SAINT PATRONS: THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PROCESS OF CANONIZATION

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ABSTRACT: The newest legislation on the process of canonization in the Roman Catholic Church has combined with the desire on the part of the Church to highlight the sanctity of laypersons to encourage an increase in the number of persons beatified and canonized. This article examines the role of archives in the canonization process as sources of documents about candidates for sanctity, information about their historical milieux, and expertise in judging the authenticity of documents. Using the cause of the Dominican Samuel Mazzuchelli and surveys of both archives and postulators for canonization causes, the article details the use of archives in specific canonization processes, as well as problems and advantages for both researchers and archivists. It argues that the focus on diverse candidates for sanctity will increase the use of many types of repositories, especially nonchurch archives, in the future.

Introduction

In February 1999, Pope John Paul II waived the normal mandatory period of five years that must elapse between a person’s death and the beginning of the process to name that person a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. He allowed this favor for Mother Teresa because of persistent demand from an international group of the faithful. Consequently, the archbishop of Calcutta began gathering information on Mother Teresa to assist in the process of her canonization.\(^1\) Undoubtedly, a number of archives in the many destinations of Mother Teresa’s world travels; the houses of the Missionaries of Charity, her foundation; the Indian government; the archdiocese of Calcutta; and her home country, the former Yugoslavia, will provide such information. In the more than 20 years of his pontificate, John Paul II has beatified or canonized almost 1,100 persons, more than half the number of all those beatified or canonized in the previous four centuries.\(^2\) Thousands of supporters await these steps for their own spiritual heroes, and the number of newly introduced canonization causes soars higher every year with over 1,800 currently in process.\(^3\) The Church must investigate each of
these persons, most often relying on archives, the only repositories of the unique information necessary for the process.

Has the process of canonization affected archives? What role do they play in this phenomenon? Over the centuries, requirements for historical inquiry have changed along with expertise in historical methodology, making archives increasingly more essential for canonization. New legislation has solidly fixed a spot for archives in the process, as case studies of recently successful causes and causes still working for the first steps of sanctity will demonstrate. In canonization, modern archives of every type have an opportunity and responsibility to serve a unique type of patron and, correspondingly, face a unique set of challenges. “Saint patrons” may benefit certain archives considerably and, because of trends within the Catholic Church, may become a growing class of clients in the future.

The Process of Canonization

Although the canonization process has involved increasing amounts of research over the past centuries, significant changes occurred in 1983 with the Holy Father’s promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution, Divinus Perfectionis Magister, and the corresponding norms published by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (CCS) concerning inquiry by bishops into causes of canonization. John Paul II hoped to create a “simpler process while maintaining the soundness of investigation in matters of such great import.” (See Appendix 1 for an overview of the modern process.) Acceleration of the process was a further goal. One writer observed, “In its modern commitment to historical research, the congregation’s corridors today seem more like those of a university history department than the series of courtrooms for arguing over the merits and miracles of saints . . .” This came about because the pope and CCS laid down guidelines for rigorous investigation that demanded serious research in archival materials.

A number of regulations concerning archives and historical inquiry govern essential stages in the process. Most of these occur at the diocesan level, since that is the site of actual investigation. The bishop begins the inquiry by approving a postulator nominated by the person or group proposing the cause. The postulator may be any Catholic, lay or ordained, but “all must be experts in theological, canonical and historical matters,” besides having a knowledge of the rules of the CCS. In order to establish the candidate’s reputation for holiness and to demonstrate the usefulness of the canonization for the Church, the postulator, possibly assisted by a vice-postulator, is to “conduct thorough investigations into the life of the Servant of God.” Not only favorable arguments must be included, but a true, unbiased biography should facilitate the opening of the process. Further, the postulator must collect all published writings of a candidate and “all the writings of the Servant of God, those not yet published, as well as each and every historical document, either handwritten or printed, which in any way pertain to the cause.” This means both documentation directly related to the candidate and data about his or her social and historical environment. For both modern and ancient causes, these documents make up the central form of evidence. Gathered and
explained in the *positio* during the Roman phase of canonization, the information will become the basis of judgment of the candidate’s sanctity.

The modern candidate for canonization will have acted in several spheres—education, work, public life—and will have legal records of birth, death, possibly marriage, and property. Inevitably, as people become more public, the “each and every” document will be found in an increasingly wide variety of archives. Additionally, these documents will come from people who will send them in answer to the responsible bishop’s decree requesting them. The change toward a more inclusive decree that asks for all evidence, rather than stressing evidence contrary to the cause, as previous canonization protocol demanded, creates a wider, more objective base of documentation, which eventually enriches the archives of both the cause and the diocese. All information collected, no matter what its source, becomes part of the local inquiry through the labor of the postulator. The archives of the Roman Curia contribute in a unique way to this local phase. Each relevant office studies its archives to determine if anything contrary to the cause exists. If an office, such as the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, finds a difficulty—perhaps evidence of disobedience to orders from the Congregation—it notifies the bishop to see if the problem can be resolved. A major hindrance immediately stops all progress, since the Holy See cannot then issue its *Nihil Obstat* (“nothing against”), required for continuation of the cause.

