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Protestant Competition is Good for Saints

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Saints are a major point of disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant faiths. During the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s, the Catholic doctrine of the intercessory power of saints was theologically denied by Martin Luther and John Calvin on the grounds of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ.¹ The Catholic Church's position on saints, particularly as agents for souls in purgatory, created a "soul-prayer industry," whereby indulgences funded a variety of religious activities and institutions. Notable here were chantry foundations, which provided an endowment for the purpose of employing priests to sing masses to benefit the souls of deceased persons.² Protestantism, by contrast, rejected belief in purgatory and the mediating power of saints.

One reason the Catholic Church maintained the cult of saints throughout the centuries is to energize the Catholic membership. The nomination of candidates for sainthood begins in a local context with a cult of worshippers. The variety and specialization of would-be saints are products of the local demand for veneration.³ This process allows changes in regional preferences to be reflected in the choices of individuals nominated for sainthood.

¹Philip Melancthon, a close friend of Martin Luther and a Professor of New Testament at Wittenberg University, drafted a common confession for the Lutheran Lords and Free Territories. Known as the Augsburg Confession, the document was presented to Emperor Charles V on June 25, 1530. Article 21 of the Augsburg Confession states: "Scripture does not teach us to invoke the Saints, or to ask for help from the Saints; for it puts before us Christ as the one mediator, propitiatory, high-priest and intercessor."

²The term "soul-prayer industry" comes from Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York, Viking Press, 2003) p. 557. The Catholic Church teaches the veneration of the Virgin Mary, angels, and saints as part of the doctrine of the communion of saints. These beings, through prayers to them, mediate for the living and the deceased. See "Intercession (Mediation)," *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08070a.htm>, accessed March 25, 2017.

³Mario Ferrero, in "Competition for Sainthood and the Millennial Church," *Kyklos* 55, 3 (2002), pp. 335-360, discusses the flexibility inherent in the process of saint-making. This setup allowed the Church hierarchy to maintain a monopoly over conferring sainthood while adapting to changing local trends.

Our interest in saints began years ago, when we visited Antigua Guatemala, until 1773 the seat of the governor of the Spanish colony of Guatemala, which included almost all of present-day Central America.⁴ We visited the San Francisco Church, where the remains of Hermano Pedro, Guatemala's only saint, are located. Hundreds of people waited a long time to see Pedro's tomb. Once there, people often approached the stately wood and iron casket on their knees, then prayed, placed flowers, and tied wax effigies of body parts for which they were seeking a miracle cure onto the metal grill encircling the tomb. Before leaving, the supplicants knocked on Hermano Pedro's tomb to ensure that he had heard their prayers.

Hermano Pedro was born in 1619 and later left his native Canary Islands to avoid an arranged marriage. He made his way to Guatemala, where he became a member of the Franciscan Order and worked among the ill, lame, prisoners, and orphaned children. In Antigua, he established a hospital and founded a new order, the Bethlehemite Congregation, dedicated to providing healthcare for the indigent. Pope John Paul II beatified Hermano Pedro in 1980 and named him a saint in 2002.

In our visit to Hermano Pedro's tomb, we were struck by the devotion engendered by Central America's first saint. In a country dominated by the growth of Evangelical denominations and neo-Pentecostal megachurches, the level of activity at San Francisco Church surrounding saint Hermano Pedro was an anomaly. We wondered whether the Catholic Church was following a similar strategy in other parts of the world—maintaining a culture of saints through the centuries to energize the Catholic membership. We decided to find out by pursuing a research project on the choices of saints going back to the 16th century.

⁴The city was founded by the Spanish in 1527 and named Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala (Saint James of the Knights of Guatemala). Until 1773, Antigua Guatemala was politically the most important seat of Spanish colonial government between Mexico City and Lima, Peru.

