

A Statement of Reservations Concerning the Impending Beatification of Pope John Paul II

The Remnant is an American Catholic magazine, headed by Michael J. Matt. Independent from the Society of St. Pius X, it issued a "Statement of Reservation concerning the upcoming beatification of John Paul II", on March 21, 2011, which paints a damning situation of the Church after Vatican II. The analysis of the entire pontificate of John Paul II joins that of the Society of St. Pius X, even if some judgments show some leniency. www.dici.org

The impending beatification of Pope John Paul II on May 1, 2011 has aroused serious concern among not a few Catholics around the world, who are concerned about the condition of the Church and the scandals that have afflicted her in recent years—scandals that prompted the future Benedict XVI to exclaim on Good Friday 2005: "How much filth there is in the Church, even among those who, in the priesthood, should belong entirely to Him." We give voice to our own concern in this public way in keeping with the law of the Church, which provides:

In accord with the knowledge, competence and preeminence which they possess, the Christian faithful have the right *and even at times a duty* to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they *have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful*, with due regard for the integrity of faith and morals and reverence towards their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons. [CIC (1983), Can. 212, § 3.]

We are compelled by what we believe in conscience to be the common good of the Church to express our reservations concerning this beatification. We do so on the following grounds, among others that could be brought forth.

The Real Question

We stress at the outset that we do not present these considerations as an argument against the personal piety or integrity of John Paul II, which ought to be presumed. *The question is not personal piety or integrity as such*, but rather whether there is, objectively speaking, a basis for the claim that John Paul exhibited such heroic virtue *in the exercise of his exalted office as Pope* that he should be placed immediately on the road to sainthood as a Pope to be emulated by all his successors.

The Church has always recognized that the matter of heroic virtue involved in a beatification is inextricably bound up with whether the candidate performed heroically *the duties of his station in life*. As Pope Benedict XIV (1675-1758) explained in his teaching on beatification, the heroic performance of duties involves acts so difficult they are "above the common strength of man," are "accomplished promptly, easily," "with holy joy" and "quite frequently, when the occasion to do so presents itself." [Cf. *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, Bk. III, chap. 21 in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of Interior Life*, Vol. 2, p. 443].

Suppose the father of a large family were a candidate for beatification. One would hardly expect his cause to advance if it were the case that, while pious, he consistently failed to discipline and properly form his children, who habitually disobeyed him and fomented disorder in the home, even openly opposing the Faith while living under his roof; or if, while attentive to his prayers and spiritual duties, he neglected the industrious support of his family and allowed his household to fall into disarray.

When the candidate for beatification is *a Pope*—the Holy Father of the universal Church—the question is not simply his *personal piety and holiness*, but *also his care of the vast household of the Faith that God has entrusted to him*, for which

purpose God grants the Pope extraordinary graces of state. This is the real question: Did John Paul II perform *heroically* his duties as Supreme Pontiff in the manner of the sainted predecessors we will mention here: opposing error, swiftly and courageously defending the flock from the ravening wolves who spread it, and protecting the integrity of the Church's doctrine and sacred worship? We fear that under the circumstances surrounding this "fast track" beatification the real question has not received the careful and unhurried consideration it deserves.

Under Popular Pressure

Among the circumstances that concern us is the unseemly pressure of "popular demand" for this beatification as manifested by the slogan "Santo Subito!"—"Saint Immediately!" It is precisely in order to avoid the influence of ephemeral popular sentiment, and to allow the perspective of a sober historical judgment to form, that the law of the Church wisely prescribes a five-year waiting period before a process for beatification can even begin. Yet in this case that prudent waiting period has been dispensed with. Thus a process that should barely have commenced by now is already nearly at an end, as if to provide immediate gratification of the popular will, even if that is not the intention.

We are aware of the role of popular acclamation even in the canonization of saints in exceptional cases. Pope Saint Gregory the Great, for example, was canonized by popular acclamation almost immediately after his death. But that towering Roman Pontiff was nothing less than a builder of Christian civilization, laying down both spiritual and organizational foundations for the Church and Christendom that endured for century upon century.

