

The Pope's Too Late

Believers Beatified Already!

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What I had planned to speak on this Lord's Day was suddenly brushed aside by another incident of reading too much in the newspaper!

Yesterday I happened upon a story, and in the headline was the name Robert Mugabe. So, of course, I had to read that. Now, if you don't know who Robert Mugabe is, he is the genocidal mass murdering leader for life of the poor benighted country of Zimbabwe. His greatest claim to fame, other than the tens of thousands of people that he has butchered, was the time he went and bulldozed down 700,000 houses and called it "beautification." And he didn't even give the people a chance to get their belongings out before his thugs bulldozed down their houses. And, of course, some people were still inside and were killed.

But the article I read described how he had arrived in Rome for the beatification of John Paul II. And it remarked about the fact that he had to get a special exemption from the European Union, because they have a ban on him traveling anywhere in the European Union because of his human rights abuses and atrocities. But because he is a head of state that has diplomatic relations with the Vatican, and because the Vatican is not a member of the European Union, therefore it was possible for him to make the pilgrimage to attend this glorious event, just like he attended the pope's funeral in 2005 and created a diplomatic stir when Prince Charles accidentally shook his hand at the solemn event.

But now he is going to be attending the beatification which took place earlier this morning over in the Vatican. The RTE news had this to say.

"He arrived in Rome to attend the beatification of late pope John Paul II at the Vatican. Mr. Mugabe, 87, obtained a special exemption from a European Union travel ban to make the journey."

He, of course, is a life-long Catholic. It's interesting that they haven't managed to excommunicate a notorious mass murderer, but he still is in full communion with the Catholic Church.

And then the article said this -- and this is the line that just flipped me over, not that Robert Mugabe would attend the beatification, but this:

“Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims are expected to descend on Rome for tomorrow’s beatification, which will confer a blessed status on the former pope who reigned for nearly 27 years.”

And when I read that, when I saw that the purpose of this ceremony was to announce that the late pope John Paul II was blessed, I thought that this is something that must be taken up. This must be taken up.

It must be taken on, not because it is foolish or silly or of no real effect—it is all those things—but it must be taken on because it is a concrete demonstration and upholding of a false gospel that is accursed. And the fact that people believe that the pope can beatify someone, or canonize someone, or announce that it is ok to call someone blessed, because the pope says so and because of the process that has been gone through, is to make a mockery of the true gospel, and to uphold before the world a patently false gospel. And I will explain why; it actually is very simple once you understand what is going on, how this can be.

Now, an article appeared on the Vatican radio website that talked about the fact that no tickets were required. Tickets are free. They don’t want people out scalping or selling them on the internet at inflated prices. But here is a description of the events that have by now taken place.

The ceremonies for the beatification have been divided into five phases. The first is an open air vigil of preparation that will take place on the evening of Saturday, April 30 at the Circus Maximus, organized by the diocese of Rome. It will be led by Cardinal Augustine Vellini, vicar general for the diocese of Rome. Pope Benedict—now get this line! —“Pope Benedict XVI will join spiritually through a live video link.” I never have heard the word “virtual” being substituted by the word “spiritually!” Normally we call those “virtual appearances.”

The second phase is the beatification ceremony itself, Sunday May 1 at Saint Peter’s Square, a celebration which will be presided over by the Holy Father and will begin at 10 am. Immediately after the ceremony, the remains of the newly blessed will be placed in front of the high altar at Saint Peter’s Basilica of the Veneration of the Faithful. On Monday, May 2nd, Secretary of State Cardinal Bertoni will preside over a mass of thanksgiving at 10:30 in Saint Peter’s Square. Following this, Pope John Paul II’s remains will be privately interred in a side chapel of Saint Sebastian in Saint Peter’s Basilica.

And then Monsignor Morini notes, quote, “The beatification ceremony will have the same characteristics of every beatification ceremony. So during the mass there will be the proclamation of the newly blessed and a brief summary of the life of John Paul II will be read. The pope will solemnly proclaim the newly blessed. Then there will be the

unveiling of the image which will hang in front of the basilica from the central balcony, and then also the veneration of a relic that will be taken at the time. These are the various phases of the rite of beatification inserted within the Eucharistic celebration. Regarding the exposition of the coffin of the newly blessed,” Monsignor Morini adds, “It was decided as follows: the coffin containing the remains of John Paul II, suitably embellished so that we cannot see the body, will be placed in the basilica before the high altar, and access will be allowed to pilgrims for a brief moment of prayer. We thought to expose the coffin of the newly blessed in the basilica to foster an atmosphere of meditation and prayer, so that pilgrims could do so as a proper, authentic religious act.”