Our analysis particularly emphasizes recent decades to see whether the Catholic Church has found a way to compete effectively against the growing competition from Protestant Evangelicals, especially in Latin America. Organized U.S. Protestant missions began arriving in Latin America in the middle of the nineteenth century, presenting serious competition for the Catholic Church by the end of that century. Our thesis is that this recent expansion by Protestants into formerly monopolistic Catholic territory increases demand for saints, reflecting the Catholic Church's heightened concern over competition from Protestantism. Specifically, our conjecture was that the Church viewed saint-making as a strategic mechanism for invigorating local populations of the faithful and, thereby, discouraging conversions into Protestantism. We think that this competitive response is most intense in places, such as parts of Latin America, that historically have been predominantly Roman Catholic but where the number of Evangelical Protestants has risen to near equality with Catholics.

The Catholic Church's Competitive Response to Evangelicals

After centuries of Italian popes, from 1523 to 1978, the Roman Catholic Church's College of Cardinals has elected three consecutive non-Italians. The appointments of John Paul II from Poland, Benedict XVI from Germany, and Francis I from Argentina are part of the Church's increasingly global orientation. John Paul II, the first non-Italian Pope since Hadrian VI (1522-1523), beatified more individuals than all of his predecessors combined over the previous four centuries (when we look at blessed persons who are non-martyrs).

The rise in international focus applies also to saint-making. The traditional emphasis for centuries on blessed persons from Italy and the rest of Western Europe shifted since the early 1900s to encompass Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, Asia, and Africa. Thus, in

describing John Paul II, Lawrence Cunningham says, “ ... the pope has a predilection for canonizing saints from regions other than the traditional geographical locations of Europe or the Middle East where saints have typically been found. He wants to show—by canonizing people from the Far East, India, Oceania, and so on—that the possibility of sanctity may be found in all places where the Catholic Church has been planted.”⁵

In terms of numbers and based on a person’s residence at death, Italy accounted for 56 percent of new blessed persons from 1590 to 1899, compared to 42 percent from 1900 to 2012. The percentage for other Western Europe stayed fixed at 33 percent, but other regions went up. Latin America went from 6 to 8 percent, Eastern Europe from 4 to 7 percent, North America from 0 to 5 percent, Asia from 1 to 4 percent, and Africa from 0 to 2 percent. This geographical spread means that many countries got their first saint only recently. Aside from Guatemala, countries with first-time saints in the 2000s include Mexico, Brazil, Sudan, Ukraine, Ireland, Malta, India, Australia, and Belarus.

The Vatican’s concern with Protestant competition worldwide has been clear for a long time. In the early 1800s, the Papal Cardinal Secretary of State, Ercole Consalvi, warned Pope Leo XII that Latin America would have been filled with “Methodists, Presbyterians and new Sun worshippers” had the Catholic Church waited for the Spanish Monarch’s permission to fill long-vacated ecclesiastical positions on that continent.⁶ Leo XII, in an encyclical of May 5, 1824, reasserted the anti-Protestant position laid out in the Council of Trent (1545-63) by condemning religious tolerance, freedom of conscience to choose one’s religious beliefs, liberty to join “the

⁵Lawrence S. Cunningham, *A Brief History of Saints*, Oxford, Blackwell Press, 2005, 122.

⁶Frederick Nielsen, *The History of the Papacy in the XIXth Century*, London, John Murray, 1906, 10.

sect that pleases him,” and Protestant Bible societies promoting vernacular translations of Scripture.⁷

In March 1829, Pope Pius VII began his administration with an encyclical that condemned the Protestant Bible societies.⁸ On May 8, 1844, Pope Gregory XVI issued a vehemently worded encyclical attacking the work of Protestant Bible societies and the ecumenical Evangelical Alliance, which Protestants had recently formed in England. The Pope’s view was that these Protestant organizations were seeking to undermine the dominant position of the Catholic Church by advocating religious tolerance, a system that favored Protestant entry.⁹ More recently, but in the same tradition, Pope John Paul II referred vividly in 1992 to Evangelical groups in Latin America as “rapacious wolves” who were “luring Latin American Catholics away from the Church of Rome.”¹⁰ To dramatize his point, he added, “Huge sums of money were being spent on evangelical proselytising campaigns which were aimed specifically at Catholics.” The Catholic Church, accustomed to a monopolist position in Latin America with low investment in human and financial resources, now finds itself in the position of competing with Protestant groups for adherents.