Likewise, Pope Saint Nicholas I, the last of the Popes the Church has denominated "Great," was instrumental in the reform of the Church during a great crisis of faith and discipline, afflicting especially the upper hierarchy whose corrupt members he fearlessly opposed, and is rightly regarded as a veritable savior of Christian civilization at a time when its very survival was in doubt.

Further, the popular acclamation of *beati* and saints belongs to a time when the people were overwhelmingly faithful and submissive to the Church. We must ask: Of what value is popular demand for this beatification in an epoch when the vast majority of nominal Catholics simply reject any teaching on faith and morals they deem unacceptable—above all the infallible teaching of the Magisterium on marriage and procreation?

A troubling Legacy

In all candor we are constrained to observe by way of comparison that, given the condition of the Church as he left it, the pontificate of John Paul II objectively does not warrant any role for popular acclaim in his beatification, much less the immediate sainthood for which the large crowds have clamored. An honest assessment of the facts compels the conclusion that John Paul's pontificate was marked, not by the renewal and restoration we see during the pontificates of his most eminent predecessors, but rather, as the former Cardinal Ratzinger so famously remarked [Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 9, 1984], an acceleration of the "continuing process of decay," above all in the traditionally Christian Western nations of Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific.

This objective reality is all the more apparent when one considers that the late Pope himself, very near the end of his pontificate, lamented the "silent apostasy" throughout a once-Christian Europe. [Cf. *Ecclesia In Europa* (2003), n. 9.] Moreover, his successor has since publicly decried the "process of secularization" that "has produced a grave crisis of the sense of the Christian faith and of belonging to the Church." On this occasion Pope Benedict XVI announced the creation of a new pontifical council whose specific task will be "promoting a renewed evangelization in countries where the first proclamation of the faith already resounded... but which are going through a progressive secularization of society and a sort of 'eclipse of the sense of God'..." [Cf. Vespers Homily, June 28, 2010].

The permeation of the human element of the Church itself by this "silent apostasy" has become ever more evident since the Second Vatican Council. Before the Council the world at large was in precipitous decline, as Pope after

Pope had warned, but within the commonwealth of the Church the faith was still strong, the liturgy was intact, vocations were many, and families were large—until the great conciliar “opening to the world.”

Part of the diagnosis of the sudden onset of a post-conciliar ecclesial crisis without parallel was given by the currently reigning Roman Pontiff, writing as Cardinal Ratzinger in the very midst of the 27-year-long pontificate of his predecessor: “I am convinced that the ecclesiastical crisis in which we find ourselves today depends in a great part upon the collapse of the liturgy...” [*La Mia Vita* (1997), p. 113: “Sono convinto che la crisi ecclesiale in cui oggi ci troviamo dipende in gran parte dal crollo della liturgia...”]

It hardly needs to be demonstrated that a “collapse of the liturgy” is something the Church had absolutely never witnessed before Vatican II and the “reforms” undertaken in its name. Only fifteen years after the Council, during the second year of his pontificate, John Paul II himself publicly asked forgiveness for the sudden and dramatic loss of Eucharistic faith and reverence following the “liturgical reforms” approved by Paul VI:

I would like to ask forgiveness—in my own name and in the name of all of you, venerable and dear brothers in the episcopate—for everything which, for whatever reason, through whatever human weakness, impatience or negligence, and also through the at times partial, one-sided and erroneous application of the directives of the Second Vatican Council, may have caused *scandal and disturbance concerning the interpretation of the doctrine and the veneration due to this great sacrament*. And I pray the Lord Jesus that in the future we may avoid in our manner of dealing with this sacred mystery anything which could weaken or disorient in any way the sense of reverence and love that exists in our faithful people. [*Dominicae Cena* (1980), n.12]