So you see, they have it all worked out, and there is a program you can download off the Vatican website, a booklet that goes along with all of this, all sorts of orders written in Italian and translated into the many languages of the world.

Now, this whole subject of beatification has brought to the fore a great interest in the process. *USA Today* had an article yesterday by Kim Lawton that said:

Sainthood is the church’s way to recognize a Friend of God. He will move one step closer to sainthood when he is beatified during an elaborate Vatican ceremony on Sunday. While the Roman Catholic Church has held up heroes, patrons, intercessors and spiritual companions for centuries, the path to sainthood is never easy or quick. The process usually begins in the region where the potential saint lived or is buried. After local Catholics show a particular devotion to the person, the bishop opens an investigation into the case or cause for sainthood.

Normally there is a five year waiting period after the person’s death before sainthood can be considered. In the cases of both John Paul and Mother Theresa, however, that waiting period was waived.

Some people want to know what the rush is in beatifying John Paul II so quickly. On the other hand, people say the Pope is responding to the desires of people, which is what people always want the Vatican to do.

If you recall, at the funeral of Pope John Paul II the crowds roared out, ‘Santo Subito,’ which means, ‘Make him a saint now.’ But the Vatican will not be rushed. They have to do all these things the proper and, as they often say, judicial and legal way. And, of course, the rules are all made up by them. They can be changed at a moment’s notice just so long as the pontiff declares it so.

The sainthood cause is overseen by a postulator or an advocate. So someone is assigned to advocate officially on behalf of a person who might become a saint. The first thing you do is to research anything the person has written or published, and then you begin studying anything they left behind in terms of documentation.

“You have to go the archives,” said Reverend Gabriel O’Donnell, who has been in charge of several of these processes before.

In order to be a saint, someone must have lived a life of heroic virtue. According to O’Donnell, the postulator looks for evidence that the person was holy and good in his or her personal life. “You are also looking for the flaws, because the whole idea of the saint is that they have overcome their difficulties,” he added, not that they didn’t have any. He said that the church is very strong in its belief that any negative aspects of the potential saint must be revealed. “You cannot hide anything because the point is to make it as transparent as possible.”

This paragraph coming up is really humorous!

Until 1983 the church would appoint someone to argue against the cause and the name of this person was the devil’s advocate. But that position was eliminated by John Paul II in 1983. So when he got rid of the devil’s advocate position, which made it easier for more people to be elevated to sainthood, if all the assembled evidence is approved by the Vatican, then the potential saint is declared venerable or worthy of consideration. At that point the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints takes over. That is when the search begins for a miracle attributed to the person’s intercession after his or her death, as evidence that that person is, indeed, in heaven.

Now note this very well. The whole point of this is to prove that the person under consideration is already in heaven. That is the purpose of declaring them a saint. You want evidence that they are in heaven before you proclaim that they are in heaven. And the evidence would be that this person has interceded on behalf of someone and wrought a miraculous cure for that person. That is the evidence that the person is in heaven.

“The church is looking for some sign from God. So it is what we call the *digitis Dei* or the finger of God that says, ‘Yeah.’”

That is what the Reverend Gabriel O’Donnell had to say!

Any reported miracles, most are unexplained healings, are subject to rigorous review by a panel of scientists and doctors. If the pope declares that a miracle did, indeed, occur, the person is eligible for beatification and is given the title “blessed.” Martyrs who die for the faith can be beatified without a verified miracle.

“It is a recognition of the person’s holiness and importance for the world wide church,” said Martin. “A second miracle occurring after beatification must also be verified before sainthood can be declared and that can take years.”

But here are the final two paragraphs of this article:

According to O'Donnell [remember, he is the guy that has been in charge of advocating several people into sainthood already, so he is an expert], the concept of intercession by the saints is often misunderstood.

“The idea of a saint is that he or she is before the throne of God in heaven and that one asks them to intercede and pray for us. So we are praying to God together because we believe that they are with God. They are the friends of God.”

So, you see, the whole point of this is to compile an official listing of people that the church believes are in the very presence of God, and those people are therefore qualified and authorized for us to venerate and to pray to, because they have access directly to the throne of God and they can make intercession for us just like Jesus can!

Now, the origin and the meaning of beatification and of canonization, there is much that has been written about it and, perhaps, the most extensive article is the one found in the Catholic Encyclopedia. Everything inside that encyclopedia has received the imprimatur and the *nihil obstat*, which means that it has officially been declared to be true Catholic doctrine.

So here are some interesting things from the Catholic Encyclopedia that will shed some light on beatification and canonization.

