

COLUMNISTS

Two popes, 'unlike one another,' to be beatified

Pope John Paul II will beatify two of his predecessors, John XXIII (1958-63) and Pius IX (1846-78), on Sept. 3. They could not be more unlike one another.

John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) that opened the windows of the church to renewal and reform and promoted dialogue with the world. Pius IX condemned many of the major developments of the modern world in his Syllabus of Errors (1864) and convened the First Vatican Council (1869-70) that defined his infallibility.

John XXIII is widely regarded as the most beloved pope in history. Pius IX was accused of kidnapping a 6-year-old boy from his Jewish parents after the boy had been secretly baptized by a housemaid.

Many of the bishops at Vatican II had petitioned Pope Paul VI to proclaim John a saint then and there. He declined to do so, concerned about the sensibilities of the council's defeated minority. Instead, he announced that John XXIII's cause would be linked with that of his own mentor's, Pope Pius XII (1939-58).

When many in the Jewish community raised objections against canonizing a pope who had been silent during the Holocaust, Pius XII's cause was withdrawn, only to be replaced by Pius IX's.



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

However, this pope is no more likely to withdraw Pius IX's candidacy for beatification because of strong protests from the Jewish community than he was to cancel the beatification, in 1990, of Father Jose Maria Escrivá de Balaguer, founder of *Opus Dei*, in the teeth of far more widespread opposition within the church itself and even within the hierarchy.

Many Catholics object to the linkage between Pius IX and John XXIII. They feel that John XXIII is such a great figure in his own right that he should not have to share the spotlight, so to speak, with anyone else, and particularly a pope whose personality and pastoral agenda were so starkly different from his own.

Born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the third of 13 children in a family of peasant

farmers, John XXIII was ordained a priest in 1904 and served as secretary to the bishop of Bergamo and as a lecturer in church history at the diocesan seminary. He was a drafted hospital orderly during World War I and then a military chaplain.

Because of his deep interest in history, Father Roncalli came to the attention of Achille Ratti, head of the Ambrosian Library in Milan and the future Pope Pius XI (1922-39), who launched Roncalli's diplomatic career in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and then France during World War II.

Archbishop Roncalli established friendly relations with the Orthodox churches and prevented the deportation of many Jews after the German occupation of Greece. In 1953 he was appointed cardinal-patriarch of Venice, and was elected pope on Oct. 28, 1958, just shy of his 77th birthday. Many regarded him as a "transitional pope." John XXIII was to prove them wrong.

When he took possession of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, his cathedral church as bishop of Rome, the new pope emphasized that he was not a prince, but "a priest, a father, a shepherd." That Christmas he revived a custom of visiting prisoners at Regina Coeli, where he recalled the jailing of one of his own rel-

atives, and of visiting patients at one of the local hospitals. He also made frequent appearances at local parishes, other hospitals, convalescent homes, and educational and charitable institutions.

In his opening address to the council on Oct. 11, 1962, he insisted that the council had not been called to refute errors, but to update the church and to "let some fresh air in." In contrast to many of his close advisers, whom he described as "prophets of gloom," his talk was full of hope for the future of the church.

Soon after his election, he removed the word "perfidious" from the prayer for Jews in the Good Friday liturgy, and on one occasion greeted a group of Jewish visitors with, "I am Joseph, your brother."

When he died on June 3, 1963, virtually the whole world mourned his loss. Even the Union Jack was lowered to half-mast in the bitterly divided city of Belfast.

In the early church John XXIII would have been proclaimed a saint by popular demand. By contrast, a Roman mob tried to throw Pius IX's body into the Tiber.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

With trust in Jesus, bring truth into politics

21st Sunday of the Year (Aug. 27): (R3) John 6:60-69; (R1) Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18; (R2) Ephesians 5:21-32.

We live in a time when truth-telling has been replaced by efforts to represent things in the best possible light.

John F. Kennedy in his inspiring book, *Profiles in Courage*, tells the story about a little-known senator who took a courageous stand that affected the course of our government. It was during the time Andrew Johnson succeeded Abraham Lincoln. Unlike Lincoln, Johnson was less skilled in diplomacy. He had many enemies. He was a Democrat and the Republican Senate decided to run him out of office. So they created false charges against him. Based on these charges, the House of Representatives voted to impeach him. But to everyone's surprise, six Republican senators decided to vote in Johnson's favor. Even though they disliked him, they could not in conscience falsely convict the man. With these six voting against impeachment, only one more vote would make or break the two-thirds margin. And that was where Edmund O. Ross came in.

Ross was a Republican senator from Kansas. His party members badgered him mercilessly to go along with impeachment. Bribes, threats and ostracism couldn't sway Ross. On May 16,



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

1868, Ross voted against impeachment. An innocent man was acquitted, and the balance of power was restored in our government. And not a single one of those seven Republicans was re-elected to the Senate. They sacrificed their political careers for the sake of the truth.

Our country has been fortunate to have many men and women of conscience who have served us in the halls of government. Still, there are many political commentators who believe that no candidate for high office today dare tell the truth about what he or she really believes about critical issues. It would mean political suicide. So they shade a little here — and a little more there.

Some people would contend that politicians reflect the greater society. Well, how many of us shade a little bit of

truth here, a little bit of truth there?

Many of those who followed Jesus were drifting away. His message was too radical, his demands too great. Jesus asked the Twelve Apostles, "Do you want to leave me, too?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We are convinced that you are God's holy one."

Simon and the disciples had come to know that they could trust Jesus.

We live in a world in which the truth is constantly being shaded by parents, by politicians, by co-workers, even by spouses. And sometimes we begin to wonder, "Is there anybody we can trust?" There is nothing in the world more freeing than to have a friend, a spouse, anyone in whom we can place complete confidence.

The disciples discovered such a person in Jesus. Simon Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Everyone else may let us down, but Jesus never will. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Years ago a fire broke out in a Chicago hotel. Some people on the 10th floor were trapped. It looked as if they were doomed. However, one man braved the smoke and found an exit to a fire escape. He got to the trapped group and asked them to follow him. Most did. But some

did not believe him, they didn't trust him, they didn't follow him. They stayed on the balcony of the 10th floor, and they died. Life was there for them. They refused to accept it, and they perished.

That is sad: to have someone who can help you, and yet turn your back out of a lack of trust.

Jesus can help us. We can trust him! We should trust him.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, August 28

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12;
Matthew 23:13-22

Tuesday, August 29

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 14-17;
Mark 6:17-29

Wednesday, August 30

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, 16-18;
Matthew 23:27-32

Thursday, August 31

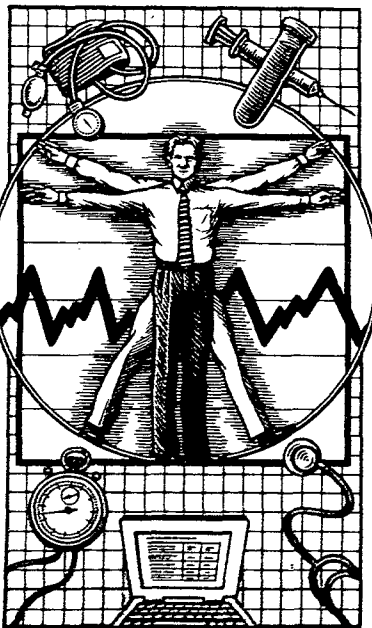
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Matthew 24:42-51

Friday, September 1

1 Corinthians 1:17-25; Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday, September 2

1 Corinthians 1:26-31;
Matthew 25:14-30



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