But John Paul’s stunning apology was never followed by any decisive action to stem the continuing collapse of the liturgy over the next twenty-five years of his reign. Quite the contrary, in 1988, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Pope hailed the “reforms which it has made possible” as “the most visible fruit of the whole work of the Council,” noting that for “many people the message of the Second Vatican Council has been experienced principally through the liturgical reform.” Indeed it has! Concerning the self-evident collapse of the liturgy, however, the Pope merely made note of various abuses that occur “on occasion,” while insisting nonetheless that “the vast majority of the pastors and the Christian people have accepted the liturgical reform in a spirit of obedience and indeed joyful fervour.” [*Vicesimus Quintus Annus* (1988), n. 12.]

Yet today the majority of the Christian people do not even believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, which they receive in the hand from the unconsecrated hands of lay ministers as if it were a mere wafer of bread, which is exactly how they treat it. Moreover, in keeping with a nearly universal selective obedience to the Magisterium, the practice of contraception is widespread among Catholics, whose view on contraception differs little from that of Protestants, according to innumerable polls and surveys. This is also evidenced by the plummeting and now abysmally low birthrates among the Catholic populations of the Western world, which are not even producing enough children to replace themselves. Hence John Paul himself noted “the widespread fear of giving life to new children” in the midst of the “silent apostasy” he decried in *Ecclesia in Europa*. In fact, it cannot be disputed that the highest rate of births in the Catholic world is seen among “traditionalists” who do not take part in the reformed liturgy or who, having no alternative, endure it with anything but “joyful fervor.”

Moreover, it is manifest that John Paul contributed to the liturgical collapse by his own acts. For the first time in her history the Church witnessed during his pontificate the scandalous novelty of “altar girls,” concerning which the Pope reversed his own prior decision forbidding the innovation as *incompatible* with the bimillennial tradition of the Church. Then there were the “inculturated” papal liturgies incorporating rock music and frankly pagan elements, including such shocking spectacles as a bare-breasted woman reading the Epistles in New Guinea, gyrating, feathered Aztec dancers shaking rattles and a “purification rite” in Mexico, and an aboriginal “Smoking Ceremony” replacing the prescribed penitential rite in Australia. The excuse that the Pope knew nothing of these liturgical aberrations beforehand is belied by his own choice and retention of their very author and orchestrator: Piero Marini, who served as John Paul’s Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations for nearly twenty years, despite worldwide protests against his truly grotesque abuses of the Roman liturgy. Marini was finally, and mercifully, replaced by Pope Benedict in 2007.

Honesty compels one to admit that if the great preconciliar Popes had witnessed these papal liturgies of John Paul II, or indeed the general state of the Roman Rite throughout his pontificate, they would have reacted with a mixture of outrage and terrified incredulity.

But not only the liturgy was in a state of collapse by the end of the last pontificate. As we noted at the beginning of this Statement, on Good Friday 2005, just before ascending to the Chair of Peter himself, the former Cardinal Ratzinger remarked: "How much filth there is in the Church, even among those who, in the priesthood, should belong entirely to Him." [Cf. "Homily for Good Friday Mass," 2005]. The "filth" to which the Cardinal referred was of course an unbelievable number of sexual scandals involving unspeakable acts by Catholic priests, erupting in nations around the globe—the harvest of decades of "conciliar renewal" in the seminaries.

Instead of disciplining the bishops who fostered this filth in their seminaries, covered it up by moving sexual predators from place to place, and then bankrupted their dioceses by paying civil settlements, John Paul II provided safe haven for several of the most egregiously negligent prelates. Perhaps the most notable example is Cardinal Bernard Law (see photo). Forced to testify before a grand jury concerning his gross negligence in failing to address rampant homosexual predation of young boys by priests in the Archdiocese of Boston, which resulted in \$100 million in civil settlements to more than 500 victims, Law's "punishment" by the Pope, after his disgraced resignation as Archbishop, was to be brought to Rome and awarded one of the city's four magnificent patriarchal basilicas over which to preside as Archpriest.