The true origin of canonization and beatification must be sought in the Catholic doctrine of the worship (*cultus*), invocation and intercession of the saints as was taught by Saint Augustine. Catholics, while giving to God alone adoration, strictly so-called, honor the saints because of the divine supernatural gifts which have earned them eternal life...

Now notice that. The “divine supernatural gifts” that the saints possess have earned them eternal life and, therefore, they are in heaven. They are not in purgatory anymore.

...and through which they reign with God in the heavenly fatherland as his chosen friends and faithful servants.

In other words, Catholics honor God and his saints as the loving distributor of supernatural gifts. The worship of *latrea*—that is a Latin term—or strict adoration is given to God alone. The worship of *dulia* or honor and humble reverence is paid to the saints. The worship of *hyperdulia*, a higher form of *dulia*, belongs on account of her greater excellence to the blessed virgin Mary.

It must be obvious, however, that while private moral certainty of their sanctity and possession of heavenly glory may suffice for private veneration of the saints, it cannot suffice for public and common acts of that kind. No member of a social body may independently of its authority perform an act proper to that body. It follows naturally that for the public veneration of the saints, the ecclesiastical authority of the pastors and rulers of the church was consistently required.

The decision as to the martyr having died for his faith in Christ, and the consequent permission of worship, that is worship of the martyr, lay originally with the bishop of the place in which he had borne his testimony. The bishop inquired into the motive of his death and, finding he had died a martyr, sent his name with an account of his martyrdom to other churches, especially neighboring ones, so that in event of approval by their respective bishops, the *cultus* of the martyr might extend to their churches also.

This is the way it used to be done before the papacy organized it into an official process whereby the pope's permission had to be obtained.

Canonization, generally speaking, is a decree regarding the public ecclesiastical veneration of an individual. Such veneration, however, may be permissive or preceptive, may be universal or local. If the decree contains a precept and is universal in the sense that it binds the whole church, it is a decree of canonization. If it only permits such worship or if it binds under precept, but not with regard to the whole church, it is a decree of beatification.

So the point there is that the pope can command worship of a saint or he can merely permit worship of a saint. He can give permission for it. And depending on the one or the other, it is either a beatification or a canonization.

And then two more quotes from this Catholic Encyclopedia:

Beatification is a permission to venerate granted by the Roman pontiffs with restriction to certain places and to certain liturgical exercises. Thus, it is unlawful to pay to the person known as blessed public reverence outside the place for which the permission is granted, or to recite an office in his honor, or to celebrate mass with prayers referring to him unless special permission be had. Similarly, other methods of honor have been interdicted. Canonization is a precept of the Roman pontiff commanding public veneration to be paid an individual by the universal church.

To sum up, beatification in the present discipline differs from canonization in this, that the former implies a locally restricted, not a universal

permission to venerate which is a mere permission and no precept, while canonization implies a universal precept.

And then, finally, the actual decree of canonization will read as follows:

In honor of [fill in the blank], we decree and define that blessed [fill in the blank] is a saint, and we inscribe his name in the catalog of saints in order that his memory be devoutly and piously celebrated yearly on the [fill in the blank] day of [fill in the blank], his feast.

Now notice in all of that -- this has been approved as being official Roman Catholic doctrine -- they interchange, they use the word “venerate” as “worship.” And they make it very clear that these people, once they are canonized, are to be worshipped. And even though it is the lower, inferior form of worship, nevertheless the church calls it worship. They call it a public cult, from that old Latin word *cultus*, which refers to worship.

Now there are a couple of decrees available on the Vatican website. My favorite one is this short one titled “Response of his holiness, Benedict XVI, for the examination of the cause for the beatification and canonization of the servant of God John Paul II.”

At the request of His Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome, the Supreme Pontiff BENEDICT XVI, taking into consideration the exceptional circumstances put forward during the Audience granted to the same Cardinal Vicar General on 28 April 2005, has dispensed the five-year waiting period following the death of the Servant of God John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła), Supreme Pontiff, so that the cause of Beatification and Canonization of the same Servant of God can begin immediately. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

It is amazing to read the Vatican documents and see all the boiler plate pseudo-legal jargon that they have accumulated, like the phrase “notwithstanding anything to the contrary!”

Given in Rome of the See of this Congregation for the Causes of Saints 9 May, 2005.

So there is one of the orders that is on the books, as it were, showing that the present pope has waived the mandatory five year waiting period. And then, of course, there is this extended description of what types of public worship of John Paul II will be permitted and where they will be permitted.

