

Cause for Sainthood

To date we have focused our attention on Father Kapaun's activity as an army chaplain. His leadership while serving as a chaplain is legendary. Those who served with him speak of the impact he had on their spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. Because of their witness our nation has recognized him as a genuine American hero. As proof Father Kapaun was awarded a Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor among many other awards. Now, we in Kansas, seek to honor him in our state capitol with a memorial. Since we kicked off our fundraising campaign for the Kapaun Memorial nine months ago, we are 52% of the way to our fundraising goal. By the 2026 State Convention I would love to be at 75% of our \$250,000 goal. We are making remarkable progress, and I thank you, but we still have work to do.

However, with this article I wish to shift gears and focus on Father Kapaun's cause for sainthood. As a reminder, there are four steps required for sainthood.

- **1. Servant of God (Initiation):** After a minimum five-year waiting period, a local bishop investigates the candidate's life, writings, and reputation for holiness. If a "cause" is opened, the person receives the title "Servant of God".
- **2. Venerable (Heroic Virtue):** The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome reviews the evidence, often focusing on a *Positio* (a summary of the life). If the Pope declares the person lived a life of "heroic virtue," they are declared "Venerable"
- **3. Blessed (Beatification):** To be declared "Blessed," one miracle attributed to the candidate's intercession must be verified by independent experts and approved by the Pope.
 - *Note:* For martyrs, the miracle requirement for beatification is waived.
- **4. Saint (Canonization):** A second, distinct miracle is generally required after beatification to move from "Blessed" to "Saint". Once this is confirmed, the Pope formally canonizes the individual, allowing for public veneration throughout the universal Church.

Father Kapaun reached the first step in 1993 when Pope John Paul II declared him Servant of God. He reached the second step on February 24, 2025, when Pope Francis declared him Venerable. To reach the third step of Blessed requires a miracle. With the declaration

as Venerable it opens the door for review of the alleged miracle needed to advance his cause to Blessed. There have been multiple alleged miracles attributed to Father Kapaun. The one submitted for review by the Dicastery for Saints in Rome is the story of Chase Kear. Chase, a pole-vaulter for Hutchinson Community College fractured his skull while performing at the Hutchinson Night Relays.

Chase's vault went terribly wrong and ended with him missing the landing mat, fracturing his skull from ear to ear and resulting in severe bleeding of his brain. Doctors didn't give Chase much hope of recovering from his injury. They shared with the family that Chase would likely not survive the surgery needed to repair his fractured skull or the very real danger from post-surgical infection. Despite the doctor's prognosis Chase's parents, Paul and Paula along with other family and friends never gave up. Instead, they leaned on their strong faith and belief in Father Kapaun's intercession. In faith, against these odds they petitioned Father Kapaun for Chase's recovery. Of course, Chase did survive and walked out of the hospital only a few weeks later. To this day doctors are unable to explain his remarkable recovery.

All medical records of his injury and recovery have been turned over to the Vatican where the investigation into Chase's recovery will continue. These records will be reviewed again by doctors not connected with the original case. Their conclusions may well lead to an approval of this miracle and the advancement of Father Kapaun as Blessed. This process could still take years. There are so many causes for the Dicastery for Saints to review, and they all take time to complete. Father Kapaun's cause is in the queue. We need to be patient as we pray for that glorious day. Add your prayers and petitions to those of Paul and Paula Kear and to all of us who pray for his canonization.

Contribute today at:

2025 Chaplain Kapaun Memorial Committee

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