The Process of Becoming a Saint

Our main study applies to regular saints, known as confessors—individuals who lived a life of virtue and may have suffered persecution of some form for their faith but were not put to death. Thus, we do not consider martyrs, who were killed in the cause of the Church and were often chosen in large groups. For example, shortly after becoming pope in 2013, Francis I

⁷Papal Bull (*Bullarium Romanum*) XVI to the Irish clergy of Pope Leo XII, May 3, 1824, cited in Charles Elliott, *Delineation of Roman Catholicism*, v. 1, New York, George Lane, 1841, 45-66.

⁸Papal Bull (*Bullarium Romanum*) XVIII, cited in Frederick Nielsen, op. cit., 43-44.

⁹Op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁰Timothy Elphick, “Pope Attacks ‘Rapacious’ Sects,” *Catholic Herald*, October 23, 1992.

canonized the 813 martyrs of Otranto, who were executed in 1480 following an Ottoman siege of their southern Italian city.

An important feature of sainthood is that it entails an often lengthy two-stage process: first, designation as a blessed person (beatification) and, second, promotion to the status of a saint (canonization). Our main data on persons named as beatifieds and saints covers the period since 1588, when official Vatican records began.¹¹ Less complete information is available since 1234, after which designation as a saint formally required papal approval and could not reflect merely local popularity.

Here is a brief history of the selection procedures. Beatification requires the posthumous performance of a miracle—one since John Paul II’s 1983 reforms, two or more before that. Beatification is almost always required for the second stage, canonization, which requires another, post-beatification miracle (two additional miracles before the 1983 reforms). In contrast to confessors, martyrs need no miracles to become blessed persons.

The first recognized papal canonization occurred in 993 when Pope John XV canonized Ulric of Augsburg a mere 20 years after Ulric’s death. In contrast, the average time between death and canonization since 1590 has been almost 200 years. The process of canonization gradually became formalized up to the 12th century. In 1234, Pope Gregory IX declared the exclusive authority of the Holy See to bestow the title of “saint.” However, this decree did not deter local bishops from conferring beatifications, thereby creating a clear distinction between “saint” and “beatified.”

Pope Sixtus V’s creation of the Congregation of Rites in 1588 formalized the saint-making process and concentrated authority within the Holy See. The Congregation was assigned

¹¹The data are mostly from Catholic Church, *Congregatione pro Causis Sanctorum*, 1999. Information for recent years comes from the Vatican website and other sources.

authority over canonization, particularly with regard to verifying miracles and virtues. For the first time the process included medical examiners, who were charged with verifying that a person had existed (by examining the remains) and with confirming the posthumous miracles (for example, by examining the persons who claimed to be cured of disease). Sixtus V also purged the Calendar of Saints of persons with questionable credentials.

An important development in 1917 was the collection of canonical materials into a single authoritative reference known as the Pio-Benedictine code (named for Pope Pius X, 1903-1914, and Pope Benedict XV, 1914-1922). For our purposes, the Code is important because it laid out clearly the rules for beatification and canonization. Canon 1999 stipulates that only the pope has the authority to canonize, that The Congregation of Rites is charged with overseeing the process, and that local ecclesiastical authorities must follow canon law. Canons 2038 and 2039 stipulate that the process of naming blessed persons should typically be initiated by local Catholic authorities, and Canon 2101 reaffirms the long-held condition that 50 years must elapse after a person's death before a petition could be made.

In 1969, Pope Paul VI created the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which replaced the Congregation of Rites. John Paul II decentralized the process in 1983, while strengthening the Vatican's ability to review cases by creating the College of Relators. A relator is a high-ranking member of the Roman Curia who supervises the preparation of materials presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. John Paul II also eliminated the "Devil's Advocate," who had for centuries assumed the role of posing objections to proposed blessed persons.

