

McCleary, Rachel M.; Barro, Robert J.

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Opening the fifth seal: Catholic martyrs and forces of religious competition

Robert J. Barro

Harvard University, American Enterprise Institute

Rachel M. McCleary

Harvard University, American Enterprise Institute

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Opening the Fifth Seal

Catholic Martyrs and Forces of Religious Competition

Rachel M. McCleary and Robert J. Barro

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, since becoming Pope Francis in March 2013, is focusing on martyrdom in the Roman Catholic Church. Two months into his pontificate, Francis canonized the 813 martyrs of Otranto, the largest such group in recorded Catholic Church history. Five months later, Francis beatified another large group, 499 martyrs of the Spanish Civil War. Francis continues to emphasize martyrs over confessors, the name given to blessed persons who died of natural causes. In 2019, Francis beatified 39 martyrs and only 6 confessors.

As a snapshot of what is happening, within the last four years, 14 persons who died in Guatemala have qualified as blessed martyrs; six were foreign missionaries who served in Guatemala and eight were national lay persons, including one child.¹ The missionaries were Oklahoma priest Stanley Rother, the first U.S. born martyr beatified by the Catholic Church, three Missionaries of the Sacred Heart priests, a priest of the Order of Friars Minor, and James Miller, of the De La Salle Brothers of the Christian Schools and the last Vatican beatification for 2019. Over 100 martyrs' causes for Guatemala are at various stages of investigation for eventual beatification. Papal attention of this magnitude for a small country such as Guatemala seems, at first glance, to be excessive. For reasons we discuss here, this pattern is not an outlier, constituting part of the pontifical global perspective articulated first by John Paul II and now Francis.

¹The laypersons are Luis Obdulio Arrayo Navarro, Domingo del Barro Batz, Tomás Ramirez Caba, Reyes Us Hernández, Rosalio Benito, Nicolas Tum Castro Quiatán, Miguel Tiu Imul, and Juan Barrera Méndez (aged 13).

We have recently assembled data on martyrs chosen by popes from 1588 (Sixtus V) to early 2020 (Francis). In contrast to some earlier work, our research focuses only on martyrs that were officially beatified and canonized by the Catholic Church since the establishment of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints in 1588.² Table 1 gives an overview of the results on martyrs that we detail later. The calculated total number of martyrs beatified over the full sample is 5048. The table gives the events associated with these martyrs, with cases listed in decreasing order of the number beatified.³

I. Paths for Beatification and Canonization

The Catholic Church currently recognizes four paths to reach the final two stages of the saint-making process, beatification and canonization. In all cases, the life of the candidate must exemplify the practice of “heroic virtues.” This term connotes consistent and exceptional exercising of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, combined with the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. As the Vatican describes it (vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a7.htm), a candidate must display these virtues “with uncommon promptitude, ease, and pleasure, from supernatural motives and without human reasoning, with self-abnegation and full control over his natural inclinations.” This definition of virtuous behavior derives from Thomas Aquinas’s interpretation of Aristotelian ethics. Aristotle referred to virtuous conduct as habitual, motivating the person to feel pleasure in having performed a virtuous action regardless of the consequences to oneself and for its own

²For a demographic analysis of Christian martyrs in the twentieth and twenty-first century, see Johnson and Zurlo (2014).

³In the data set, martyrs are listed individually except for two cases, the Muslim invasion of Otranto in 1480 and the Mongol invasion of Poland in 1260. For these events, the individual names are unknown, except for the lay person Antonio Primaldi for Otranto and the Dominican friar Sadoc for Poland. Further, not all individuals beatified are named. For example, for the 30 martyrs of the Portugal-Dutch War, beatified in 2000, 11 individuals are referenced by designators such as “a daughter of de Miranda” and “lay companion of Martins.”

sake. In this Aristotelian sense, a saintly person engages in virtuous behavior because she is motivated in the right way. But, beyond that, she cognitively comprehends through judging her own actions why virtuous behavior is relevant to her circumstances, not just that she has been taught to do it. The saintly person recognizes virtuous action as good in itself. Heroic virtue, according to the Catholic Church, is the practice of all the virtues in imitation of Christ so as to move, in accordance with Aquinas, toward Christian perfection.

The first path to canonization is a life lived by practicing virtues in an exemplary manner and with heroism. Verification of the holiness of the person's life is documented at the diocesan level as part of a candidate's qualifications to be considered (made venerable) for beatification. The second path, not exclusive from the first, is through devotional cults supported by the "constant and common attestation" of credible historians on the saintly person's virtues. Pope Urban VIII, in his 1643 *Coelestis Hierusalem Cives*, declared that he did not "wish to prejudice the case of those servants of God who were the objects of a *cultus* [cult] arising out of the general consent of the Church, or an immemorial custom, or the writings of the Fathers, or the long and intentional tolerance of the Apostolic See, or the Ordinary." This path of the cult of saints often makes it difficult to distinguish historically between myth and reality.

The first two paths lead to beatifications and canonizations of confessors. The third path is martyrdom, reserved for individuals who have been killed for their Christian beliefs, that is, in "hatred of the faith" (*odium fidei*). The martyr must voluntarily endure or tolerate her death on account of her faith. Prior to death, the martyr is typically persecuted for her work of evangelization, charitable work, and promotion of human dignity and justice of the "poor and oppressed." Martyrs, like confessors, must exemplify a virtuous Christian life.

In 2017, Pope Francis officially enlarged the definition of martyrdom by creating a fourth category, known as the freely offering of one's life or *oblatio vitae*. This category features a single act of Christian heroism in an otherwise routine life by those who were not martyred in the strict sense—killed in hatred of the faith—but who made an “offering of their life” that led to their death. Pope Francis's biblical foundation for this new category is “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).”⁴ This expansion of the Catholic conception of martyrdom continues a contemporizing or, as Benedict XVI saw it, a diluting of Catholic tradition begun by John Paul II within the category of “martyr of charity,” that is, dying for the love of one's neighbor. Establishing hatred of the faith (*odium fidei*) on the part of the killer is controversial in complex political settings, such as the civil wars in Spain (1936-1939), El Salvador (1979-1992), and Vietnam (the Lê Văn Khôi revolt of 1833-1835). It is also difficult to identify a martyr's motives when the person spoke out against the prevailing regime (as with Richard Henkes in Nazi Germany, Jerzy Popiełuszko in post-WWII Communist Poland, and Oscar Romero in El Salvador's civil war) or sheltered others from political persecution (as with Vincente Vilar David in the Spanish Civil War, Margaret Ball in Ireland during the English Reformation, and Vilmos Apor in Hungary during World War II). In these circumstances, John Paul II and Francis have been clear that the voluntary giving of one's life qualifies as martyrdom.

II. Studying Saint-Making

Our interest in saint-making began years ago during one of our trips to Guatemala. We were staying in Antigua, the colonial capital until it was largely destroyed by an earthquake in

⁴The Holy See, Apostolic Letter issued *Motu Proprio* by the Supreme Pontiff Francis, *Maiorem Hac Dilectionem*, On the Offer of Life (July 11, 2017).

1773 (and replaced in 1776 by the new Guatemala City). Part of our tour of Antigua involved the Catholic San Francisco Church, where the remains of Saint Hermano Pedro are kept. Born in Vilafor, Canary Islands in 1626, Pedro de San José Betancur emigrated to Cuba and later to Guatemala where he became a Franciscan tertiary. His legacy consists of a hospital named after him in Antigua, Guatemala and the lay religious order of Bethlehemite Brothers. At the time of our visit, Hermano Pedro was the only saint in Central America. In 2018, Francis canonized the Archbishop of San Salvador, martyr Oscar Romero, who became the first native-born saint of Central America.

