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A black and white photo of a white man in a clerical collar

This is the image of Fr. Giuseppe Beotti being used by the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio, Italy, to publicize the sainthood cause of the priest who was arrested and shot by the Nazis in 1944 for helping to rescue and hide Jews. Pope Francis formally recognized his martyrdom May 20, 2023, clearing the way for his beatification. (CNS photo/Courtesy of the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio)

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Pope Francis formally recognized the martyrdom of an Italian priest shot by Nazi soldiers after they discovered he was helping his parishioners hide about 100 Jews.

The martyrdom of Fr. Giuseppe Beotti, who was arrested and shot July 20, 1944, in Sidolo in northern Italy, was one of nine decrees in sainthood causes Francis signed May 20.

The help Beotti "offered to many Jewish people persecuted by the Nazi-Fascists played a decisive role" in his death, according to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

"To give them refuge, the priest had mobilized all the parishioners" and helped them hide and feed about 100 Jews, the dicastery said. "The Germans searched his house, but found nothing," but they continued to hold him while they gathered information about his activities.

The recognition of his martyrdom clears the way for his beatification.

The eight other decrees signed by the pope involved the recognition that the candidates heroically lived the Christian virtues. A miracle attributed to the candidate's intercession would be needed for beatification.

The eight are:

-- Fr. Simon Mpeke, known as Baba Simon, a missionary and promoter of interreligious dialogue in Cameroon. He was born "around 1906," according to the dicastery, and died Aug. 13, 1975.

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-- Spanish Piarist Fr. Pedro Díez Gil, a famed teacher and spiritual guide, who was born April 14, 1913, and died Dec. 14, 1983.

-- Italian Capuchin Sr. Edda Roda, who led missions throughout Italy. During one of her travels, probably in 1994, the dicastery said, she was beaten and raped by three men but told no one except her cousin. A year later, she was diagnosed with uterine cancer and died in 1996 at the age of 55.

-- Discalced Carmelite Sr. Maria Luiza Rezende Marques, who was born Dec. 24, 1915, in Borda da Mata, Brazil, and died Nov. 14, 2005, was a popular spiritual director and, according to the dicastery, worked hard to ensure the monasteries she led lived the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.

-- Arnaldo Canepa, a lay catechist in Rome and founder of the Federation of Rome Oratories, places where teens and young adults could play, learn and pray. He was born Sept. 24, 1882, and died Nov. 2, 1966.

-- Guido Vidal Schäffer, a physician and seminarian born in Brazil May 22, 1974; he was known as an avid surfer and surf instructor who always led his students in prayer before getting in the water. He died in a surfing accident in Rio de Janeiro

May 1, 2009, shortly before his 35th birthday.

-- Maria Cristina Ogier, who was born in Florence, Italy, March 9, 1955. She suffered from a brain tumor as a child and was not well for much of her life. In the midst of Italy's debate to legalize abortion, she convinced her father, an obstetrician, to get involved; he founded a center that inspired the national pro-life movement. His daughter died in Rome at the age of 18.

-- Lorena D'Alessandro, born in Rome Nov. 20, 1964, had bone cancer that led to her having her left leg amputated at the age of 12. She was active in her parish, helping to prepare children for their first Communion. She died in 1981, at the age of 16, from cancer that had metastasized in her lung.