In the current structure, the bishop and other church authorities from the location of a candidate's death oversee the collection of evidentiary materials in the first phase of the beatification process. After a five-year waiting period following the death of the candidate, a

formal petition can be submitted to Rome to open the case for beatification. (The 50-year waiting period for beatification has been dropped.) Upon Rome’s approval, the local diocese appoints a postulator, who gathers evidentiary materials—writings by the candidate, testimonials from eyewitnesses, and second-hand accounts. The body of the candidate is exhumed and examined to ensure that the person existed. When the collection of evidence is complete, the report is sent to Rome to a relator, who reviews the report and appoints a medical expert to conduct an independent inquiry into the claimed miracles. The relator oversees the report, which is submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, consisting of 25 cardinals and bishops. If the candidate is deemed by the Congregation to have lived a virtuous life according to Catholic theology, the candidate receives the title “venerable,” the current status of Pope Pius XII. To be beatified, the candidate must be verified to have performed a miracle. This verification earns the candidate the title “blessed” as a beatified, the status accorded to John Paul II in 2011. A second post-beatification miracle must be performed and verified before the candidate can be canonized as a saint. This process was completed for John Paul II and Pope John XXIII in April 2014.

Testing Our Hypotheses

Our study attempts to isolate the principal determinants of numbers of persons beatified and canonized by each of the 38 popes with terms begun since 1590 and completed by 2013; that is, through the term of Benedict XVI. Therefore, our statistical analysis does not include the ongoing term of Francis I. We focused on choices across seven world regions: Italy, other Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, Asia, and Africa.¹²

¹²Details are in our paper, “Saints Marching In, 1590-2012,” *Economica*, July 2016, 385-415.

Table 1 gives basic facts since 1590 about popes and their choices of blessed persons. The lengths of popes' terms varied from a few weeks (Urban VII in 1590 and John Paul I in 1978) to over 25 years (Pius IX, 1846-1878; John Paul II, 1978-2005; and Leo XIII, 1878-1903).

Figure 1 shows the regional patterns in choices of beatifieds (with a similar pattern applying to persons canonized). The graph makes clear the long-term dominance of Italy and other Western Europe but also shows the recent rise in representation for Latin America, Eastern Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa.

We have some information on socio-economic characteristics of blessed persons. One trend is that the early emphasis on males (77 percent of those chosen as beatifieds from 1590 to 1899) has shifted to gender equality (males were 51 percent from 1900 to 2012). The percentage with some formal education rose from 75 percent for 1590-1899 to 85 percent for 1900-2012. The percentage coming from urban areas was roughly stable—78 percent for 1590-1899 and 74 percent for 1900-2012.

Another trend is an increase in the share of beatified persons with lay status—from 35 percent for 1590-1899 to 48 percent for 1900-2012. This shift, which began by the early 20th century, relates to the dramatic decline since the mid-1960s in men and women joining religious orders and in men becoming candidates for the priesthood. Some scholars explain this decline as a response to Vatican II (1962-65), which placed lay religious dedication on the same level as religious vocation.¹³ However, the shift toward more blessed persons with lay status occurred well before Vatican II.

The total number of beatified persons (non-martyrs) selected from 1590 to 2012 was 670 (see Table 1). A remarkable fact is that John Paul II picked 319 of these, while Benedict XVI

¹³Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1994; Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, "Catholic Religious Vocations: Decline and Revival," *Review of Religious Research*, December 2000, 125-145.

picked 92—therefore, the two immediate predecessors to Francis I accounted for 61 percent of all the beatifieds chosen from 1590 to 2012. For saints, 286 were chosen over this period, with 122 or 43 percent coming from these two recent popes.

Francis I has continued his recent predecessors' inclination to beatify persons at high rates—Francis I named 35 from 2013 to 2016 (with another 8 already announced for 2017). However, the rate at which he has been beatifying—9.2 persons per year from 2013 to 2016—is below that of John Paul II (12.0 per year) and Benedict XVI (11.7 per year).

Our research examined in detail the patterns shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. This analysis took account of the Catholic population of each region at each date, along with other variables, including the length of a pope's term and his age when entering office. Twice as many Catholics in a region leads, other things the same, to roughly twice as many beatifieds chosen. Similarly, a doubling of a pope's term implies roughly twice as many blessed persons chosen. Older popes tend to choose blessed persons more rapidly—perhaps to be confident of picking a desired number before dying.