We interpret the canonization of Romero as an attempt to invigorate the faithful by multiplying Saint Hermano Pedro; that is, by naming and publicizing more saints. Further, Francis's choice of Romero is indicative of the general trend toward beatifying and canonizing more martyrs, even politically controversial ones. These observations motivated us to study in detail—using data on saints and popes back to the 1500s—the Church's choices of blessed persons over time and across regions.⁵ We wanted to see, in particular, whether popes respond to competition, notably from Evangelical Protestantism, in determining numbers and locations of saints. We found that this competitive force has been important since at least the start of the 20th century, led by the grand expansion of saint-making by John Paul II. As an example, the competition is keen in Guatemala, where Evangelical Protestants are now roughly equal in number to Catholics. This competition likely helps to explain why Francis has chosen so many martyrs in Guatemala.

A. The Globalization of the Papacy

⁵Our previous research on confessors is detailed in Barro and McCleary (2016) and McCleary and Barro (2019, Ch. 7).

Choices of confessors and martyrs relate to each pope's vision for the Catholic Church. Saint-making is one strategy at the disposal of each pontiff, reflecting his theological focus, political agenda, and geographical influence. Popes for centuries came from Italy. Before John Paul II was appointed in 1978, the last non-Italian pope was Hadrian VI, in office from 1522 to 1523 and the only Dutch pontiff to date. In recent years, the Catholic Church has chosen three consecutive non-Italian popes: John Paul II from Poland, Benedict XVI from Germany, and Francis from Argentina. This international diversification represents a sharp break from the past; notably, Francis is the first non-European pope in over 1000 years and the first pope from the Americas.

The enhanced globalization of the papacy applies also to saint-making. The traditional emphasis for centuries on blessed persons from Western Europe has shifted since the early 1900s to encompass Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, Asia, and Africa. These patterns are clear for confessors. The shift toward Eastern Europe and Latin America applies also to martyrs, but a confounding element is the rise for Western Europe, driven mainly by the large numbers of martyrs related to the Spanish Civil War and World War II.

The findings from our data sets of confessors and martyrs are best understood within a framework that incorporates the theological, political, and social perspectives on saint-making of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. We start, accordingly, with a brief analysis of each pope's views on the role of saints, with emphasis on the changing ideas about martyrs.

1. John Paul II: Competition and Globalization. In his 1994 apostolic letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, John Paul II noted that Christianity began with martyrs and continued, in the twentieth century, with an even greater role for martyrdom. On the eve of the third

millennium, the pontiff's Apostolic Letter of November 10, 1994 directed the Church to take stock of martyrs of the second millennium. His perspective on martyrdom was informed by his experiences during World War II. As he noted in 2000, "The generation to which I belong experienced the horror of war, the concentration camps, persecution. In my homeland, during the Second World War, priests and Christians were deported to extermination camps. In Dachau alone some 3,000 priests were interned. Their sacrifice was joined to that of many Christians from other European countries, some of whom belonged to other Churches and Ecclesial Communities."⁶ After the war, John Paul II visited Poland in 1979, and two more times during Communist rule. Communist regimes in Eastern Europe persecuted Christians with John Paul II beatifying twenty-one of them. John Paul II's 1979 visit is sometimes viewed as a key catalyst for the fall of Soviet Communism.⁷

From the standpoint of martyrs of the twentieth century, John Paul II, in his 1995 encyclical, "*Ut Unum Sint*," called for a renewed commitment to the unity of Christian denominations and ecclesiastical bodies. Taking the Vatican Council II as his theological grounding, John Paul II called for the unity of Christianity in its shared "religious memory" of the first martyrs. With the new millennium (2000) on the horizon, the pontiff decreed that the Church would "update the martyrologies for the universal Church, paying careful attention to the holiness of those who in our own time lived fully by the truth of Christ. In particular, there is a need to foster the recognition of the heroic virtues of men and women who have lived their Christian vocation in marriage." Following up on this idea in 2001, the pontiff beatified a married couple, Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, and in 2003 a sainthood case was opened

⁶The Holy See, Pope John Paul II, "Christians Have Been United in Suffering," The Celebration of the Great Jubilee, May 7, 2000.

⁷For a detailed analysis of Pope John Paul II's 1979 trip and its political consequences, see Kraszewski (2012).

for a Polish couple, Jozef and Viktoria Ulma and their seven children, by the Polish Diocese of Przemyśl. This case is currently under review by the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

In February 1996, the Vatican solicited names of martyrs from dioceses and Christian faiths around the world. In 1998, John Paul II established the Commission for the New Martyrs of the Great Jubilee to work with local commissions to compile a registry of martyrs from various Christian faiths in a "vision of the ecumenism of the blood." The archives of the Commission are not publicly available and, as a result, it is not known how many martyrs listed are from faiths other than Catholicism.

The ecumenism of John Paul II included dialogues with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian religious authorities. Putting his ecumenism into action, the pontiff traveled to Israel, Egypt, England, Sweden, Germany, and former Soviet nations to meet personally with religious and political leaders and visit holy sites. With an emphasis on Eastern Europe, martyrs of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church and the Slovak and Ruthenian Greek Catholic Churches were beatified by John Paul II. Francis continued this trend by beatifying martyrs from the Albanian and Romanian Greek Catholic Churches and the Syriac Catholic Church.

John Paul II's efforts to create "fraternal dialogue" with Jewish religious leaders and the state of Israel were unexpectedly damaged with the beatification (1987) and canonization (1998) of Edith Stein (Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), a nun killed at Auschwitz in part because she was of Jewish heritage. This beatification and canonization continued a deep controversy not only within the Catholic Church but with segments of the Jewish faith.⁸ Her canonization took place in a milieu of public questioning by Jews and Christians of the role of Pius XII during

⁸For essays on her religious life, conversion, and religious identity, as well as her beatification and canonization, see Cargas (1994) and Herbstrith (1998).

the Nazi regime and of anti-Semitism more broadly among Catholics.⁹ The canonization of Maximilian Kolbe, nine years before that of Stein, occurred during a period of controversy regarding John Paul II and the Catholic hierarchy's awareness of the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in the Church. Kolbe, an editor of a Polish anti-Semitic newspaper, *The Knight of the Immaculate*, was at John Paul II's insistence canonized as a martyr over the recommendation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.¹⁰

The ecumenical approach of the Vatican in Europe was not implemented in Latin America. As early as 1955, Catholic clergy in this region identified Pentecostal denominations (the two largest are the Assemblies of God and the Church of God of Cleveland TN) as primary threats to Catholicism. These "sects" were transforming the continent's "Catholic culture" and, by implication, its socio-religious unity ("weaken the bonds that unite the countries of Latin America and thus undermine the forces that arise from unity").¹¹

The Vatican had taken for granted the strength of Catholicism's deep roots in Latin America. The rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the region since 1900 came primarily from conversions out of Catholicism. This competition destabilized the Catholic monopoly, bringing into question the viability of the Catholic Church. John Paul II, in his opening address to the 1992 Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), fueled existing Catholic animosity towards Pentecostals: "Following the example of the Good Shepherd you must feed the flock that has been entrusted to you and defend it from the voracious wolves. The cause and the discord in your ecclesial communities are—you know it well—the sects and the 'pseudo-

⁹For a discussion of the context of Stein's canonization, see Hisch (2013).

