

Canon

The word canon comes from the Greek word *kanon*, meaning "rule," "measure," or "standard." In the Catholic Church, the word has several important meanings, all referring to something that serves as an authoritative norm or guide.

1. Canon Law

The most common use of the word refers to Canon Law, the official body of laws that governs the life and organization of the Catholic Church.

The Code of Canon Law establishes norms for matters such as:

- The celebration of the sacraments
- The rights and responsibilities of the faithful
- The structure and governance of the Church
- Marriage and annulments
- Parish and diocesan administration

Canon Law exists to help the Church carry out her mission in an orderly and just manner while promoting the spiritual well-being of God's people.

2. The Canon of Scripture

The Canon of Scripture is the official list of books that the Church recognizes as inspired by the Holy Spirit and included in the Bible.

The Catholic canon contains:

- 46 books of the Old Testament
- 27 books of the New Testament

These 73 books are considered the inspired Word of God and are the foundation of Christian faith.

3. The Roman Canon

Within the Mass, the word *Canon* traditionally refers to the Roman Canon, also known today as Eucharistic Prayer I.

It is the oldest Eucharistic Prayer still in regular use in the Roman Catholic Church and has been prayed for many centuries. During this prayer, the priest recalls the saving work of Christ and asks the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

4. Canonization

The word canonization refers to the Church's official declaration that a person is a saint and may be publicly honored throughout the universal Church.

After a careful investigation of the person's life, virtues, and miracles attributed to their intercession, the Pope may canonize the individual. Canonization does not "make" someone a saint; rather, it recognizes that the person is with God in heaven and is a model of Christian holiness.

Summary

Although the word *canon* has several meanings, they all share the same basic idea: a standard or rule that guides the life of the Church.

The term may refer to:

- The laws of the Church (Canon Law)
- The official books of the Bible (Canon of Scripture)
- The oldest Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass (Roman Canon)
- The Church's recognition of a saint (Canonization)