One strong pattern is the discrimination in choices of blessed persons in favor of Italy, followed by other Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the other regions (where we classified persons in terms of residence at death). Other things the same, the number of blessed persons from Italy was multiplied by 4 compared with other Western Europe, 8 with Eastern Europe, 19 with North America, 33 with Latin America, 37 with Asia, and 50 with Africa. Therefore, an ending of geographical discrimination would require a truly momentous shift in the naming of blessed persons away from Europe and toward the rest of the world.

We noted before the unprecedented pace of beatification and canonization under John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Our research found that John Paul II was, indeed, extraordinary in

terms of persons beatified and canonized. Other things the same (including Catholic populations in each region), he chose seven times as many beatified persons and four times as many canonized persons, compared with the actions of previous popes. These findings accord with the concerns expressed by Lawrence Cunningham, “The prodigal use of this process [making saints] has been the subject of some wonder and criticism, both in Rome and in other parts of the church. The criticism comes mainly from those (including some in the Roman curia) who think both that the process is too hasty and that the multiplication of new saints cheapens the whole notion of those who are in the canon of the saints.”¹⁴

In contrast, we found that Benedict XVI was less of an outlier for beatified persons (choosing four times as many compared with popes prior to John Paul II) and within the norm for canonizations. The 42 persons canonized during Benedict XVI’s papacy was high in historical perspective mainly because of the extraordinary rise in the number of candidates—persons already beatified—as a result of the large number of blessed persons selected by John Paul II. In other words, Benedict XVI was dealing with the exceptional build-up of candidates created by his predecessor, John Paul II.

As shown in Table 1, Francis I had even more candidates waiting in the queue at the start of his term (399) than did Benedict XVI (344). This consideration likely explains why Francis I has already canonized 33 persons from 2013 to 2016. The large backlog of beatified candidates needs to be reduced! As a result, Francis I’s rate of canonization—8.7 per year—is well above that of Benedict XVI (5.3) or John Paul II (3.0).

Our main economic hypothesis concerns the Catholic Church’s use of saint-making as a device to compete with Protestants. To check this idea, we looked at effects on beatifications and canonizations from the extent of competition between Catholics and Protestants. We

¹⁴Lawrence S. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, 121-122.

constructed a measure of this competition for each country and date. Our measure is highest when adherence rates to the two religions are similar and when adherence to other religions (Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) is minor. Gauged this way, Latin America and Africa are the regions where Catholic-Protestant competition expanded sharply in the 20th century because of the dramatic growth of Evangelicals.

Our analysis verifies that heightened competition between Catholics and Protestants induces popes to name more blessed persons. This effect was particularly important since the early 1900s and especially in Latin America. This influence was important enough to raise the number chosen as beatifieds by as much as 50 percent in some cases. Our previously mentioned Hermano Pedro of Antigua, Guatemala was one of the blessed persons likely chosen with an eye on competition with Protestantism.

We mentioned that concerns with inroads from Evangelical competition particularly explain the spread of saint-making across the globe, notably toward Latin America, the world region with the largest number of Catholics. Francis I, thus far, has continued this geographical trend. From 2013 to 2017, his pattern for the 43 beatifieds chosen was 49% Italy, 16% other Western Europe, 7% Eastern Europe, 14% Latin America, 5% North America, 7% Asia, and 2% Africa. Notable here are the decline in other Western Europe (which was 33% from 1900 to 2012) and the rises for Latin America (8% from 1900 to 2012) and Asia (4% from 1900 to 2012). For Latin America, the share had already risen to 10% under John Paul II and 11% under Benedict XVI. Thus, Francis I's share of 14% is further indication of the Catholic Church's desire to stave off further losses to Protestant faiths in the Latin American countries.