¹⁰Kolbe was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1971 as a confessor, a decision upheld by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints but which was overruled by John Paul II at the time of canonization. See newsaints.faithweb.com/newmartyrs/martyrs_charity.htm

¹¹The Holy See, Apostolic Journey to Santo Domingo, *Opening of the Works of the IV General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, Address of John Paul II, Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), October 12, 1992, paragraph 12.

spiritual' movements mentioned in the Puebla Document ... and whose diffusion and aggression it is urgent to face."¹² The Puebla meeting of Catholic Bishops in 1979, to which John Paul II referred, discussed nine times the "sects" that were "invading" Latin America, preaching false doctrines, introducing foreign syncretic beliefs, and being anti-Catholic in their attitude toward the Church. The pontiff went on to elaborate that the success of the "sects" was primarily due to decades of a dearth of Catholic clergy in Latin America, religious (catechism) ignorance, lack of spiritual vigor in the Church, and inadequate financial resources.

2. Benedict XVI: Secularization and the "Eclipse of God." Whereas John Paul II's worldview was framed by Communism and the Cold War, Benedict XVI's focus was on the secularizing of Western Europe, a pattern that he ascribed to post-World War II economic growth. Benedict XVI referred in 2005¹³ to the prosperity of Europe as "unbridled consumerism," fostering religious indifference and a secularism closed to transcendence." Of three major themes that Benedict XVI discussed—secularization; hedonistic, self-centered consumerism; and "non-bloody" martyrdom of ordinary life—the last two would become central to Pope Francis's discourse and emphasis on everyday martyrdom.

Benedict XVI emphasized secularization in Europe. He argued that secularization permeates "all aspects of daily life and causes the development of a mentality in which God is effectively absent, entirely or in part, from human life and awareness."¹⁴ Part of this concern showed up in his contentious relationship with other religious faiths in Europe. He invited

¹²Opening of the Works of the IV General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Address of John Paul II, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1992.

¹³The Holy See, Benedict XVI Angelus, St. Peter's Square Sunday, 28 October 2007. It is with this speech that Benedict XVI broadened the concept of martyrdom to ordinary, daily sacrifice of oneself.

¹⁴The Holy See, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council of Culture, Clementine Hall, March 8, 2008.

disillusioned married Anglican priests in England to convert to Catholicism,¹⁵ and he called on the religious hierarchy in countries such as Finland and Ireland to inculcate religious values in their populations.¹⁶ In 2010, Benedict XVI formed the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization to address secularization in Europe.¹⁷

3. Francis: Daily Martyrs and Ordinary Saints. In 2019, Pope Francis compared martyrs to ordinary saints (confessors) in this way: “Martyrs are not ‘little holy men’ [*santini*] but men and women in flesh and blood who, as the Book of Revelation 7:14 says, ‘have washed their garments, making them white in the blood of the Lamb’.” Martyrs, the pope added, “are the real winners.”¹⁸ Martyrs are individuals who die for their faith. Martyrdom, as recognized by the Catholic Church, manifests as a person’s refusal to compromise or renounce her faith and whose death is the ultimate witness of faith.¹⁹

Early in his pontificate, Francis explicated a new type of martyrdom called “daily martyrdom.” He outlined three aspects of this type of martyrdom: sacrifice in ordinary life, *caritas* (Christian love), and evangelization. First, martyrdom is living one’s faith in ordinary daily activities, the quotidian life, and within one’s context. Martyrdom does not require extreme acts of saintly asceticism (vows of poverty, chastity, obedience) where one lives an

¹⁵The Holy See, Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution, *Anglicanorum Coetibus, Providing for Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans entering into Full Communion with the Catholic Church*, St. Peter’s Square, November 4, 2009.

¹⁶The Holy See, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to H.E. Mr. Alpo Rusi, New Ambassador of the Republic of Finland to the Holy See, Clementine Hall, December 17, 2009. The Holy See, Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland, March 19, 2010.

¹⁷See vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/new-evangelization/index.htm, accessed January 11, 2020.

¹⁸The Holy See, Pope Francis, General Audience St. Peter’s Square. The Vatican, September 25, 2019.

¹⁹See entries “Martyr” and “Martyrdom” in McBrien (1995, p. 829).

insulated life in devotion and self-sacrifice. A martyr lives her faith in daily activities, in her choices and actions.²⁰ In this way, a Christian is a credible and convincing witness to others.

Everyday martyrdom, according to Francis, does not require literal death “but is still a ‘loss of life’ for Christ, by doing one’s duty with love, according to the logic of Jesus, the logic of gift, of sacrifice. Let us think: how many dads and moms every day put their faith into practice by offering up their own lives in a concrete way for the good of the family! Think about this! How many priests, brothers and sisters carry out their service generously for the Kingdom of God! How many young people renounce their own interests in order to dedicate themselves to children, the disabled, the elderly.... They are martyrs too!”²¹ Francis extends the concept of martyrdom to encompass moral obligations that parents voluntarily assume toward their children, responsibilities adult children have toward elderly, incapacitated family members, or older siblings caring for younger ones. Those who become clergy and members of religious orders take vows of service that are obligations of charity toward others. “To give one’s life, to have the spirit of a martyrdom, is to surrender it in duty, in silence, in prayer, in the fulfillment of duty; in this silence of everyday life; to give one’s life little by little.”²²

Daily martyrdom, defined in this way, complements what Francis calls “hidden saints” or “middle class of holiness.” “In God’s great plan, every detail is important, even yours, even my humble little witness, even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationships, friendships. These are the saints of every day,

²⁰This characterization paraphrases Pope Francis’s answer to a question. See “Visit to Villa Nazareth, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis,” June 18, 2016, p. 3. Francis reiterates this concept of daily martyrdom in his audiences, speeches, and homilies; see Pope Francis, General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, January 7, 2015; Pope Francis, General Audience St. Peter’s Square, September 25, 2019, p. 2; and The Holy See, “Holy Mass for the Beatification of Paul Yun Ji-Chung and 123 Martyr Companions,” Homily of Pope Francis, Gwanghwamun Gate (Seoul), August 16, 2014.

²¹The Holy See, Pope Francis, *Angelus*, St Peter’s Square, June 23, 2013, p.1.

²²Pope Francis, General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, January 7, 2015, p.1.

the ‘hidden’ saints, a sort of ‘middle class of holiness’.” Whereas “daily martyrdom” can be construed as referring to morally obligatory sacrifices voluntarily assumed, “hidden saints” refers to supererogatory actions people perform in their daily lives.

The second aspect of Francis’s daily martyrdom is *caritas*—love of God and fellow human beings is intended as an antidote to indifference and isolation as a result of a narcissistic, technologically-dominated culture. Acting on *caritas*, requires renouncing one’s psychological, emotional, and physical comfort to engage with those in physical need. “Jesus says that every time we feed someone who is hungry and give drink to someone who is thirsty, that we clothe a naked person and receive a stranger, that we visit a sick or imprisoned person, we do it to Him (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).” In those encounters, human emotions such as pity, tenderness, sadness, joy, and love are developed. Francis also points to spiritual charity consisting of six actions, “to counsel the doubtful, to endure patiently annoying people, to teach the ignorant, to admonish sinners, to console the afflicted, to forgive offenses, to pray to God for the living and the dead.”²³

The third aspect of daily martyrdom that Francis discusses is evangelizing one’s faith through interactions with others. The witness of daily martyrs “confirms us in faith and helps us to renew our dedication and commitment to missionary discipleship which strives to create a culture capable of protecting and defending all life through the daily ‘martyrdom’ of silent service toward all, especially those in greatest need.”²⁴ Daily martyrdom is witnessing in personal relationships, communal activities, interactions with strangers in the spirit of Christian love.

Francis’s new interpretations of everyday martyrdom and silent saintliness should translate in the future into the beatifications and canonizations of a higher numbers of lay

²³The Holy See, Pope Francis, General Audience, “On the Works of Mercy.” St. Peter’s Square, October 12, 2016.

