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BBC: “‘Extraordinary’ student could be first Gen Z saint”

This is the headline of a recent BBC News article about Pedro Ballester. His story continues to inspire young people around the world, who recognize their own lives in Pedro's university studies, friendships, and dreams for the future. None of that is extraordinary in itself... except for the way Pedro lived his ordinary life.

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The story of Pedro Ballester, a Manchester student who died at the age of 21, has attracted international attention and was recently covered by BBC News. The Catholic Church is studying his life as part of the canonisation process, which could make him one of the first saints of Gen Z.

Today, many young people see him as someone close to them; not a distant hero, but a friend who shows that it is possible to live with depth, coherence and hope in the midst of an ordinary life and suffering.

That is why his story continues to grow as a simple reminder: holiness is not a thing of the past... nor just for other people.

Pedro Ballester: holiness in ordinary life

Pedro Ballester was studying Chemical Engineering when he was diagnosed with aggressive bone cancer. He died in 2018, but his time at university, in the hospital, and with family and friends left a lasting impression on those who knew him.

His father sums up his life with an expression that has been widely repeated: Pedro lived “ordinary life in an extraordinary way.”

This idea captures the essence of his witness: he did not perform extraordinary feats in the eyes of the world, but he lived with deep faith, constant joy and a great capacity for friendship.

[Read the BBC News article](#)

Offering suffering: the gesture that marked his story

When he became ill with cancer, Pedro did not withdraw into himself. He continued caring for others, making friends, finding meaning in his suffering, and living his faith naturally and joyfully.

Pedro offered his suffering for the Pope and for the Church, and had an encounter with Pope Francis, which he valued not so much for the words they exchanged as for the affectionate way the Holy Father looked at him.

He showed the same capacity for closeness at the cancer hospital in Manchester, where he made friends easily and created community wherever he was. In the hospital, Pedro befriended patients of different faiths and got them to sign a card addressed to Pope Francis.

When he was able to deliver it personally, he told him that he offered his illness “for the Pope and for the Church.” This gesture reflects one of the keys to his spirituality: transforming suffering into an offering full of meaning.

An extraordinary capacity to create community

The news repeatedly highlights his approachable character and his ease in making friends. In the hospital, at university and in his environment, Pedro formed bonds naturally.

A friend described him as a young man who was “very normal and very good,” serious but cheerful, with a deep faith that he shared without imposing it.

This naturalness explains why his funeral drew more than 500 people,

a crowd that surprised his own family.

Growing devotion worldwide

Since his death, devotion to Pedro has grown notably. His grave in Manchester receives visitors and pilgrims, and more than 150 favours have been recorded as attributed to his intercession.

The prayer asking for his help has already been translated into 28 languages, a sign that his witness has crossed borders.

A role model for today's young people

The canonisation cause, promoted by Opus Dei, emphasises that Pedro's life can help young people of his generation to find God and happiness.

His story connects especially with young people because it shows that holiness is not something distant or extraordinary, but a real possibility in the midst of study, friendship, illness and everyday life.

Learn more about Pedro Ballester

- **Documentary (2026):** A Friend in Heaven: devotion to Pedro Ballester around the world
 - Official website
 - **Biographical documentary:** Pedro Ballester: I have never been happier
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en-uk/article/bbc-pedro-ballester-
extraordinary-student-could-be-first-
gen-z-saint/ (03/20/2026)