And what of Archbishop Weakland, the notorious theological dissenter who admitted in a deposition that he deliberately returned homosexual predators in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to active priestly ministry without warning parishioners or notifying the police of their crimes? Having driven the Archdiocese into bankruptcy court on account of the resulting civil suits, Weakland ended his long career of undermining the integrity of faith and morals—to worldwide fawning publicity—only after the revelation that he misappropriated \$450,000 in archdiocesan funds to pay off a man with whom he had had a homosexual affair. John Paul II allowed this thieving wolf of a bishop to retire with the full dignity of his high office in the Church, after which a Protestant publishing company published his memoirs: "A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church: Memoirs of a Catholic Archbishop." An admiring reviewer writes that the book "portrays a man imbued with the values of the Second Vatican Council [who] had the courage to carry them forward both as Benedictine Abbot Primate and as Archbishop of Milwaukee."

The "filth" that afflicted the Church during the last pontificate includes the long history of sexual predation by Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado (being blessed by Pope John Paul in photo to the left), founder of the "Legionaries of Christ," supposedly the very exemplar of the "renewal" in action. John Paul II refused to initiate any investigation into Maciel's conduct despite mounting evidence of abominable crimes which, thanks to worldwide publicity, are now the most notorious ever committed by a Catholic cleric. Paying no heed to the long-pending and widely known canonical charges against Maciel by eight of the Legionary seminarians he had sexually molested, John Paul lavishly honored him in a public ceremony at the Vatican in November 2004. Days later, however, then Cardinal Ratzinger "took it on himself to authorize an investigation of Maciel." [Jason Berry, "Money Paved the Way for Maciel's Influence in the Vatican," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 6, 2010].

It was literally the case that John Paul had to die before Maciel could be disciplined. He was finally removed from active ministry and exiled to a monastery almost immediately after Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope Benedict. But this was only part of a pattern described by a prominent Catholic commentator: "[T]he high-flying John Paul let scandals spread beneath his feet, and the uncharismatic Ratzinger was left to clean them up. This pattern extends to other fraught issues that the last Pope tended to avoid—the debasement of the Catholic liturgy, or the rise of Islam in a once-Christian Europe." [Ross Douthat, "The Better Pope," *New York Times*, April 11, 2010].

Another reason for reservation concerning this beatification is that throughout John Paul's long pontificate faithful Catholics were bewildered and scandalized by numerous manifestly imprudent papal statements and gestures the likes of which the Church has never witnessed in 2000 years. To recall just a few of the more well-known examples:

- **The numerous theologically dubious apologies for the presumed sins of Catholics in prior epochs of Church history.**

Of course the world did not view the Pope's unprecedented *mea culpas* as a great demonstration of the Church's humility. Rather, quite predictably, they were construed as admissions of the Church's historic guilt for all manner of offenses against humanity. With the exception of the apparently forgotten apology in *Dominicae Cenae*, however, there were no apologies for the catastrophic failure of *living* members of the hierarchy to preserve faith and discipline in the midst of the "continuing process of decay" and "silent apostasy."

- **The Assisi gatherings of October 1986 and January 2002.**

During Assisi 2002, John Paul provided places in the very Convent of Saint Francis for the practitioners of "the great world religions," from Animism to Zoroastrianism, to enact their assorted cultic rituals in that sacred Catholic shrine. Referring with emphasis to "*the arranged places*," the Pope declared to a motley assembly that included practitioners of Voodoo: "we will pray in different ways, respecting one another's religious traditions." [Cf. "Address Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Representatives of the World Religions," January 24, 2002, and List of Participants, vatican.va].

The inevitable public impression left by the Assisi event, especially when filtered through the prism of the secular media, was that all religions are more or less pleasing to God—the very thesis rejected as false by Pope Pius XI in his 1928 Encyclical *Mortalium Animos*. Why else would the Pope have summoned all their "representatives" to Assisi to offer their "prayers for peace"? Can it honestly be denied that every single one of the Pope's preconconciliar predecessors would have condemned these spectacles?