²⁴The Holy See, Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Thailand and Japan (19-26 November 2019), “Tribute to the Martyrs: Greetings of His Holiness,” Martyrs’ Monument - Nishizaka Hill (Nagasaki), November 24, 2019.

persons and married individuals. We should also find ordinary, routine lives characterizing martyrs and saints rather than extraordinary sacrifices and extreme ascetic lifestyles. Francis's introduction of *oblatio vitae* as the fourth category for becoming a martyr complements the pontiff's broadening of the concept of martyrdom to include ordinary, daily acts of sacrifice. Without *oblatio vitae*, daily martyrs would not meet the traditional requirement of *odio fidei* for beatification and canonization.

We note that Francis equivalates character traits of human moral agency that demonstrate discipline over selfish, amoral, or immoral appetites with the religious category of martyrdom. As moral agents, through reason and acquired habitual behavior, we are responsible for our actions. A societal notion of human agency informs moral and legal standards of responsibility and accountability. We hold people accountable for the care and treatment of their children, the elderly, and neighbors in need. By equating acts of martyrdom and saintliness with moral obligations, an "overload of obligations" crisis is created.²⁵ This problem is similar to that of universal beneficence. If we owe acts of beneficence (acts of martyrdom and saintliness) to anyone in need regardless of circumstances, we negate our own preferences, depleting our resources, thereby engaging in extreme self-denial. If beneficence is selective, then many acts of beneficence (martyrdom and saintliness) are legitimately supererogatory. Equivalating all human actions to the theological categories of martyrdom and sainthood overlooks the fundamental point that morality circumscribes obligations, assigns responsibilities to moral agents, and holds people accountable to a societal conception of justice (laws and morality).

²⁵See O'Neill (1986) p. 161.

B. Saint-Making as a Strategic Process

One of our arguments is that the geographical expansion of saints, as well as popes, derives partly from the Church's heightened concern over competition from Protestantism. Consistent with our perspectives on Saint Hermano Pedro in Guatemala, the Church seems to view saint-making as a strategic device for invigorating local Catholic populations and, thereby, discouraging conversions particularly into Evangelical Protestantism. This competitive response has been most intense in places such as Latin America, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, where Evangelical adherence has increased sharply.

Our research on confessors that included this hypothesis relied on processes and records that were formalized over centuries by the Catholic Church. The full authority of the Pope in the saint-making process was not established until 1588, during the reign of Pope Sixtus V. He created the Congregation of Rites to concentrate decision-making authority within the Holy See, particularly with regard to verifying miracles and virtues. For years after 1588, we have good information about blessed persons chosen by each pope.

Our previous research details the evolution of the process of saint-making.²⁶ To summarize, the lengthy process is typically initiated at the local level with an investigation of the person's life and writings to determine if the candidate demonstrates a heroic level of virtue or suffered martyrdom. Once this preliminary stage has concluded, with no objections raised (*nihil obstat*), the process moves into the stage of beatification and then canonization, supervised within the Holy See by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.²⁷ For beatification, if not martyred and *obliato vitae*, a miracle attributed to the person's intercession must be proved.

²⁶See Barro and McCleary (2016) and McCleary and Barro (2019, Ch. 7).

²⁷The process of beatification and canonization is described in the Apostolic Constitution, *Divines Perfectionism Magister*, issued by John Paul II in 1983.

Once the decrees are promulgated (life of heroic virtue, martyrdom, the miracle) and confirmed by the pope, the martyr and confessor become known as a blessed with beatification. For canonization, another miracle occurring after beatification is required for both martyrs and confessors. Whereas a blessed (martyr and confessor) is publicly venerated at the local level, with canonization public veneration of a saint is elevated to the Universal Church.

For centuries, the process required two verified (posthumous) miracles at each of the two final stages, but, in 1983, John Paul II reduced the required miracles to one at each stage. (Martyrs differ from confessors in not requiring any miracles for beatification, because martyrdom is viewed as equivalent to a miracle.) The waiting period for initiating a case for beatification used to be a minimum of 50 years after death, but John Paul II lowered this period to 5 years.

C. Beatifications and Canonizations of Confessors

Our main sample on confessors went from 1588 to 2019 and covered the reigns of 40 popes, from Sixtus V to the ongoing papacy of Francis. Over this interval, the total number of persons beatified as confessors was 745. Within this total, John Paul II stands out as revolutionary in terms of numbers and geographical distribution. Under the 37 previous popes, 265 persons were beatified as confessors. John Paul II surpassed this total by himself by naming 321 persons between 1978 and 2005. The two popes who followed John Paul II continued his rapid pace of beatification, with Benedict XVI contributing 94 and Francis 63 (through 2019).

We have information on socioeconomic characteristics of confessors. One trend is that the early emphasis on males (76 percent of those chosen as beatifieds from 1585 to 1899) has shifted to gender equality (males were 50 percent since 1900). Lay persons were close to 50

percent through the reign of John Paul II but have since declined to about 10 percent; that is, Benedict XVI and Francis have focused more on priests, seminarians, nuns, and other persons with formal religious identification. Married persons have been nearly 10 percent of the total and have remained roughly stable throughout. We have less complete data on education and urban versus rural location. The percentage with some formal education rose from about 75 percent from 1588 to 1899 to around 85 percent thereafter. The share living in urban areas near the time of death has been roughly stable at 75-80 percent. Children represent a very small fraction of confessors. Persons who died at aged 16 or less constituted only 0.5 percent of confessors in our full sample.

When considering the number of persons that a pope beatifies, we should adjust for the pope's length of time in office. In fact, our formal analysis, described in Barro and McCleary (2016), finds that the number chosen is roughly proportional to a pope's tenure—which has ranged from a month or less (Urban VII in 1590, Leo XI in 1605, and John Paul I in 1978) to 26.5 years for John Paul II (1978-2005) and 31.7 for Pius IX (1846-1878). These last two terms are the longest at least since the 1200s.

Figure 1 shows the numbers of confessors beatified per year in office for each pope. When viewed this way, the rates of beatification for the last three popes were similar: John Paul II's beatification rate was 12.1 per year, Benedict XVI's was 11.9, and Francis's was 9.3. These rates compare with the average of only 0.67 per year for the 37 prior popes.

From a geographical perspective, with blessed persons classified in accordance with location at death (typically the place where a person's main lifetime work was carried out), the striking recent shift for beatified confessors has been away from Italy and the rest of Western Europe and toward other regions. Western Europe had traditionally been dominant, contributing

90 percent of total beatifications before the start of John Paul II's reign in 1978 (with Italy at 53 percent and other Western Europe at 38 percent). Since then, these regions declined to 69 percent of the total (with Italy at 39 percent and other Western Europe at 30 percent). For five other main regions of the world and again comparing pre- and post-John Paul II, Latin America went from 3 percent to 11 percent, Eastern Europe from 2 percent to 9 percent, North America from 2 percent to 5 percent, Asia from 2 percent to 4 percent, and Africa from less than 1 percent to 2 percent. Thus, John Paul II's focus—continued by his two successors—was on extending saint-making to previously neglected parts of the world.

Patterns for canonization, the final part of the saint-making process, are mostly similar to those for beatifications. Figure 1 shows the number of confessors canonized per year in office for each pope. The main new element is that canonizations respond to the number of previously named but not yet “promoted” beatifieds. This force became powerful under John Paul II, who bequeathed an enormous stock of not-yet-canonized beatified confessors to his successors. The figure shows that the canonization rate per year in office jumped up for John Paul II—going from an average of only 0.43 per year for the 37 prior popes to 3.0. However, the rate then rose further, to 5.5 for Benedict XVI and 7.0 for Francis.

