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Forget about sainthood, let's worry about ministry

by Bill Tammeus

A small c catholic

What opinion should a Protestant like me have about the small controversy over whether the late Pope John Paul II is being rushed to sainthood?

None -- that would be the proper and courteous thing to say. But, in fact, Protestants, like Catholics, have lots of opinions about things that may not directly concern them. So I'd like to share some of that with you Catholics so that you might have a better sense of how non-Catholics may be thinking about you and your church.

The idea of sainthood is not unfamiliar to Protestants. In fact, we're so attached to the idea that we call absolutely every member of the church a saint. Which sort of devalues the term but is in harmony with our old Reformation idea of "the priesthood of all believers."

Over the years it's been my experience that many Protestants are simply baffled by the Catholic Church's saint-creation process. And, no, most Protestants have no idea that this process has been adjusted several times over the years, the most recent such change being a radical simplification in 1983 when John Paul II was pope.

As Frank K. Flinn's *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* puts it: "Since then, less time and fewer miracles have been needed to clinch the case."

Beyond being mystified by the process, many Protestants don't understand why the church devotes so many resources and so much effort to it, including having a Vatican agency called the Congregation of the Causes of Saints.

I won't hide my own opinion here behind these nameless "many Protestants" to whom I've been

