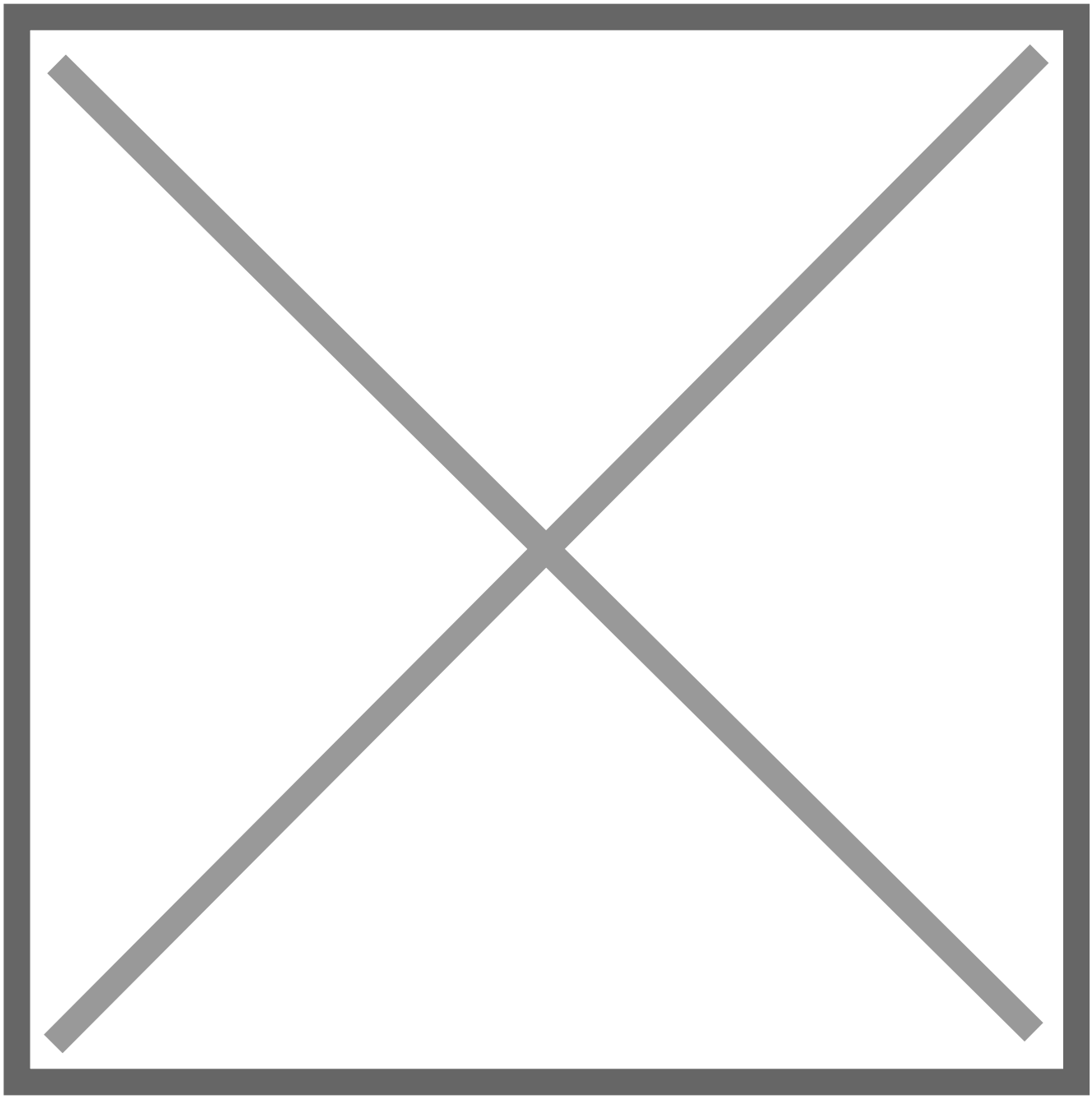
Spirituality
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Argentine Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, former head of the Vatican congregation for religious and council for the laity, is pictured in a photo from 1998, the year he died. (CNS photo/Michael Edrington)