In our formal analysis, we find that the further increase in the canonization rate for the two most recent popes can be well explained by the sharply expanded number of candidates (i.e. beatifieds) that became available. Hence, the two most recent popes are not really behaving differently from John Paul II. They have been canonizing more persons each year because they have a large reservoir of candidates from whom to choose.

The detailed statistical results highlight the role of competition between Catholicism and Protestantism. We constructed a measure of this competition over time and across seven major

world regions by looking at an interaction between the fraction of the population that is Catholic and the fraction that is Protestant. Specifically, we argued that competition is more intense when each adherence share is larger and when the shares are closer to each other. Hence, the peak in competition arises when each adherence share equals half of the population. Gauged this way, the main increases in Catholic-Protestant competition occurred during the 20th century in Latin America and Africa because of the large growth in Evangelical Protestantism, notably in Pentecostal faiths. In Asia, competition is high today, but the main rise occurred much more gradually over a long period. In North America (United States and Canada), competition was always high but has not risen over time. In Western and Eastern Europe, competition was always moderate and has also not risen over time.

The statistical analysis demonstrates that the competition force exerted an important positive influence on beatifications and canonizations of confessors in the applicable time period and region. In fact, the typical size variation in the amount of Catholic-Protestant competition accounts for about half of the observed variation in the number of persons beatified.

We found specifically that Catholic-Protestant competition underlies the spread of saint-making away from its traditional Western European focus and toward other regions, especially Latin America and Africa but also Eastern Europe, Asia, and North America. This geographical spread means that many countries received their first saint only recently. Countries with first-time saints (including here martyrs as well as confessors) in the 2000s are Argentina, Australia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ireland, Malta, Mexico, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, and Ukraine.

We also considered whether competition between Catholicism and other religions mattered for saint-making. The only noticeable interaction that we found was between the

Catholic and Orthodox religions in Eastern Europe. But this force turned out not to be quantitatively important for choices of blessed persons. Therefore, our conclusion was that the Catholic Church's saint-making activity has reacted mainly to competition from Protestantism. This interaction can be viewed as part of the broader competition with Protestantism that has been important since the Reformation, which started with Martin Luther in Wittenberg Germany in 1517.

We also assessed competition for Catholicism on another front, secularization, which we mentioned before as a focus of Benedict XVI. We considered that greater enthusiasm for the Catholic religion, stimulated partly by the naming of popular saints, would discourage people from leaving religion entirely; that is, from opting for "no religion." The no-religion category, often described as "nones," includes agnostics and atheists but also individuals who just report no affiliation with a formal religion.

The no-religion group grew particularly during the 20th century, especially in Western Europe but also in other parts of the world. For example, from 1900 to 2010, the estimated no-religion fraction of the population rose from 0.2 percent to 16.5 percent in Italy, 0.3 percent to 19.8 percent in France, 0.3 percent to 23.2 percent in Germany, and 1.3 percent to 17.1 percent in the United States. A different pattern for former Communist countries is that no-religion status became common during the Communist era but typically declined after Communism disappeared, often in the early 1990s. For example, the estimated no-religion fraction in Russia rose from 0.2 percent in 1900 to 50.1 percent in 1975 but then declined to 8.2 percent in 2010. For China, where the government may or may not still be Communist but clearly remains substantially anti-religion, the estimated no-religion share went from 0.0 percent in 1900 to 60.1 percent in 1970 and 39.9 percent in 2010.

Our statistical analysis found some positive response of saint-making to secularization but the effect was weaker than that from Catholic-Protestant competition. The typical size variation in the amount of Catholic/no-religion interaction accounts for about 10 percent of the observed variation in the number of persons beatified as confessors. This effect is most important for Western Europe, where efforts to stave off movements to no-religion by naming more blessed persons has partially offset the broader tendency to move saint-making away from this region and toward other parts of the world.

D. Beatifications and Canonizations of Martyrs

An important contrast between confessors and martyrs is that the latter are often chosen in large groups. Prominent examples are the priests and other religious persons killed during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Other large groups of martyrs associate with long ago religious persecution in China, England, France, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Mexico, and European Communist countries after World War II (see Tables 1 and 2). As a recent example mentioned before, Pope Francis in 2013 canonized the 813 martyrs of Otranto, who were beatified in 1771 by Pope Clement XIV. These male townspeople were killed by Muslim invaders in 1480 in the southern Italian coastal city of Otranto.

As mentioned before and shown in Table 1, we have data on 5048 martyrs beatified from 1588 to early 2020. The potential number of future beatifications of martyrs is even more impressive, because the candidates include the roughly 12,000 names collected between 1996 and 2000 by the Commission of New Martyrs.²⁸ Thus far, 1394 martyrs have been canonized.

²⁸The Commission collected histories, narratives, and lists of martyrs from different Christian faiths and all parts of the world. See Riccardi (2000, p. 11). Since the Commission's archives are not public, we do not know what percentage are Catholic.

Thus, there is also potential for large numbers of future canonizations from the stock of those already beatified.

As shown in Table 1, martyrs often associate with a single event, such as the roughly 1900 beatified thus far from the priests and other persons associated with the Catholic Church who were killed mostly in 1936 during the Republican government's Red Terror in the Spanish Civil War. These persons are combined into a number of groups and spread over several years of beatification, starting in 1987 under John Paul II. The potential for more saint-making from this period is great because the canonizations thus far total only 11, and another 2000 or so cases for beatification are in process.²⁹

Table 1 gives the full list of events associated with Catholic martyrs, with cases listed in decreasing order of the number beatified. This table includes many of the world's most violent wars and revolutions, such as World War II, the Spanish Civil War, the French Revolution, the Mongol Invasion, the Thirty Years' War, and the 100 Years' War (featuring Joan of Arc). Also included are massive persecutions of Catholic clergy and adherents, including the English Reformation and the persecution of missionaries and their followers in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and China. In general, the table slants toward locations in which the Catholic Church was evangelizing or already had a significant institutional presence.

Table 1 excludes 87 (out of 5048) individual cases of martyrdom not associated with a larger event. This individual group includes fourteen cases of attempted rape (*in defensum castitatis*); Catholic missionaries killed proselytizing to those of other faiths; missionaries evangelizing in violent areas; inquisitors and their staff killed by "heretics;" indigenous converts

²⁹See Reczioch (2007). Beatifications associated with the Spanish Civil War were delayed until 1987 in order to allow 50 years to elapse from the event.

murdered by their own people; and individuals killed in random circumstances, such as robbery, ambush by natives, or by pirates.

In Table 2, we categorize events in which the martyrs died into three types: Internal Wars (civil wars, insurgencies), Wars between Countries, and Religious Persecutions. The most numerous occurrences (not number of deaths) are religious persecutions. In these cases, government rulers and military regimes typically enacted decrees and laws that suppressed a particular religion or all religions. In some circumstances, informal policies of religious persecution were implemented. Forms of religious persecution have been practiced historically across the globe.

Civil wars and insurgencies represented in the martyrs' data have a geographic concentration of numbers of occurrences in Latin America (Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, and Peru), followed by Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Africa. The beatification and canonization of martyrs in Latin America is taking place at a higher rate under Francis than any other pope. This pattern applies to each of the three types of events, notably in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, and Mexico.

Figure 2 shows the number of martyrs beatified and canonized per year in office for each pope (starting with Sixtus V in 1588). Prior to the start of John Paul II's term in 1978, most popes chose few martyrs. The outlier is Clement XIV, who selected the 813 martyrs of Otranto. Also noteworthy is Pius XI, who beatified 473 martyrs, associated particularly with the French Revolution, the English Reformation, and anti-Catholic Church violence in Korea.