It has been decided that during the year following the Beatification of John Paul II, that is, until 1 May 2012, it will be possible to celebrate a Holy Mass of thanksgiving in certain places and on certain days. The responsibility of establishing the day or days as well as the place or places

for gathering the People of God for this purpose belongs to the Diocesan Bishop. Having considered the local needs and pastoral benefits, one Holy Mass in honour of the new Blessed may be celebrated on any Sunday during the year or on another day of the week designated in numbers 10-13 of the Table of Liturgical Days.

As far as regards the celebration of Mass, besides the permission to sing the Gloria, the appropriate collect is to be prayed in honour of the Blessed; the other prayers, as well as the Preface, the Antiphons, and the Readings, are to be taken from the “Common of Pastors: For a Pope.” If the celebration falls on a Sunday in Ordinary Time, appropriate texts for the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, and Gospel may be taken from the “Common of Pastors.”

Inserting the new blessed into local liturgical calendars:

The annual celebration of Blessed John Paul II is to be inserted into the liturgical calendars of the Diocese of Rome and all the Dioceses of Poland as a “memorial” to be observed on 22 October.

As for the liturgical texts, the Collect and the second reading of the Office of Readings, together with its Response, are to be inserted into the “Proper of Saints.” The other texts are to be taken from the “Common of Pastors: For a Pope.”

With regard to other local calendars, any request that the celebration of Blessed John Paul II be observed as an Optional Memorial is to be submitted to this Congregation by a local Conference of Bishops when it involves an entire territory, a Diocesan Bishop when it involves an individual diocese, and a Superior General when the request pertains to a religious community.

And then there is a special rule on dedicating a church to God in honor of the new blessed:

An indult of the Apostolic See is needed to dedicate a church in honour of Blessed John Paul II.

In other words, they have to get special permission from the pope to dedicate a church to John Paul II.

...unless a celebration in his memory has already been inserted into the local calendar; in this case the indult is not necessary and the memorial is elevated to a liturgical Feast in the church named for the Blessed.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

So you see that the process of beatifying someone gives the papacy complete control over the time, place and manner of the worship of the newly designated blessed John Paul II. And all the formulas have to be carried out in accordance with what the pope has decreed, and all the proper permissions have to have been obtained. There is even an official prayer that has been approved that you can use to invoke the blessed John Paul II when you are asking for a miracle. I won't go to the trouble of reading it.

The final piece of information about this whole process that I think you ought to be aware of is this from the BBC News yesterday, headlined "Blood of Pope John Paul II to go on display at Vatican."

Blood taken from Pope John Paul II before he died is to go on display at his beatification on Sunday.

One of four small vials of blood removed from John Paul during his final days will be used, the Vatican said in a statement.

The Polish pontiff is to be beatified at a ceremony celebrated by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI.

Pope John Paul II, whose papacy lasted 27 years, died on 2 April 2005 after battling Parkinson's disease.

More than 50 heads of state and several hundred thousand pilgrims are expected to travel to Rome for the beatification, a step before full sainthood.

'First degree relics'

After the death of John Paul, two of the vials of blood were given to the late pope's private secretary, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, now archbishop of Krakow, Poland.

The other two - one of which will be used for Sunday's beatification - were left in the care of nuns at the Vatican's Bambin Gesu hospital.

The vial will be placed in a "precious reliquary" prepared specially for the occasion by the Office of Papal Liturgical Celebrations.

After being extracted, the blood was mixed with an anti-coagulant in the container to ensure it remained liquid.

"The blood and hair, these are from the pope's body, so these are relics of the first degree," Cardinal Dziwisz told AFP.

This is an amazing thing if you think about it, that they are going to place on display the pope's blood as a relic to be venerated, to be kissed, to be prayed to, to be exalted, to be honored!

How can you read all of that and not come away with a scent of a relapse into the most barbaric pagan worship rituals that one could imagine? The use of the term worship to describe what is being commanded to the faithful by the pope towards the newly canonized or beatified person. The use of the phrase "the indult for the public *cultus*," a public celebration at worship of this person. How much all of it violates, runs counter to the terms of the second commandment:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.¹

And yet the Catholic Catechism has a way of "explainifying" all of that away in paragraph 2131:

Basing itself on the mystery of the incarnate Word...

That phrase is code word for mumbo jumbo!

...the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea (787) justified against the iconoclasts the veneration of icons - of Christ, but also of the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints. By becoming incarnate, the Son of God introduced a new "economy" of images.

The Christian veneration of images is not contrary to the first commandment...

Note that they call it the First Commandment, not the Second.

...which proscribes idols. Indeed, "the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype," and "whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it."

If only the Israelites had realized this simple truth, then they too could have justified any kind of idolatry they had wanted to!