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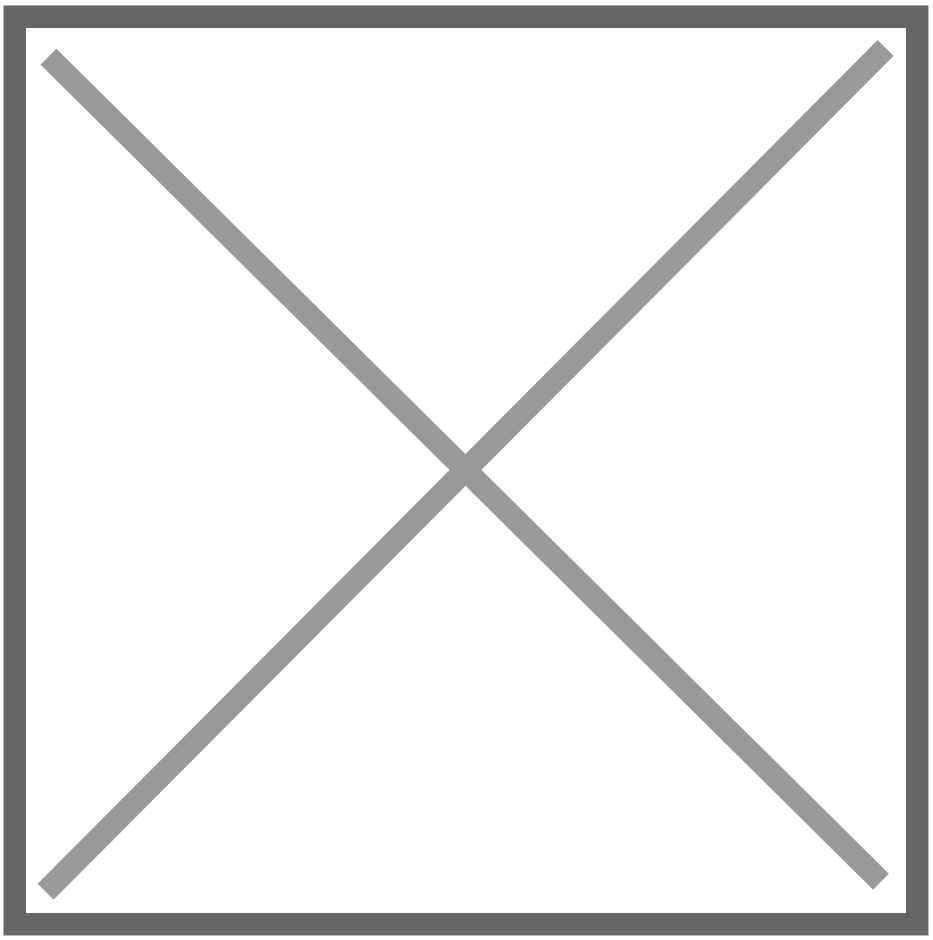
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Vatican City — February 18, 2022
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Pope Francis advanced the sainthood cause of Argentine Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, the prelate who organized and oversaw the first six international celebrations of World Youth Day.

The pope also approved a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Capuchin Poor Clare Sister Maria Costanza Panas of the Italian monastery of Fabriano. She was born Jan. 5, 1896, and died May 28, 1963.



Argentine Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, former head of the Vatican congregation for religious and council for the laity, is pictured in a photo from 1998, the year he died. (CNS photo/Michael Edrington)

In addition to recognizing the miracle that clears the way for her beatification, the pope approved decrees recognizing that four candidates for sainthood heroically lived the Christian virtues; the decrees were signed during an audience Feb. 18 with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes.

The four candidates, who are now "venerable," included Pironio, who had served in numerous offices in the Roman Curia from 1975 until his retirement in 1996.

St. Paul VI called him to Rome as pro-prefect of the Vatican congregation for religious. When St. John Paul II named him to head the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 1984, the late pope instituted the annual celebration of World Youth Day, including huge international gatherings presided over by the pope every two years and organized by the laity council.

Pironio welcomed thousands of young people to the first gathering in Rome in 1985 and continued to coordinate the mega-events later held in Buenos Aires; Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Czestochowa, Poland; Denver; and Manila, Philippines.

He was born in the city of Nueve de Julio in Argentina Dec. 3, 1920, the last of 22 children born of parents who had emigrated from Friuli, Italy. He died in Rome Feb. 5, 1998.

The other candidates the pope declared "venerable" are:

- Italian Discalced Carmelite Brother Aldo Brienza (1922-1989), who lived the last 50 years of his life with osteomyelitis, a painful and debilitating bone infection, and whose bedside was a place "of pilgrimage" for the faithful.
- Brazilian Sister Maria da Conceição Santos of the Congregation of the Auxiliary Sisters of Our Lady of Pity (1907-1981), who was a nurse helping families and individuals in need.
- Spanish Sister Juana Méndez Romero (1937-1990), who was a member of the Religious Workers of the Heart of Jesus and worked as a catechist despite a life of illness and suffering.

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