- **The Pope's public kissing of the Koran during the 1999 visit to Rome of a group of Iraqi Christians and Muslims.**

The Chaldean-rite Catholic Patriarch of Iraq hailed this act as a "gesture of respect" for a religion whose essence is a denial of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ and whose entire history is marked by the persecution of Christians, as we see at this very moment in Iraq and the Islamic "republics" of the Arabic world.

- **The astonishing exclamation of March 21, 2000 in the Holy Land: "May St. John the Baptist protect Islam and all the people of Jordan..."** [Cf. "Papal Homily in the Holy Land," vatican.va].

What possible explanation could there be for this unprecedented prayer for the protection of a false religion itself (as distinct from its followers as human persons) during a papal sermon in the Holy Land – the very place liberated from Islam during the First Crusade?

- **The bestowal of pectoral crosses – symbols of episcopal authority – on George Carey and Rowan Williams.**

These Anglican so-called Archbishops of Canterbury, the validity of whose priestly and episcopal ordinations was definitively ruled out by Pope Leo XIII's 1896 Bull *Apostolicae Curae*, do not even adhere to the teaching of the Catholic Church on matters of basic morality rooted in the divine and natural law. [Cf. John Allen, "Papal Deeds Speak Louder," *National Catholic Register*, November 8, 2002]

- **Pope John Paul's active participation in pagan worship at a "sacred forest" in Togo.**

The Pope's own newspaper reported how, upon his arrival at this place, "a sorcerer began to invoke the spirits: '*Power of water, I invoke you. Ancestors, I invoke you.*'" Following this invocation of "spirits," the Pope was presented "with a receptacle full of water and flour. [He] first made a slight bow and then dispersed the mixture in all

directions. In the morning he had performed the same action before Mass. *That pagan rite* [!] signifies that he who receives the water, symbol of prosperity, shares it with his ancestors by throwing it on the ground." [*L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian edn., August 11, 1985, p. 5].

Shortly after his return to Rome, the Pope expressed satisfaction with his public participation in the prayer and ritual of animists: "The prayer meeting in the sanctuary at Lake Togo was particularly striking. There *I prayed for the first time with animists.*" [*La Croix*, August 23, 1985]. One would think that even this one instance—not only unrepented, but publicly vaunted—should be sufficient reason for terminating the cause for John Paul's canonization. For by the Pope's own admission, he "prayed . . . with animists." And that kind of action – direct and formal participation in pagan worship – is something the Church has always judged to be objectively gravely sinful. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, pagan idolatry occurs not only when man worships false gods or idols as such, but also when he "honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, *ancestors*... Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God." [CCC § 2113].

But this was only the most egregious (arguably) of many similar incidents during John Paul's pontificate. It is instructive to note the Church's posthumous verdict on the 4th-century Pope, Liberius, the first Bishop of Rome *not* to be declared a saint. Liberius earned this dubious distinction because—while in exile and under great duress from a persecuting emperor—he endorsed an ambiguous doctrinal statement favorable to Arianism and then excommunicated Athanasius, the champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy. Even though after his liberation and return to Rome he promptly retracted these lamentable actions and once again upheld orthodoxy for the rest of his pontificate, he was still denied canonization.

• **The "ecumenical" vespers service in Saint Peter's Basilica, the very heart of the visible Church, in which the Pope consented to pray together with Lutheran "bishops", including *women* claiming to be successors of the Apostles.**

This spectacle of course invited questions about whether the Pope was undermining his own teaching against women's ordination. [Cf. Allen, loc. cit.]

In sum, by any objective assessment of the facts, John Paul II presided over and left behind a Church that remained in a state of crisis following the turmoil that erupted immediately after Vatican Council II. It is true that his pontificate included some decidedly positive achievements, including an admirable and forthright defense of human life in the face of the growing "culture of death," valuable teaching in several weighty social encyclicals, an infallible pronouncement against any possibility of women's ordination, and the *motu proprio* (*Ecclesia Dei*) that at least set the stage for the "liberation" of the traditional Latin Mass by Pope Benedict. Nor do we mean to question the personal piety and prayerfulness that were evident to those who knew him, and which we acknowledged at the beginning of this Statement.