The honor paid to sacred images is a "respectful veneration," not the adoration due to God alone: Religious worship is not directed to images in themselves, considered as mere things, but under their distinctive aspect

¹ Exodus 20:4-5.

as images leading us on to God incarnate. The movement toward the image does not terminate in it as image, but tends toward that whose image it is.

All of that is Saint Thomas Aquinas' sophistry and special pleading to wriggle out of the requirements of the Second Commandment.

I recalled as I read this the rebuke that was twice given to the apostle John for just such acts of veneration in Revelation 19. The angels said to John:

Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.²

And then several chapters later:

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.³

So not only does all of this smack of pagan ritualism, but it also is the sort of activity which has been rebuked by the Scriptures against the saints of God. And not only that, but it also violates, of course, as we well know, the mediatorship of Christ. He is the lone mediator between God and man. We don't need the interposition of other people, declared by the church to be saints or to be blessed, to speak on our behalf unto God.

But I promised I would show you that the real danger in all of this is the fact that it upholds a false gospel.

Now the true gospel is, of course, that we are called upon to trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, his obedience and his blood: his perfect obedience to the law accredited to us, imputed to us; and our disobedience against God's commandments imputed to Christ and atoned for by his precious blood, by the sacrifice that he made for sinners at Calvary.

It is not a righteousness that we are clothed with of our own, it is an alien righteousness of the manufacture of the Lord of glory. He has clothed us with garments of righteousness, cloaks unto salvation.

And it is in keeping with that glorious text by the apostle Paul that we read earlier in Romans four:

² Revelation 19:9-10.

³ Revelation 22:8-9.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”⁴

So the true gospel says to sinners, to come to Jesus, to trust in Jesus, to rely upon Jesus as their substitute in the judgment for their sin; to lay hold, if you will, upon the substitute lamb, to cry out, “Judge my sins in this thy perfect Lamb, oh God, and not in myself!”

And the Scriptures tell us that whoever trusts in the Lord Jesus in such a way shall have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. No one can lay any charge against us, because God has justified us already in Jesus. No one can condemn us, because the condemned one was slain, and is risen, and sits at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession for us!

Now then, there is the false gospel which the Roman Catholic system teaches, which is a righteousness according to personal works. And it is a scheme by which a person goes through a set of rituals, first being baptism which cleanses of original sins, supposedly. And then all these rituals of repeated representations of Christ’s sacrifice at the blasphemous mass, which are said to have propitiatory and saving effect upon the recipients; that the sacrifice of Christ must be reapplied by an earthly priest with the permission of the Roman Catholic system to recleanse and to recleanse the person who comes to the service and who submits to it.

So there is a lifetime of ritual, of acts of charity, of attending the mass, of auricular confession; of having the church dispense, little by little, small piece by small piece, merit from the great bank of merit which the Catholic Church believes that it holds the keys to; so that as a man sins and as he applies for this saving merit, his sins are remitted. And he goes through his whole life sinning, falling from grace, being readmitted to grace. There is no trust in Jesus in all of this. There is only trust that he will be able to keep up with the rituals required by the Church.

And then, when he goes into the grave, he passes to purgatory where all of his leftover sins are purged away by fire and judgment. He has no hope or security in the knowledge that his sins have actually been forgiven. And no man can have that hope or that knowledge, until one day they appear in heaven before the throne of God. Only then can they know that they have been declared righteous. And then they have been declared righteous, not according to the righteousness which is of God by faith, but according to this elaborate system of rituals and of works righteousness, which includes their own acts of righteousness, and acts of righteousness of the saints, and also of the Lord Jesus himself.

So, you see, under the Roman Catholic system, a person is only a saint when he finally is justified by his own righteousness and appears before God, and not a moment before that. And a person can trust in the Lord Jesus all his life and die and go to hell, because his sin has not been remitted, because he has not performed the proper rituals and performed the

⁴ Romans 4:5.

proper acts of charity. And the church has declined to advance to him the merit from the bank of merit, which is the accumulated good works of Christ, and of all the saints, and of the blessed and so forth.

So, you see, a person who is in heaven, according to Catholic false gospel preaching, is a person who died ahead of the game, as it were. He made it to heaven immediately because when he died, all his sins had been covered, had been accounted for by his own good works, and by the merit graciously offered him by the church, and his original sin only by the death of Christ obtained through the sacrament of baptism.

So, a person is declared a saint when the church is convinced that they have finally been justified. They are finally perfect and they are finally fit to be in the presence of God. So therefore they are to be prayed to because they have special access to God.

It does no good to pray to a church member who is in purgatory. They are tied up with other problems. They don't have access to God. They are not a friend of God, because they have not been declared righteous yet. They have not been justified. They have not been brought into the presence of God.