The number of martyrs beatified shows a clear break with John Paul II (start year 1978), who jumped up from the prior popes' average of 5.4 per year in office to 39. The number per year then rose to 98 for Benedict XVI (start year 2005) and 167 for Francis (start year 2013 and

considered through early 2020). Hence, as suggested earlier, the choosing of martyrs has become Francis's trademark.

Figure 2 shows that canonizations of martyrs have been rare until recently. However, there is an indication, starting with John Paul II, that popes have now turned to canonizing substantially from the backlog of martyrs already beatified. The large number (848) for Francis reflects especially the canonizations of the 813 martyrs of Otranto in 2013.

In terms of characteristics, one difference from confessors is that beatified martyrs have remained predominantly male. This share averaged 84 percent over the full sample and was roughly the same from before John Paul II to afterwards. Another difference from confessors is the higher frequency of child martyrs. Persons aged 16 or less at the time of death constituted 2.7 percent of martyrs overall (96 of 3614 martyrs with data on age of death). The percentages were 4.2 before John Paul II and 2.1 thereafter. Child martyrs typically arise when whole families are murdered together, applying especially to long ago cases in Asia, particularly in Japan. Overall, 74 percent of child martyrs (71 of 96) are in Asia. This pattern in Asia reflects the nature of familial units' conversion into Christianity as well as a cultural understanding of religion as hereditary. The majority of child martyrs died during periods of religious persecution. Child martyrs are vastly underrepresented in the counts made thus far by the Catholic Church. It is unclear whether a policy altering this pattern is occurring in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.³⁰

For beatified martyrs, the lay fraction averaged 27 percent and the married fraction 10 percent, each with no clear trend. For regions, the largest share over the full sample is for

³⁰Two causes for 110 child martyrs of the French Revolution have been opened but it is unclear where they stand in the process of beatification. There are many more causes for child martyrs in process. We are currently writing a paper, "Child Martyrs," based on our data.

Western Europe, at 71 percent, reflecting in recent years especially the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Asia was next at 19 percent, followed by Eastern Europe at 4.9 percent and Latin America at 2.9 percent. Upward movements pre- and post-John Paul II show up for Western Europe (which went from 64 percent to 76 percent), Eastern Europe (from 2.7 percent to 6.4 percent), and Latin America (from 2.1 percent to 3.5 percent). The boosts for Eastern Europe and Latin America go along with the rises in beatifications of confessors in these regions.

In conducting our research on Catholic martyrs, we find that the horrific acts that humans commit against each other, even against their ethnic, tribal, and familial relations, is universal, not limited to one culture or geographic region or historical period. These atrocities can happen in any given century, in any country, town, or neighborhood, and among people who have bonds of affection, care for one another, are neighbors and acquaintances, and interact in daily activities. The circumstances that create martyrs are not exceptional, but the result of a universal human pattern of committing atrocities against other humans, even children and infants.

III. Standards for Making Saints

The sharp increase in beatifications and canonizations (initiated by John Paul II for confessors and by Francis for martyrs), the reduced waiting period for beatification (from 50 to 5 years), and the increased naming of ex-Popes as blessed persons can all be viewed as reductions in the Catholic Church's standards for saint-making. In fact, Cunningham (2005, pp. 121-122) notes a high level of concern within the Catholic hierarchy about the process having been cheapened: "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.”

The observation that the Catholic Church has diminished its standards for saint-making does not necessarily imply that this policy shift has been a mistake. In fact, our conjecture is that John Paul II and his successor popes have found a bottom-up strategy for reinvigorating the faithful. With a dearth of Catholic clergy globally and reliance on deacons who are also in short supply, heightened makings of martyrs and confessors may be a cost-effective strategy for competing effectively against serious threats from Protestantism and secularization.

Note, however, that the trend initiated by Francis away from extraordinary acts and exceptional lives may lower the impact of saint-making on the faithful. The inclusion of ordinary persons and lives into martyrdom likely lessens the inspirational value of sainthood. Therefore, the Church and its Congregation for the Causes of Saints may have to rethink the changed vision of martyrs initiated by Francis.

An important gap in our argument is that we have not shown directly that the Catholic Church’s strategic selections of blessed persons—in terms of numbers and locations—actually works to energize Catholics. One study that examines the impact of saint-making on outcomes is Pfaff (2013). He found for Germany in the years following the Reformation that the probability of a city’s leaders opting for Protestantism, rather than staying with Catholicism, was inversely related to the number of saints’ shrines per capita that had been erected in the area prior to the Reformation. Moreover, Pfaff’s evidence pointed to the special role of saints and their shrines because there was no significant relation between the pre-Reformation number of monasteries per capita and the probability of adopting Protestantism.

Pfaff (2013, p.201) used the city of Cologne as an example of the importance of a local saint: “Cologne provides an example of how a city resisted the Evangelical insurgency with the help of its cult of the local martyr St. Ursula. From the twelfth century, Ursula’s homegrown cult was deeply woven into the cultic life of Cologne’s citizens. ... Certainly, material interests help to explain why Catholicism triumphed in Cologne ... but so too does the role of the cult of the saints in helping to achieve civic unity, political consensus, and cultural cohesion in rites, processions, and civic festivals.”

Pfaff’s vision of the inspirational value of saints and their shrines accords with Durkheim (1915, p. 422), who argued that a person’s religious experiences tends to be more rewarding when carried out in a social setting, such as joint participation in prayer, singing, processions, and pilgrimages. He thought that these kinds of rituals created a “state of effervescence,” which led to “passions more active, sensations stronger.” Pfaff (2013, pp. 197-200) argues that a group’s joint veneration of saints is an example of Durkheim’s effervescence.

IV. Research Plans

We are currently carrying out research to investigate directly how choices of blessed persons invigorate the faithful and bring in new converts. Specifically, we will assess the impact of beatifications of confessors and martyrs on the number of baptisms in the locality corresponding to the blessed person’s place of death. We think that baptism numbers are a good indicator of Catholic participation, and these data are available by diocese going back many years. Once these data are assembled, we will be able to assess effects from beatifications and canonizations of confessors and martyrs on Catholic participation. We will, in particular, be able to determine the relative influence of one confessor versus one martyr versus one group of

martyrs (such as those associated with Otranto or the Spanish Civil War or the French Revolution). More broadly, we hope to assess whether the expanded saint-making of Popes John Paul II and Francis has been a successful global competitive strategy and not a mere cheapening of the currency.