Nevertheless, it can scarcely be denied that every one of John Paul's predecessors would have been shocked and dismayed by the disastrously widespread disobedience, doctrinal dissent, liturgical decay, moral scandals, and declining Mass attendance that continued to the end of his pontificate – all exacerbated by frequently poor episcopal appointments and the sorts of highly questionable papal words and deeds we have recalled above. Even the reformist Paul VI, whose own ecumenical and interreligious initiatives were far more cautious than those of John Paul, would have been appalled by the state of the Church at the end of John Paul's long reign. And it was Pope Paul himself who described the already-developing postconciliar debacle with some of the most shocking words ever uttered by a Roman Pontiff:

By some fissure the smoke of Satan has entered into the temple of God: there is doubt, uncertainty, problems, unrest. Doubt has entered our consciences, *and it has entered through the windows which were meant to have been opened to the light*. This state of uncertainty reigns even in the Church. It was hoped that after the Council there would be a day of sunlight in the history of the Church. *Instead, there came a day of clouds, of darkness, of groping, of uncertainty*. How did this

happen? We will confide Our thoughts to you: there has been interference from an adverse power: *his name is the devil*... [Paul VI, *Insegnamenti*, Ed. Vaticana, Vol. X, 1972, p. 707]

Like John Paul after him, however, Paul failed to take any effective measures to address a debacle that the Pope—and only the Pope—could have prevented, or at least greatly curtailed.

Pope Paul's devastating admissions were quoted by no less than Msgr. Guido Pozzo, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei," in his address to the European priests of the Fraternity of St. Peter on July 2, 2010 at Wigratzbad. As Msgr. Pozzo admitted on that occasion: "Unfortunately, the effects as enumerated by Paul VI have not disappeared. A *foreign way of thinking has entered into the Catholic world*, stirring up confusion, *seducing many souls*, and disorienting the faithful. There is a 'spirit of self-demolition' that pervades *modernism*..." The post-conciliar crisis, he observed, involves a "para-Conciliar ideology" that "proposes once more the idea of *Modernism*, condemned at the beginning of the 20th century by St. Pius X."

But who, if not the last Pope—and the one before him—bears partial responsibility for the spread of this para-Conciliar, heterodox ideology throughout the Catholic world? Certainly, John Paul II, like Paul VI, promulgated a number of doctrinally traditional magisterial documents that were directed against such heterodoxy. But the question before us now is this: Was his witness strong enough, and consistent enough, to qualify him as an heroic defender of orthodox faith and morals? Or rather, did his own many questionable novelties in word and deed – together with his omissions and his lack of firm ecclesiastical governance – have the overall effect of taking away with his left hand much of what he gave with his right?

In this connection we note the supreme irony that while a resurgent Modernist heresy was causing chaos throughout the Church, John Paul II saw fit to announce personally the excommunication of only five persons during his twenty-seven years as Pope: the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and the four bishops he consecrated in 1988 for the Society of Saint Pius X, whose very aim (whether or not one agrees with their approach) was precisely to oppose the "para-Conciliar ideology" remarked by Msgr. Pozzo according to the program of the sainted Pope for whom their association is named. (Note: John Paul did not personally announce the excommunication of Tissa Balasuriya, who at any rate was "unexcommunicated" within a year.)

As the whole world knows, in early 2009 Pope Benedict revoked the excommunications of the four Society bishops. He has since observed that "[f]rom the moment in which these four bishops recognized the Primacy of the Pope, juridically they had to be liberated from excommunication..." [*Luce del Mondo*, p. 43] But they always *had* recognized the papal primacy, unlike the legions of Catholics—laity, priests, nuns, theologians, and even certain bishops—who effectively negated it with their open dissent from the most basic teachings of the Magisterium, while the Vatican did nothing or next to nothing for more than a quarter-century.