Thus, beatification and canonization are the elaborate worked out consequences of the false gospel that the Roman Catholic system teaches, of justification based upon good works and upon merit.

Now, you see, they represent the church's recognition of a lifetime pursuit of righteousness for salvation by the saint or by the blessed one. You see, the blessed one and the saint are thereby acknowledged, that they have achieved that personal righteousness, and that therefore they are truly and eternally saved and are in God's presence.

All of this ought to remind us of what the apostle Paul said about the people of Israel and their works righteousness. Do you remember what he said in Romans chapter 10?

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.⁵

For, you see, in the Roman Catholic system, the law is used as the means of obtaining righteousness, that is, obedience to the law is alive and well. The process of beatification is simply the church's way of announcing that John Paul II obeyed the law well enough, he lived a holy enough life, he committed enough works of charity, that his righteousness has been validated, and that all of his iniquities have been atoned for and overcome by his work of righteousness and by the merit that is in the church's bank; and that therefore he

⁵ Romans 10:2-4.

is now fit to be in the presence of God, because he has been found to be actually righteous in his own person.

But, you see, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness which is of God by faith. They have set out to work out their own righteousness based upon the keeping of the law.

Now the problem with all of this is two fold: that the motive for the works of the blessed or the sanctified, the motive for those works can never be true love of God, cannot be the result of God's having saved them and rescued them from judgment, and as an act of love and obedience following after that; and because they have then pursued this life of holiness. Oh, no, they pursue this life of holiness so they can obtain salvation, so they can obtain righteousness before God, so they can be worthy to be in his presence and not be sent to hell or kept in purgatory for ages on ages.

So, you see, it corrupts the motive of the so-called blessed and the so-called sanctified.

But it also creates in the presence of the people who have not died, the church faithful, if you will, it creates in them a false veneration and a false example. You see, they are taught to look to this man. This is how you become righteous. Behave like John Paul II. He is in heaven today because of the way he behaved. So go thou and do likewise.

And so the whole process of beatification and canonization has the effect of shifting the gaze and the focus of the faithful in the congregation to the saint, to his example, to the way he behaved, as a model for how they, too, can get to heaven; and shifting their gaze away from the Lord Jesus.

What does the Scripture say? We are to look to Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith. He is our example. He is the one we should seek to emulate and to follow, and he is the one that has already provided us with all of the righteousness that we require to be just before God and to be accepted into his presence.

But according to the Catholic false gospel, the Lord Jesus is objectified in the sense that he is not to be followed. He is not to be emulated. He is not to be relied upon. No, no, no. His death is just a process that was gone through, the results of which have been distilled down and deposited in the great bank of merit of the church. And he can only be accessed, his grace and his goodness can only be accessed by our faithfulness to the church's rituals, to the church's law, to the church's commandments.

So this whole idea of beatification and canonization comes directly from the false gospel of the Roman Catholic system, and it confuses the Church members into looking to the beatified, looking to the canonized, as the way to obtain righteousness and salvation, instead of looking unto the Lord Jesus.

Now there are some verses that show that this whole process of beatification and canonization are contrary to the very gospel of the Scriptures. And the sum of these

verses is to demonstrate this: that the pope is too late! All the believers are beatified already. We are already beatified. The pope has not the power to declare a person to be called blessed. The Scriptures tell us that all those who have trusted in Jesus are already blessed!

First example, Psalm two verse 12. What does that psalm end with?

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”⁶

Who is “him?” The Lord Jesus, the King, the Messiah anointed by the Father to be enthroned o’er all the world!

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”⁷

Well, there is a verse that says that if you trust in Jesus, if you put your trust in him, then you are blessed already. But, you see, this is how we can distinguish between the true gospel and the false.

God declares we are blessed now for those who trust in his Son, but the Roman Catholic system says, “Oh, no. You are not blessed now. You can trust in Jesus all you like. But if you sin, you will go to hell. Only when you life is over and the scales are balanced, and the sins are all atoned for, and your righteousness has been shown by your good works and by the merit of the church, and that merit received has all been counted; only then you will know that you are blessed. Then you can be declared blessed.”

You see, the blessedness of the Roman Catholic system is after you have demonstrated by your holiness that you are saved; whereas the blessing which the Scriptures declare is upon everyone who puts their trust in the Lord Jesus.

Or consider the text we studied last Lord’s Day, John 20 verse 29. Jesus said:

“...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”⁸

That blessedness is declared by Christ upon all who believe in his resurrection and in his promise of salvation through faith in his work.