In principle, the Catholic Church could also be using saint-making to compete against religions other than Protestantism. We looked particularly at the Orthodox Church, which

separated from Catholicism in the Great Schism of 1054, long before the Reformation of 1517. Our analysis found no effect on saint-making from Catholic-Orthodox competition. A likely explanation is that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches came to an understanding long ago not to interfere with the relationship of each church to its own members. In addition, it is hard to isolate effects from Catholic-Orthodox competition because, in contrast to Catholic-Protestant, there is little within-country overlap between Catholic and Orthodox populations—only in Eastern Europe to a significant extent.

In addition to competing with other religions, the Catholic Church became concerned in the 20th century with the rise of no religion, an aspect of secularization. In this case, raising enthusiasm among Catholics—perhaps through saint-making—might stave off some of the departures to no religion (apostasy). That is, we can think of the Catholic Church as competing on two sides; one with Protestantism (or other religions) and the other with secularization.

To measure competition with no religion, we started by examining the fraction of each country's population classified as no religion (including atheists and agnostics). Many countries experienced sharp growth in this category during the 20th century; for example, the fraction with no religion in Italy rose from 0.2 percent in 1900 to 16.5 percent in 2010, while that in Germany increased from 0.3 percent to 23.2 percent. We multiplied these increases in no-religion fractions by the Catholic share of the population in 1900 (99.7 percent for Italy, 35.6 percent for Germany). The resulting numbers gauge competition with secularization in the sense of measuring the fraction of the population that might have been persuadable (perhaps through saint-making) to remain in or revert to the Catholic faith. A key finding is that this indicator of competition with secularization rose mainly in the 20th century and especially in Western and Eastern Europe.

Our analysis finds that greater competition with secularization tends to raise saint-making. This effect was particularly important during the 20th century and especially in Western Europe. That is, we find that the shift of saint-making away from Western Europe would have been even more pronounced if not for the Catholic Church's concern with Western Europeans increasingly opting for no religion.

An interesting case not captured by our detailed analysis is the United Kingdom. Because the Catholic share of the U.K. population has not been high (6.3 percent in 1900 and 9.0 percent in 2010), our measures of Catholic competition with Protestantism or no religion have also not been high. The dominant adherence in the United Kingdom is to the Anglican Church (Church of England), which derives from King Henry VIII's ouster of the Catholic Church in 1534. In many theological respects, the Anglican Church remains similar to the Catholic Church. This closeness may explain the beatification of the (Catholic) English Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) by Benedict XVI in 2010. A year before Newman's beatification, Benedict XVI issued an invitation to discontented Church of England members and clergy to join the Catholic Church. The Vatican set up a structure whereby Anglicans, including married priests, could practice Catholicism while maintaining much of their own identity and liturgy. Moreover, Newman's beatification occurred at a time of a potentially serious schism in the Anglican Church over the ordination of female and homosexual priests. Thus, this particular beatification may reflect a special form of competition—the Catholic Church seeking converts from Anglicanism.

Our sample (starting in 1588) contains part of the period of religious warfare in Western Europe from the Protestant Reformation in 1517 until the end of the Thirty Years' War with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. These military conflicts suggest that competition between the

Catholic and Protestant religions was especially fierce in the pre-Westphalia period. Our empirical results accord with this idea because the propensity to name blessed persons turned out to be much higher pre-1648 than post-1648. Quantitatively, we found that (other things equal) the number of beatifications pre-1648 was twice as high and the number of canonizations three times as high, compared to post-1648.

We already noted that Francis I's two predecessor popes—particularly John Paul II—accelerated the process for choosing blessed persons. Another change, likely related, is the tendency to name previous popes as blessed persons. From 1590 to 1977 (before John Paul II took office) only two popes were canonized—Pius V in 1712 and Pius X in 1954—and one more beatified—Innocent XI in 1956. In contrast, recent times saw beatifications of Pius IX and John XXIII (the great reformer of Vatican II) in 2000 and John Paul II in 2011. Francis I has continued this process by beatifying Paul VI in 2014 and by canonizing John XXIII and John Paul II in 2014. The latter action, coming only three years after John Paul II's beatification, is unprecedented for its speed. Moreover, other popes are currently under active consideration for beatification, including Pius XII (controversial because of his role during World War II) and John Paul I (who served as pope for only about a month).