Likewise, the ill-starred Paul VI, in the midst of the mounting "self-demolition" of the Church he himself decried, reserved his harshest discipline for the Society and Archbishop Lefebvre, whom he publicly rebuked by name and then ordered suspended from the exercise of Holy Orders while theological and liturgical rebels were sacking the Church with impunity all over the world.

Today very few seriously propose the beatification of Paul VI, who rued the debacle over which he presided while not doing nearly enough about it. In fact, there was no process for Pope Paul's beatification at all until John Paul II commenced it at the diocesan level in 1993. It has not advanced since then, having apparently been stopped cold by grave objections not unlike some of those suggested here. And so we must ask: Why the rush to beatify John Paul II, given that he persevered unswervingly in the imprudent reformist program of his predecessor, adding to it a long series of novelties not even Pope Paul, that supremely tragic figure, would have dared to venture? At least Paul had the candor to admit that he saw the smoke of Satan entering the Church, not a "new springtime of Christian life which will be revealed by the Great Jubilee, if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit." [*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1994), n. 18]

For the sake of truth we must be frank in stating the obvious conclusion: No blessed or sainted Pope in Church history has a legacy as troubling as that of John Paul II, and perhaps no Pope at all aside from Paul VI.

A Miracle Open to Doubt

Finally, we cannot fail to note that the lone miracle on which the entire beatification is premised—the reported cure of a French nun, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre, said to be suffering from Parkinson's disease—is open to question.

For one thing, the very diagnosis of Parkinson's leaves room for doubt absent the only definitive test known to medical science: an autopsy of the brain. Other conditions subject to spontaneous remission can mimic Parkinson's. For another, the nexus between the purported cure of the nun and a "night of prayers to John Paul II" seems dubious. Did the prayers for this nun exclude the invocation of *any* and *all* recognized saints?

Compare the *two* miracles—it was John Paul himself who reduced the requirement to only one—that Pius XII deemed sufficient for the beatification of Pius X. The first involved a nun who had bone cancer and was cured instantaneously after a relic of Pius X was placed on her chest. The second involved a nun whose cancer disappeared when she touched a relic statue of Pius. No such indisputable connection exists between the purported cure in this case and any putative relic of John Paul II.

There is no question here of the infallible teaching authority of the Church; the assessment of this lone miracle is a judgment of medical fact subject to the possibility of error. Imagine the damage to the Church's credibility should this nun eventually suffer a return of her symptoms. In fact, in March of last year the *Rzeczpospolita* daily, one of Poland's most respected newspapers, reported that there had been some return of symptoms and that one of the two medical consultants had expressed doubts about the purported miracle. This report prompted the former head of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, to reveal to press that "It could be that one of the two medical consultants perhaps had some doubts. And this, unfortunately, leaked out." Martins further revealed that "*the doubts would require further investigation*. In such cases, he said, the Congregation would ask *more doctors to come in* and offer an opinion." [Nicole Winfield, Associated Press, "John Paul II 'Miracle' Further Scrutinized," March 28, 2010]

One doctor doubted the miracle, and when his doubts "leaked out" unexpectedly other doctors were brought in—and this less than a year ago! Have we really been presented with the kind of indubitably miraculous cures recognized by Pius XII in the beatification of Pius X?

The Probable Consequences of this Act

Again, the real question concerning this beatification is not whether John Paul II was a good or holy man, but rather what his beatification would signify to the masses that will pay no heed to the distinction between beatification and canonization. It would signify that the Church views as a saint, and even great among Roman Pontiffs, a Pope whose stewardship of the Church cannot withstand the least comparison with the examples of his sainted and blessed predecessors.