And in Galatians three at verse six, there is an extended passage that describes a blessedness to God’s people by faith now, not later, not after death:

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto

⁶ Psalm 2:12.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John 20:29.

Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.⁹

You see, the Roman Catholic gospel is the gospel of the curse of the law. And the people are cursed. They are not blessed until they enter into their salvation, having obtained it through works of righteousness enabled by the grace of God. They are cursed. They are under the curse of the law. They are not justified. They are not redeemed until they are finally proven justified by their works, by the merit of the church. This is what this text is denouncing -- that curse, versus the blessing that is received by all who are in the faith of faithful Abraham!

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.¹⁰

You see the distinction here, the contrast. The Roman Catholic false gospel is a gospel of the curse of the law until the end comes. Only then is it a blessing. But salvation and righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus, following after the faith of Abraham, is a blessing now to all who have believed, to all who have trusted.

And then in Romans four, later in the passage that we read this morning:

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.¹¹

And here we get to the heart of it. The Roman Catholic system holds that we are not blessed now, because God does impute our sin to us. He imputes the sin of all the members of the church to them, and that imputation can only be erased by good works, and by merit from the church, and by obedience to the ritual, and by the purging of purgatory.

So, you see, they don't believe that we as saints who trust in Christ are blessed now, because they don't believe that the Lord does not impute sin to us now. They don't believe that. They believe that comes later.

You see, it is not that our sins have been imputed to Christ, they teach, but rather they have been imputed to the sinner. They are only absolved of all sin in the grave and in

⁹ Galatians 3:6-10.

¹⁰ Galatians 3:13-14.

¹¹ Romans 4:6-8.

purgatory, and by rituals and by acts of obedience. And only when they are in heaven finally will they really know that God finally has not imputed their sins to them. He has removed that imputation, removed the imputation of the last sin off the saint.

Do you see how the scheme of beatification and canonization denies these precious promises of God to us now, that we are blessed because he does not impute our iniquities to us now, but they have already been imputed unto our Savior the Lord Jesus? And, therefore, the process of beautification and canonization make a mockery of Christ's gospel and of the efficacy of Christ's death.

But not only so, not only do the Scriptures declare us blessed now, not later by some pope, but the Scriptures also proclaim all God's people to be saints right here and now!

1 Corinthians one at verse one:

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.¹²

The New Testament is full of references to believers being saints now; not some day in the future, when their good works are toted up, and they are seen finally to be righteous in their own conduct on account of their obedience to the law, and the rules of the church, and the rituals of the church; but rather saints now even while they yet continue to commit sin, they are saints now according to the Scriptures!

1 Corinthians 16:1.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.”¹³

Hebrews 13:20-24.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.¹⁴

Notice this is a prayer for something that has not yet taken place, that they will be made perfect in every good work to do his will. And then at verse 24:

¹² 1 Corinthians 1:1-3.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 16:1.

¹⁴ Hebrews 13:20-21.

“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”¹⁵

So that Paul refers to believers as saints even while he prays that God will perfect their obedience and perfect works of righteousness in their conduct!

And then in 1 Corinthians six:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”¹⁶

And he goes on to list all these heinous sins.

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”¹⁷

Even people who have committed the worst sins he calls saints, sanctified by the Lord Jesus, not in some future life, but right here, right now, according to the true gospel.

And then in Romans 8:27:

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”¹⁸

Now think of the logical problem there. If saints are only those people who have gone to glory and are in the presence of the throne of heaven, why do they need intercession? They are supposed to be the ones interceding for us, aren't they, according to Roman Catholic doctrine. But the Scriptures say that the Holy Ghost now intercedes for us down here right here and now, and we are called saints. He intercedes for his saints, for those who have not yet reached perfection as the Roman Catholic system would teach.

And then in Hebrews two, we see a description of the Lord Jesus.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.¹⁹

¹⁵ Hebrews 13:24.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:11.

¹⁸ Romans 8:27.

¹⁹ Hebrews 2:9-11.

You see, our identity as saints is with the Lord Jesus, as brethren with the Savior as our elder brother. That is our identity as the saints of God, and it is in this life and in this time, not in some time in the future.

And finally, Hebrews 10:10 describing the will of God to purge away sin by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, where the writer says:

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”²⁰

You see, we are not sanctified by our works, or by the merit of the bank of merit of the church, or by the rituals we keep, or by the proclamation of the pope, or by the fact that we have appeared physically before the throne of heaven. We are not sanctified in any of that. We are sanctified by the sacrifice which the Lord Jesus made and by faith in that sacrifice.

