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Bipartisan canonizations

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Papal canonizations

?Popapalooza.? That?s what some observers are calling the joint canonization of two popes in one day. Both John XXIII and John Paul II will be officially declared saints on Sunday, April 27 by Pope Francis.

But it?s probably Francis who deserves the greatest praise for pulling off a ?bipartisan? victory with the Sunday ceremony. (We could use him -- or someone like him -- in the US Congress these days.)

The dual canonization is clearly designed to please both the conservative and progressive wings of the Catholic Church. Sure, some Catholics were inspired by both men, but generally, conservatives favor the legacy of John Paul II and progressives are more fond of John XXIII.

Personally, I was not a big fan of John Paul II. I was glad that we finally had a pope from Eastern Europe, and I do recognize his role in bringing down communism. But I don?t think he understood Liberation Theology and its importance in Latin America -- especially in the 1980s, and many of his policies (carried out by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger -- the future Benedict XVI) stifled needed theological discussion, innovation and debate. But hey! He still could be a saint.

I am a fan of John XXIII, principally because of his leadership in calling the Second Vatican Council, which created needed and revolutionary change in worldwide Catholicism. I doubt that he understood the importance of what he did at the time, but he definitely followed the Spirit -- and that?s what saints are supposed to do. I also loved his sense of humor. For example, when asked, ?How many people work at the Vatican?? he said, ?About half.?

But overall, I tend to agree with that ?party pooper? who writes for *NCR*, Fr. Tom Reese, S.J. [1] We are canonizing two popes ? for what? If saints are supposed to provide examples ? how will I have the opportunity to emulate a pope?

So next, Francis might think about several canonizations of ordinary people who did extraordinary things.

Interfaith Voices did a two-person interview [2] this week on these joint canonizations. We talked to Jim Martin, S.J. of *America Magazine*, and Mitch Horowitz of Tarcher/Penguin Publishers. To listen, go here [2].

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/john-xxiii-and-john-paul-ii-united-heaven
[2] http://interfaithradio.org/Story_Details/The_Short_Road_to_Sainthood_for_Pope_John_Paul_II_and_Pope_John_XXIII