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Table 1 Martyr Events

Martyr Event	Year death	Beatified	Year BEA	Canonized	Year CAN	Country death
All		5048		1394		
Spanish Civil War	1934-1939	1896	1987-2020	11	1999-2003	Spain
Muslim invasion, Otranto	1480	813	1771	813	2013	Italy
French Revolution	1792-1798	440	1906-2012	0	2016	France
Martyrs of Japan	1597-1639	437	1627-2008	42	1862-1989	Japan
English Reformation	1535-1679	286	1886-1987	47	1935-1970	England
Martyrs of Korea	1791-1888	228	1925-2014	105	1984	South Korea
World War II	1939-1945	175	1985-2019	2	1982 1998	Germany, Poland, etc.
Martyrs of Vietnam	1745-1862	118	1906	118	1998	Vietnam
Boxer Rebellion	1900	86	1946-1955	86	2000	China
Communism post WWII	1945-1984	80	2001-2019	0		Albania, Romania, etc.
Mongol Invasion	1260	49	1807	0		Poland
Martyrs of Brazil	1570	40	1854	0		Brazil
Cristero War	1926-1928	38	1998-2005	25	2000-2016	Mexico
Portugal-Dutch War	1645	30	2000	30	2017	Brazil
Martyrs of Uganda	1885-1886	22	1920	22	1964	Uganda
Algerian Civil War	1994-1996	19	2018	0		Algeria
Martyrs of Gorkum	1572	19	1675	19	1867	Netherlands
Martyrs of China	1648-1839	18	1889-1909	18	1992-2000	China
Martyrs of Ireland	1584-1654	17	1992	0		Ireland
Martyrs of Laos	1954-1970	17	2016	0		Laos
Taiping Civil War	1856-1862	15	1900-1909	15	2000	China
Guatemala Civil War	1980-1991	14	2017-2020	0		Guatemala
Martyrs of Prague	1611	14	2012	0		Czech Republic
Martyrs of Pratulin	1874	13	1996	0		Poland
Martyrs of Damascus	1860	11	1926	0		Syria
Martyrs of Toulouse	1242	10	1866	0		France
Martyrs of North America	1642-1649	8	1925	8	1930	Canada, USA
Martyrs of Armenia	1895	8	1982	0		Armenia
Martyrs of Thailand	1940	7	1989	0		Thailand
Martyrs of Thane	1322	5	1894	0		India
Martyrs of Cuncolim	1583	5	1893	0		India
Martyrs of La Rioja	1976	4	2019	0		Argentina
Thirty Years' War	1619 1631	4	1905 1974	3	1995-1997	Hungary, Germany
Martyrs of Chimbote	1991	3	2015	0		Peru
Martyrs of Ethiopia	1716	3	1988	0		Ethiopia
Colombian Civil War	1948 1989	2	2017	0		Colombia
El Salvador Civil War	1980	1	2015	1	2018	El Salvador
Mexico Revolution	1915	1	1992	1	2000	Mexico
Ecuador Revolution	1897	1	2019	0		Ecuador
Khmelnysky Uprising	1657	1	1853	1	1938	Poland
Union of Brest	1623	1	1643	1	1867	Belarus
100 Years' War	1491	1	1909	1	1920	France
Menalamba Rebellion	1896	1	1965	1	2013	Madagascar

Note to Table 1: The table includes beatifications and canonizations from 1588 (Pope Sixtus V) to early 2020 (Francis). 87 of the 5048 martyr beatifications are included in the total but are not classified into a specific event. Thousands of additional blessed persons were declared before the creation by Sixtus V in January 1588 of the Sacred Congregation for Rites, now known as the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The data set excludes pre-Congregation blessed persons. The sources on martyrs include the Vatican website (vatican.va), Pontifical Academy Cultorum Martyrum (vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/cult-martyrum/index.htm), official websites of religious orders, Catholic Church (1999), Burns (1995), McBrien (2001), Hagiography Circle (accessed at newsaints.faihw.com), catholicsaints.info, and websites dedicated to specific groups of martyrs, for example, 26martyrs.com and *Wikipedia*.

Table 2

Descriptions of Martyr Events

Martyr Event	Description
Internal Wars (civil wars, revolutions)	
Spanish Civil War 1936-1939	Catholic Church allied with Nationalist revolt led by Franco. Killings of priests and other Catholic personnel carried out mostly by Republican government, mostly in first year of war, 1936.
French Revolution 1789-1799	Revolutionary opposition to Catholic Church partly due to anti-religion sentiment and partly to general opposition to established leadership structure.
Algerian Civil War 1991-2002	Catholics killed likely by Islamic rebels.
Martyrs of Gorkum 1568-1648	Catholics killed by Dutch Calvinists as part of Dutch revolt against Spain (80 Years' War).
Martyrs of Laos 1954-1970	Catholics killed by anti-religious Communist government (Pathet Lao).
Taiping Civil War 1850-1864	Rebellion against Qing Dynasty led by Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which attempted to introduce revolutionary form of Christianity. Government saw Catholic Church as allied with rebels.
Guatemala Civil War 1960-1996	Catholic personnel killed by military and right-wing political groups. Catholic Church seen by government as allied with insurgents.
Martyrs of Chimbote 1991	Catholic priests killed in Peru by Shining Path guerrillas.
Colombian Civil War 1948-2016	Catholics killed by guerrillas as part of civil war.
El Salvador Civil War 1979-1992	Oscar Romero, archbishop of San Salvador, assassinated, likely by right-wing political group.
Mexico Revolution 1910-1920	Killing as part of anti-Catholic stance of revolutionaries, who founded liberal government with constitution of 1917.
Ecuador Revolution 1895	Liberal revolutionaries overthrew conservative government and introduced anti-Catholic positions.
Khmelnysky Uprising 1648-1657	Cossacks won independence from Poland, including movement away from Catholic Church and toward Orthodox Church. Cossacks committed mass atrocities, especially against Catholic clergy.
Union of Brest 1595-1596	Conflict between Orthodox and Catholic Church. Killings by Cossacks, who favored Ukrainian independence and Orthodox Church.
Menalamba Rebellion 1895-1903	Revolt against French occupation in Madagascar.
Wars between Countries	
Muslim Invasion 1480	Killings of Catholic townspeople in Otranto, Italy, by Muslim invaders.
World War II 1939-1945	Killings of Catholic priests and others mainly in Nazi concentration camps.