Francis I has also heightened attention toward the saint-making process by canonizing famous non-Popes. Junipero Serra, known for founding numerous Spanish missions in California in the 18th century, was named a saint in 2015, following his beatification by John Paul II in 1988. Mother Teresa (Teresa of Calcutta), famed for charitable work in India and elsewhere, was canonized in 2016, following her beatification in 2003, also by John Paul II. At present, there is a lot of attention for the announced canonization in 2017 of the Portuguese Marto siblings, known for witnessing apparitions of angels and the Virgin Mary in 1916-17.

These siblings died soon thereafter from the Great Influenza Epidemic. In this case, the beatification process was complicated because the Catholic Church typically views children as ineligible. However, with the approval in 1979 by a special assembly of the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the process began, and the Marto siblings were finally named as blessed persons by John Paul II in 2000.

One way to look at the dramatic growth in overall numbers of beatifieds and saints and the extension to popes and other famous persons is that it all amounts, if one thinks in economic terms, to a cheapening of the currency with regard to the value placed on sainthood. As already mentioned, Lawrence Cunningham ascribed this view of recent saint-making to some members of the Catholic Church hierarchy. We, however, do not share this view. Our assessment is that the increased numbers and geographical spread of persons named as blessed and the targeting of popular popes and other famous persons are clever innovations aimed at raising the enthusiasm of Catholics. We interpret the lowering of saint-making criteria combined with a geographic broadening of candidates as an intentional effort on the part of the Catholic Church hierarchy to universalize its relevance. More specifically, the Catholic Church—the world's longest-lasting corporate enterprise—is trying hard to maintain its powerful worldwide position by competing more effectively against Evangelical Protestantism. As mentioned before, this perspective accords with the high level of enthusiasm and devotion shown by pilgrims from all over the world at Hermano Pedro's tomb in Guatemala.

