

SELECTED SESSIONS

CHURCH OF SAINTS AND SINNERS

Topic:	Church of Saints and Sinners: Ecclesiological Challenges Arising from Ecumenical Encounters
Convener & Moderator:	Catherine E. Clifford, Saint Paul University, Ottawa
Presenters:	Scott Sharman, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto Pieter de Witte, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven

Contrasting visions of holiness are reflected in differing practices of canonization and theological understandings of the mark of the holiness the church. Exploring Roman Catholic and Anglican processes for the canonization of saints, Scott Sharman presented a paper entitled, "Ecumenical Hagiography: Ecclesiologies of Roman Catholic and Anglican 'Saint-Making'," suggests the need for the development of an "ecumenical hagiography." The calendar of saints of the Roman Catholic Church, in particular as adapted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, was contrasted to the calendar established by the Episcopal Church USA—a province of the wider Anglican communion. The 2009 General Convention of ECUSA approved a revision of the liturgical calendar for trial use, *Holy Women, Holy Men*, to complement the calendar of the *Book of Common Prayer*. One hundred new commemorations are more ecumenically inclusive and seek to promote a wider recognition of lay holiness and the contributions of women. It includes figures as diverse as Copernicus, John Calvin, Martin Luther, J. S. Bach, Charles and John Wesley, Patriarch Tikon, Andrei Rublev, Teilhard de Chardin, John XXIII, Evelyn Underhill, Thomas Merton, Sojourner Truth, and Oscar Romero. Though ecumenically comprehensive in its scope, *Holy Women, Holy Men* appears to define saintliness "more by fame and accomplishment" than by exemplary living of Christian virtue. Such a radically different understanding of sanctity may pose a challenge to future ecumenical reception.

Divergent structures for the discernment of holiness and the shaping of the liturgical calendar of saints can be seen as a reflection of differing ecclesiologies. Where the participation of women and the laity in discernment and decision-making is minimized, feminine and lay models of holiness also appear to be marginalized. While recent Roman Catholic practice has simplified the process of canonization of local saints and allows for greater adaptation of the liturgical calendar in each region by the episcopal conference, the majority (90%) of those beatified continue to be clergy or religious. The "saints of the ordinary" continue to be underrepresented. Pope Paul VI noted the presence of Anglicans in the group

of Ugandan martyrs canonized in 1964, yet such gestures remain tentative and occasional events. The Catholic Church has not yet embraced a practice of ecumenical inclusivity in the naming of exemplary witnesses of faith. Contrasting Anglican and Catholic practices of “saint-making” point to the need for the cultivation of a spirituality that is more consistent with the churches’ ecclesiological and ecumenical commitments.

In light of the crisis of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy, Pieter De Witte draws upon the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith (JDJF) to point to the need for renewed reflection on the church as *simul justus et peccator*. His paper, “The Church as *simul justus et peccator*? Ecumenical Challenges for Roman Catholic Ecclesiology,” began by observing that public discourse relating to the scandal in Belgium reveals an implied understanding and expectation of holiness: 1) the church ought to be holy; 2) such holiness is not a hidden quality but should be demonstrable; 3) a lack of holiness by an individual affects the whole; 4) even non-believers look to the church to be an example for the world; and 5) justice and reparation ought to precede forgiveness. In its attempts to respond to criticism and accusations of hypocrisy, Catholic leaders have failed to convey a credible understanding of the church’s holiness and sin or righteousness.

In its reflections on baptism, the JDJF observes that sinful individuals are received into a holy community. Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar both attempted to give a positive interpretation to the Lutheran doctrine *simul justus et peccator*, and accepted a certain “sinfulness of the church.” While the official Vatican Response to the JDJF affirmed that this idea was most difficult to accept, the later “Annex” to the Declaration acknowledged this as an idea that both Lutherans and Catholics can affirm. In its reflection on office in the church, the JDJF recognizes that “in its bearers and their ministry” ecclesial office can be exercised in a manner that may contradict the gospel. This begs the question, in an ecclesiology of the church as sacrament, whether one might speak of structural sin in the church. De Witte argues that a fuller development of this line of thought is required as part of a theological reflection on the troubling pattern of the systematic abuse of pastoral authority.

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