

## The Difficulty With Beatifying or Canonizing Popes

Michael Sean Winters | Apr. 29, 2011 | Distinctly Catholic

Yesterday, I called attention to E.J. Dionne's article calling for the canonization of Blessed Pope John XXIII. Of course, the last Pope to be canonized was St. Pope Pius X. He was a saintly man but he was a disaster as Pope, inaugurating a series of witch-hunts against modernism which tagged many devout and perfectly orthodox priests as potential heretics including none other than Angelo Roncalli, who went on to become Blessed Pope John XXIII.

The problem, however, is hardly unique to Pius X. I suspect that the skills that make a Pope effective preclude the kind of personal sanctity we associate with sainthood. To become a cardinal, surely you must learn how to throw an elbow, to play office politics, to develop a skepticism appropriate to one charged with decision-making. Surely, staring down the Communist authorities in Poland demanded the kind of steeliness that we do not normally associate with sanctity.

Monday, I will reflect on the good and the bad that Pope John Paul II and why, ultimately, while I would have not agreed to his speedy beatification, I am not particularly upset by it either. But, when the next conclave comes around, I hope the cardinals will look for a man who will be effective as well as holy, and if they have to choose between the two, I hope they go for effective.

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Source URL (retrieved on 05/22/2017 - 20:39): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/difficulty-beatifying-or-canonizing-popes>