The Roman Catholic system teaches that only beautified and canonized church members gone on to glory are in the presence of God, are finally purified, are righteous before him, are fit to be in his presence, are fit to call upon him directly. But the Scriptures teach otherwise, do they not? What does the writer of Hebrews say in chapter 10 and verse 18? He says:

Now where remission of these is [that is, sin], there is no more offering for sin.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.²¹

You see, the Scriptures teach, contrary to the Roman Catholic system, that we don't have to wait until we have accumulated good works, righteous deeds, the merit of the church, obedience to all the rituals of the church, the purging away of sin, we don't have to wait for all of that to be in the presence of God.

We don't have to wait for all of that to be in the presence of God. The Scriptures say, what does it say -- that we appear in the holiest place now by the blood of Jesus!

You see, our right to be in God's presence is not our own personal righteousness. It is not

²⁰ Hebrews 10:10.

²¹ Hebrews 10:18-24.

our holy life. It is not our adherence to the rituals and the demands of the Church. We have the right to appear before the holiest now through the blood of Jesus. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Notice that it says we have the right to appear in the holiest place by the blood of Jesus and then it goes on to say, we should provoke one another to good works and to charity.

You see, the Roman Catholic system teaches that we appear before God's holiest place after we obtain perfection in our works, but the scriptures tell us we appear as sinners under Christ's blood in the holiest place. Our good works come after we have made that bold appearance before the very throne of God, through the blood and through the veil of the torn flesh of the Savior.

Now wonder Count Zinzendorf wrote those stirring words:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head!

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame!

The Lord's Table reminds us how it is we came to be beatified and sanctified; and it wasn't through anything we did, and it wasn't through any proclamation of any popes or potentates or preachers or churches; but all things were purged by the blood of the Savior. For by that one sacrifice he has forever made perfect those who trust in him. And so we stand perfect before God. We are blessed now! We are sanctified now!

You see, the pope is too late. Jesus has done it already for everyone who believes in him!

Let's give thanks for the Lord's Table and for this glorious means by which we are beatified now. We are called blessed through Jesus' death. We are sanctified now. We have been canonized by the operation of Christ's blood upon our hearts and our lives. He has covered up, he has purged our guiltiness, and now we are fit to be in the presence of God.

The pope claims that men who through whole lives of piety and holiness only then are able to appear; but praise God, the youngest, newest believer washed in the blood of the Lamb, is already blessed, already sanctified through Jesus' blood!

I would like to ask Bro. Whitten if he would give thanks for the bread that reminds us of the body that was broken for us on the cross.

And the Scriptures tell us that on the night our Lord was betrayed, he took the bread and he blessed it and he broke it. And he said, "Take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do it in remembrance of me."

Let's give thanks for the cup that reminds us of the blood poured out to atone for our guiltiness.

Oh God, our Father, we rejoice that we can come before you knowing that we are blessed, knowing that we are justified, knowing that we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus; that we have not to wait until the last day, but this is a promise that you have given to us that we enter into now.

We receive by faith our salvation with rejoicing. And we thank you that you sent your Son to be our substitute, to be your Lamb to be slain for sinners. Even as you promised to Abraham all those years ago, God shall provide himself a lamb for a sacrifice.

And you did it in the Lord Jesus. You gave up your own dear, beloved Son who had never been disobedient, who perfectly fulfilled all the commandments, who was obedient and righteous to perfection; yet he went to the cross and shifted our guiltiness onto himself, he was made a curse for us, made to bear all the judgment for all the transgressions of your people. He was smitten and bruised and killed for us.

And we thank you for that blood that he shed, by which he made possible the great new covenant, whereby you would remember against us our sins no more. You will not remember them because they have been all expunged by the blood of Jesus.

We thank you that this is a blessing, this is a thing received already by all who put their trust in Christ, and that we can boldly come before you by the blood of Jesus and not have to cower and wait in shame, and not have to have our sins imputed to us when they have already been laid on Jesus, and he has already discharged them.

We thank you for this celebration, this token of remembrance which the Lord Jesus left us, that we might always be focused upon what Christ did, and not turn our thoughts unto ourselves. Oh, Lord, that you would purge away from our hearts even the last scrap of any reliance upon our own acts, but know that our righteousness and our justification is all of Christ's work, and all of his obedience and all of his sacrifice, and none of ours.

We thank you for these things. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

And the Scriptures tell us after they had supped he took the cup, and he blessed it and he said, "Drink ye all of it. This cup is the new covenant in my blood for the remission of sins. Do it as often as ye do it in remembrance of me."

And the Scriptures tell us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do preach the Lord's death till he comes.

Let's stand and sing number 124 in the black book:

The holy one who knew no sin,
God made him sin for us!
The Savior died, our souls to win
Upon the shameful cross!