Consider the next-to-last of the sainted Roman Pontiffs: St. Pius V, a model of fortitude in his reform of the clergy according to the decrees of the Council of Trent, his stern measures against the spread of error in the Church, and his defense of all of Christendom against the threat of Islam—which John Paul II implored Saint John the Baptist to protect! Consider also the last Pope to be raised to the altars: St. Pius X, likewise remembered for his courageous governance of the Church in suppressing precisely that Modernist heresy which erupted anew after Vatican II and spread throughout the Catholic world during John Paul's pontificate, as Msgr. Pozzo so candidly observed only a few months ago (but without seeming to consider any responsibility of the head of the Church for this catastrophe). Does not this beatification, therefore, incur the risk of reducing beatification and even canonization to the level of a token of popular esteem bestowed upon a beloved figure in the Church, a kind of ecclesiastical Academy Award? Here we note that, in one of his many innovations, John Paul "streamlined" the process for both beatification and canonization, allowing him to conduct an incredible 1,338 beatifications and 482 canonizations—more than *all of his*

predecessors combined. Is it prudent for the very Pope who put this “saint factory” into operation (a development widely belittled in the press) to be judged according to its relaxed standards?

We must also express our deep concern over the predictable exploitation of this beatification by the cunning forces of world opinion. We notice that they are observing a curious silence where one would expect clamorous opposition if this beatification really represented an offense to the prevailing liberal zeitgeist—as does the proposed beatification of Pius XII, which has been met with a relentless publicity campaign to stop it at all costs. It would appear that world opinion views the beatification of John Paul II with favor insofar as it would serve to validate the “reforms of Vatican II” the world has hailed as a long overdue accommodation of a hidebound Church to the “modern world” of “liberty” and “human rights.”

Yet we can be certain, should the beatification proceed as scheduled, that powerful sectors of the mass media will not waste a moment in holding it up as an example of the Church’s “hypocrisy,” ineptitude and cronyism in so honoring the Pope who presided over the pedophilia scandal and refused to discipline the evil founder of the Legionaries. On the latter subject there is already a book-length exposé and film: “Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II,” which documents how Maciel was protected by the Pope’s key advisors, including Cardinal Sodano, Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Martínez, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and Cardinal Dziwisz, now Archbishop of Cracow, who was John Paul’s secretary and closest confidant.

Conclusion

In the midst of what Sister Lucia of Fatima rightly called “diabolical disorientation” in the Church we are especially mindful that beatification is not at all within the charism of infallibility. It does not establish an obligatory cult but merely permission to venerate the *beatus* if one wishes. In this case, therefore, we face the real possibility of a grave error in prudential judgment provoked by contingent circumstances, including popularity and affection, that ought not to influence the essential process of careful investigation and deliberation—especially in the case of this beatification, with all its implications for the universal Church.

Again we ask: Why the haste? Is there perhaps a fear that unless the act is performed immediately the more mature verdict of history might preclude beatification, as it surely did in the case of Paul VI? If so, why not let the verdict be rendered in keeping with the long view the Church has generally taken in the matter of beatification or canonization? If even a giant like Saint Pius V was not canonized until 140 years after his death, can we not wait at least a few more years in order to assess the pontifical legacy that ought to figure most prominently in the decision to beatify John Paul II? Can the Church not wait even the 37 years that elapsed between the death of Pius X and his beatification by Pius XII in 1951 (followed by the canonization of 1954)? Indeed, is it prudent to beatify now—without further assessment and on the basis of a lone miracle whose authenticity is open to doubt—a Pope whose legacy is *admittedly* marked by the rampant spread of the very evil St. Pius X heroically opposed and defeated in his time?

For all of these reasons, we believe it is just and appropriate to implore the Holy Father to defer the beatification of John Paul II to a time when the grounds for that solemn act may be assessed objectively and dispassionately in the light of history. The good of the Church can only be served by a prudent delay, whereas it can only be placed at risk by a hasty process not protected from error by the charism of the Church’s infallible Magisterium.

Our Lady, Queen of Wisdom, *Virgo Prudentissima*, pray for us!

(Source : [The Remnant](#))