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What does Pope Francis think of the upcoming canonizations?

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Papal canonizations

Rome is preparing for the double canonization ceremony [1] of Blesseds John XXIII and John Paul II on April 27, Divine Mercy Sunday. I wonder what Pope Francis really thinks of these papal canonizations. Elaborate celebrations of saintly elevation seem somehow incongruous with two main themes promoted by our current pope: being a poor church for the poor and being a more humble church, especially among her leaders.

The road to sainthood is expensive, as is the celebratory party for the victors. As a man who has intentionally chosen a more humble lifestyle, Francis must surely detest the financial cost of beatifications and canonizations. The euros saved by replacing the papal Mercedes with a Ford are trivial in comparison to the expense of these ecclesial processes and grand spectacles.

Pope Francis has been preaching against careerism in the church from the first days of his papacy. He has shared his own uneasiness and disapproval at being portrayed as a superhero on the wall of a building close to the Vatican. In a recent interview, he said [2], "To depict the Pope as a kind of superman or a star seems to me offensive." Yet he will be presiding over a ceremony that bestows official sanctity on two recent predecessors, giving them, in a sense, star status within the church. On the one hand, he is calling us to let go of the hierarchical mentality that promotes careerism in the church. On the other hand, he is promoting the hierarchical mentality of sanctity that we have artificially given to our departed sisters and brothers in Christ.

We need our saints, our heroes in the church. We do not need elaborate and expensive processes to confirm our belief that these holy women and men are in heaven. When Pope Francis dies, there will surely be shouts of "*Santo subito*" rising from St. Peter's Square. My hope is that Francis will include in his final will and testament a personal denouncement of any canonization process for himself. This would be totally in line with his preference for poverty, simplicity and humility. It would be a saintly thing to do.

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[1] http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-rome-gear-canonizations-john-xxiii-john-paul-ii
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