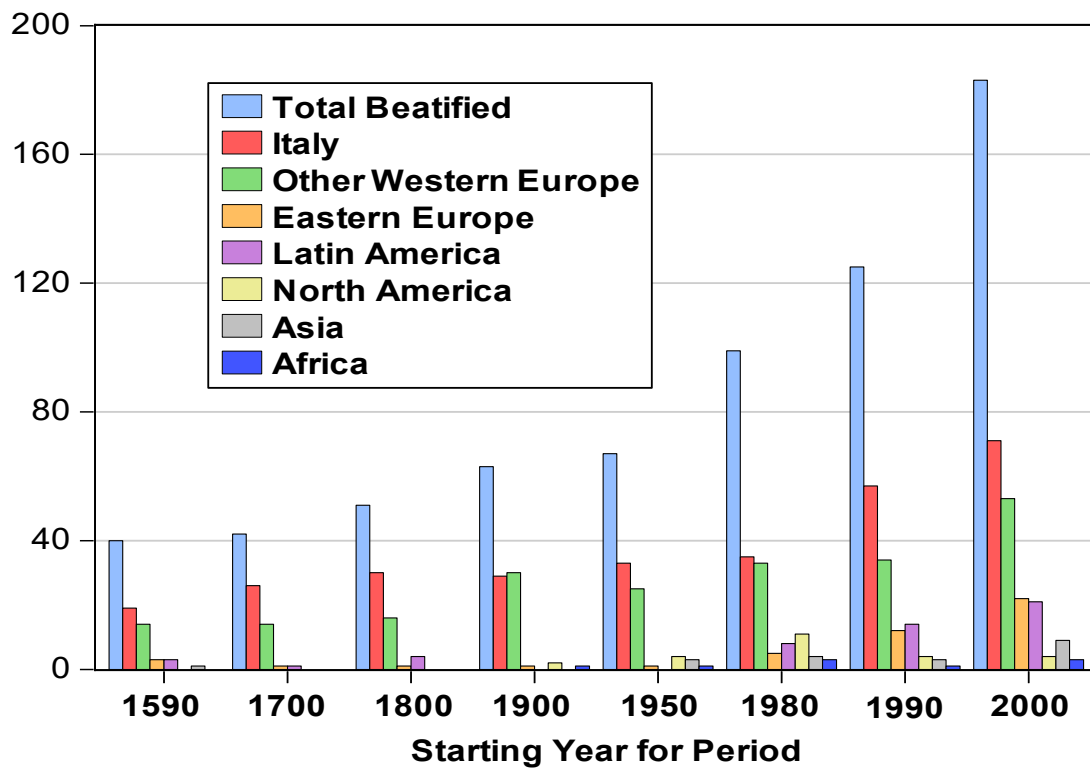
Table 1 Popes' Terms since 1590									
ID	Name	Start	End	Tenure	Beatified			Canonized	
				(years)	Stock	Duration	Flow	Stock	Flow
226	Urban VII	1590	1590	0.04	4	103	0	35	0
227	Gregory XIV	1590	1591	0.87	4	103	0	35	0
228	Innocent IX	1591	1591	0.17	4	104	0	35	0
229	Clement VIII	1592	1605	13.09	4	104	3	35	2
230	Leo XI	1605	1605	0.07	7	70	0	37	0
231	Paul V	1605	1621	15.72	7	70	13	37	2
232	Gregory XV	1621	1623	2.41	20	36	2	39	5
233	Urban VIII	1623	1644	20.99	17	43	8	44	2
234	Innocent X	1644	1655	10.32	24	40	3	46	0
235	Alexander VII	1655	1667	12.13	27	46	1	46	2
236	Clement IX	1667	1669	2.47	26	58	1	48	2
237	Clement X	1670	1676	6.24	25	59	5	50	5
238	Innocent XI	1676	1689	12.90	25	58	3	55	0
239	Alexander VIII	1689	1691	1.32	28	64	1	55	5
240	Innocent XII	1691	1700	9.22	24	60	0	60	0
241	Clement XI	1700	1721	20.31	24	69	2	60	4
242	Innocent XIII	1721	1724	2.83	22	82	0	64	0
243	Benedict XIII	1724	1730	5.74	22	85	3	64	9
244	Clement XII	1730	1740	9.58	16	66	4	73	4
245	Benedict XIV	1740	1758	17.69	16	66	8	77	4
246	Clement XIII	1758	1769	10.59	20	66	4	81	6
247	Clement XIV	1769	1774	5.32	18	67	2	87	0
248	Pius VI	1775	1799	24.53	20	66	19	87	0
249	Pius VII	1800	1823	23.45	39	52	7	87	4
250	Leo XII	1823	1829	5.38	41	62	5	92	0
251	Pius VIII	1829	1830	1.67	46	61	0	92	0
252	Gregory XVI	1831	1846	15.34	46	62	4	92	5
253	Pius IX	1846	1878	31.67	45	76	16	97	5
254	Leo XIII	1878	1903	25.42	55	88	23	102	11
255	Pius X	1903	1914	11.05	68	80	11	113	4
256	Benedict XV	1914	1922	7.39	75	80	4	117	3
257	Pius XI	1922	1939	17.02	76	86	30	120	24
258	Pius XII	1939	1958	19.62	83	82	38	143	30
259	John XXIII	1958	1963	4.60	92	80	6	173	10
260	Paul VI	1963	1978	15.14	88	81	33	183	16
261	John Paul I	1978	1978	0.09	105	75	0	199	0
262	John Paul II	1978	2005	26.52	105	75	319	199	80
263	Benedict XVI	2005	2013	7.87	344	28	92	279	42
264	Francis I	2013	2016*	--	399	30	35	321	33

Notes

For beatified: stock is the number outstanding (not yet canonized) at the start of each pope's term, duration is the mean number of years at the start of each pope's term that the beatifieds have been waiting for promotion, and flow is the number chosen by each pope. For canonized: stock is the cumulative number chosen up to the start of each pope's term and flow is the number chosen by each pope.

*For Francis I, the current pope, the numbers apply through 2016.

Figure 1
Beatifications by Region over Time



Note: The location of each beatified person is based on the person's location at time of death (typically also the place in which the person was primarily located while in the service of the Church). The data go through 2012, before the ascension of Francis I.