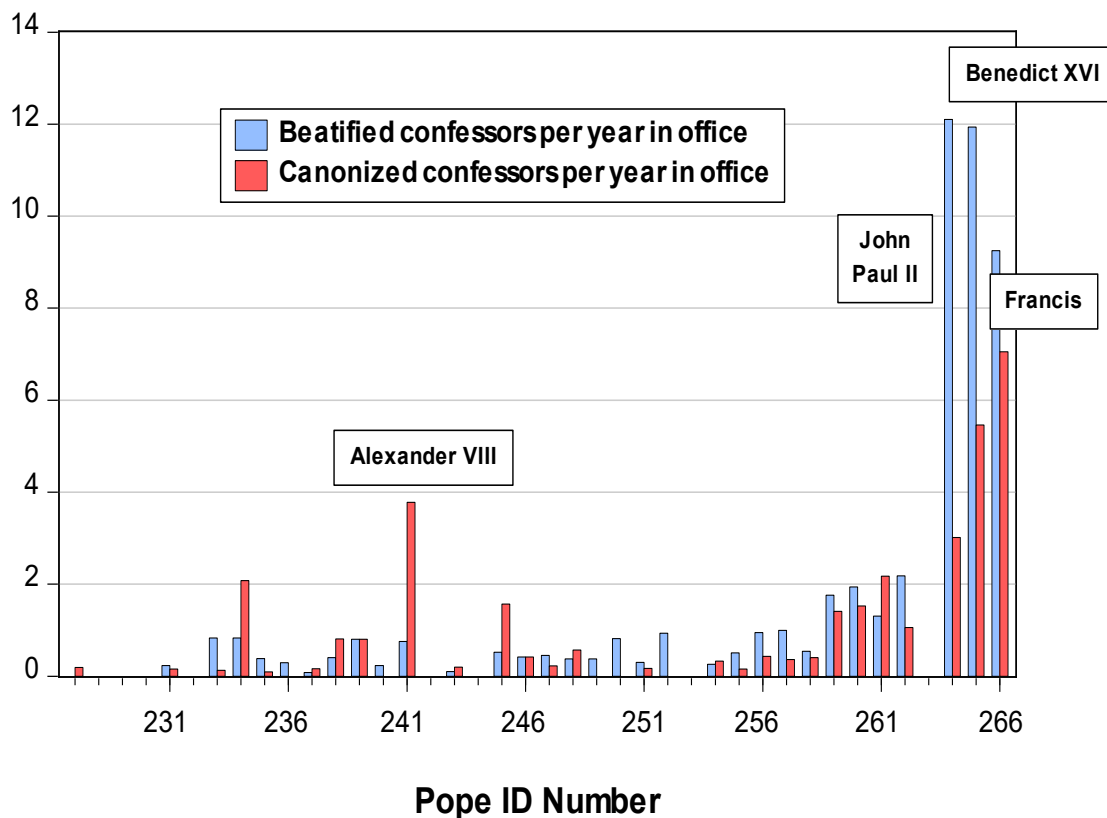
Mongol Invasions 1236-1260	Killings of Catholics in Mongol invasions of Russia and Poland.
Portugal-Dutch War 1602-1663	War between Portuguese and Dutch; conflict between these two forces in disputed colonial territory of Brazil led to killings of Catholic priests and others by Dutch soldiers. Referred to as Martyrs of Natal.
Thirty Years' War 1618-1648	Catholic priests killed in connection with Catholic-Protestant warfare in Hungary & Germany.
100 Years' War 1337-1453	Joan of Arc killed during ongoing warfare between England & France.
Religious Persecution	
Martyrs of Japan 1597-1630	Tokugawa shogunate banned Christianity in 1614; most deaths of Catholic missionaries & followers after that.
English Reformation 1535-1648	Anti-Catholic laws especially from Henry VIII & Elizabeth I. Thomas More & John Fisher killed in 1535. Most killings after 1535 under Elizabeth I.
Martyrs of Korea 1791-1888	Religious persecution against Catholics under Joseon Dynasty, which was Confucian, anti-Buddhist, and anti-Christian. In 1801, Queen Jeongsun as regent used widespread Catholic persecution as cover for eliminating political opposition.
Martyrs of Vietnam 1745-1862	Most killings from anti-Catholic persecution after 1833-35 failed revolution, which was supported by the Catholic Church.
Communism post WWII 1945-1984	Communist ideology in many countries hostile to organized religion in general and Catholicism in particular. Killings of Catholic priests and others occurred particularly in Albania & Romania.
Boxer Rebellion 1899-1901	After years of failed attempts to resist foreign influence, revolt by Chinese secret society known as Boxers was aimed particularly against Catholic missionaries & their followers. Government under Empress Dowager Cixi allied with Boxers against foreign armies but lost.
Martyrs of Brazil 1570	Catholic missionaries killed near Canary Islands on way to Brazil by French Huguenot Calvinists led by Jacques Sorie.
Cristero War 1926-1929	Killings of Catholic clergy and laypersons related to uprising against anti-clerical laws put into effect during Mexican Revolution in 1917 constitution. Catholic Church supported the Cristeros.
Martyrs of Uganda 1885-1887	Killings of Catholics on orders of Mwanga II, the Kabaka of Buganda.
Martyrs of China 1648-1839	Various waves of anti-Catholic persecution by Chinese emperors.
Martyrs of Ireland 1584-1654	Persecutions of Catholics in Ireland, related to English Reformation.
Martyrs of Prague 1611	Franciscan friars killed in Prague by a mob led by Lutherans.
Martyrs of Pratulín 1874	Catholics killed by Russian troops in Poland; part of confiscation of Catholic churches for use by Orthodox church.
Martyrs of Damascus 1860	Franciscan friars and other Catholics killed by Druz Muslims. Part of mass killings in 1860 of Christians in Lebanon and Damascus.
Martyrs of Toulouse 1242	Catholic clergy and lay associates affiliated with Inquisition; killed by Albigensian heretics.

Martyrs of North America 1642-1649	Jesuit missionaries from France, based in Canada and neighboring U.S., killed by Mohawks.
Martyrs of Armenia 1895	Killings of Catholics in Armenia and Turkey orchestrated by Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid.
Martyrs of Thailand 1940	Also called martyrs of Songkhon. Catholics killed by local police in context of Franco-Thai war.
Martyrs of Thane 1322	Franciscan missionaries killed for blasphemy by Muslims in Thane, India (close to Mumbai).
Martyrs of Cuncolim 1583	Jesuit missionaries killed by local villagers in Cuncolim, India, a part of South Goa.
Martyrs of La Rioja 1976	Bishop and other Catholic religious persons killed in Argentina, likely by the military, at a time of human-rights abuses (“Dirty War”). Catholic Church involved at the time in social activism and union organizing.
Martyrs of Ethiopia 1716	Catholic priests killed in Ethiopia by the new monarch, Dawit III, as part of anti-religion campaign.

Note: The martyr events from Table 1 were classified into three groups: Internal wars (civil wars, revolutions), Wars between Countries, and Religious Persecutions. However, some events combine aspects of two types—for example, Mexico’s Cristero War involved religious persecution derived from the Mexican Civil War and the Constitution of 1917 and China’s Boxer Rebellion featured religious persecution that evolved into a conflict between countries.

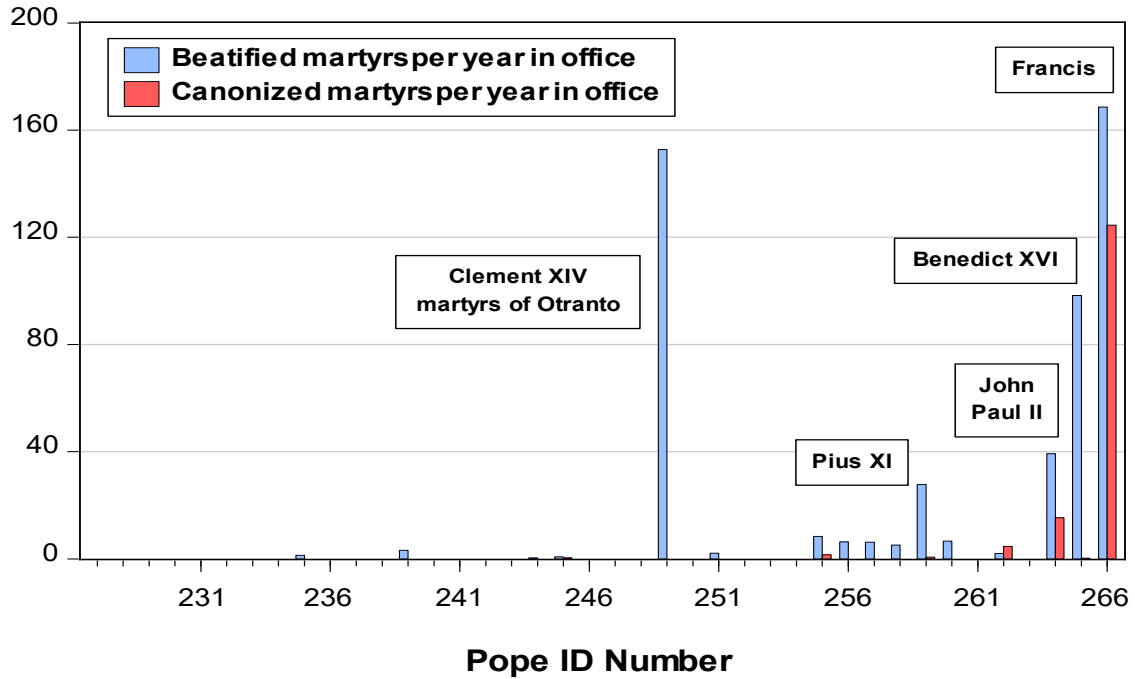
Figure 1

Beatifications and Canonizations of Confessors



Note: The figure shows, for each pope (going from Sixtus V in 1588 to Francis, start year 2013), the ratio of the number of confessors beatified and canonized to the pope’s full tenure in office. For Francis, the numbers go through 2019.

Figure 2
Beatifications and Canonizations of Martyrs



Note: The figure shows, for each pope (going from Sixtus V in 1588 to Francis, start year 2013), the ratio of the number of martyrs beatified and canonized to the pope's full tenure in office. For Francis, the numbers go through early 2020.