Under the 1983 legislation, archives are not just sources of documents, but also of expertise. In all causes, especially ancient ones that are judged only on documentary evidence, the bishop must consult experts in history and archival matters. He may create a historical commission for this purpose. The goal of consultation is the exhaustive collection of all pertinent written sources. For archival consultants, this presupposes excellent navigational skills, including knowledge of reference and access, to extract information from a wide variety of archives in varying stages of organization. In this way, they guarantee proper investigation. In addition, the experts comment on the usefulness of sources as documentation for the cause. They verify the authorship of documents, their time of creation, and their reliability. These form the solid foundation for the judgment of a candidate’s holiness. The consultation should also increase efficiency, avoiding searches for additional matter after the collection is thought to be complete.

A change in the witness process further favors good use of archives. *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* clearly states that witnesses should be questioned quickly to avoid any chance of losing their testimony through their death. Therefore, the questioning may proceed before the examination of documents is completed—impossible under previous legislation. If the urge to rush archival inquiry to completion in order to move on to the questioning of witnesses may have been an excuse for any superficiality in investigation, the new law precludes that possibility.

Finally, the diocesan archives of the candidate and the archives of the CCS receive a copy of all acts, documents, and witnesses for the Servant of God. The original copies of archival sources are called the *archetypum* and remain in the diocesan archives while the second generation of copies, the *transypsum*, and a study copy, go to Rome.
In summary, direct archival involvement in the modern process of canonization includes four aspects:
1. Serving as a source for documents concerning the candidate
2. Serving as a source for information about the historical milieu of the candidate
3. Providing expertise in judging the authenticity and value of documents
4. Receiving documents resulting from the cause

**The Role of Archives in a Recent Cause: Samuel Mazzuchelli**

To demonstrate how recent causes have proceeded and used archives, 20 archives and postulato uses from a number of archives were surveyed concerning the use of archives by those researching saint causes, documents sought, and problems encountered. (See Appendices 3 and 4 for sample surveys.) Other information for this section comes from archival documents on the cause of Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli (1806–1864), founder of the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters. The sisters hold a wealth of relevant archival documentation at their motherhouse in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin–River Falls archives provided material on the case of Solanus Casey (1870–1948), Capuchin priest. The series of *Solanus Casey Guild Newsletters* provided especially rich information on the use of archival documents, particularly the frustration involved in conforming to developing legislation. *Positios* of various causes give evidence of archival research and complement other sources. Using the Mazzuchelli process as a template, this section will show the similarities and uniqueness of causes to arrive at a description of the spectrum of archival involvement in the canonization process.

The first lesson of historical research regarding canonization procedures—a feature encountered in every case—is that research, from serious inquiries in international archives to writing letters to a candidate’s hometown to discover the probable childhood environment of a proposed saint, begins long before any official process. This reflects the enthusiasm of the petitioners of a cause, but perhaps also results from the moral responsibility of the petitioner toward the Church in confirming the suitability of the cause. In the case of Samuel Mazzuchelli, the process of collecting documents began with his death. Some of the greatest treasures of the Mazzuchelli collection came to the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters with his personal papers, including handwritten sermons, correspondence, and a sermon diary. This small book devotes each page to a different sermon topic and lists the date and place of each sermon given at Indian missions and churches, so that the owner would not repeat a subject too frequently for any audience. The sisters received another excellent inheritance from their founder: his express desire that they preserve the records of their community “in an almost scrupulous manner.” This phrase from the 1860 rule of the sisters evolved into the 1994 mandate that the general government must appoint an archivist for the whole congregation to preserve, protect, and provide access to the annals of each house of sisters, the scholarly and artistic works of members, and any relevant photographs or published articles concerning the community. The founder’s wish for accurate history and the sisters’ belief in his cause led them to contact surviving relatives and gather contemporary testimony at the time of Mazzuchelli’s death. This activity, irre-
placeable by a later generation, prompted the Madison Diocesan Historical Commission for the Mazzuchelli cause to compliment the sisters on their "sense of history." 22

The sisters gained additional incentive from people who believed Mazzuchelli should be canonized. His work as the lone priest in a large section of the Michigan Territory, which included present-day Wisconsin, running Indian missions, building schools, and constructing over 20 churches where he served, gave him much contact with people. Sr. Christiane Althaus, a Sinsinawa archivist, remarked, "[A canonization cause] is really begun by the grass-roots [effort]—people saying he’s a saintly man. Everybody is saying that, not one or two... That’s the basis for it all..." 23

In the early 1900s, the Sinsinawa Mother General, Sr. Mary Samuel Coughlin, began to write to the Dominican government in Rome about opening the process and beginning the search for documentation. 24 A letter in the Sinsinawa Dominican Archives (SDA) shows that by June 15, 1912, the sisters and Dominican fathers had begun research in Wisconsin and in Italy, Mazzuchelli’s place of birth and education. 25 By February 1916, Coughlin had asked the Dominicans in Washington, D.C., for copies of letters from or about Mazzuchelli from the archives of the order there. The archivist gladly complied, offering all documentation he had on the subject and adding, "... she may copy as much of this matter as she likes." 26 This shows that the sisters searched archives on a national and international level 50 years before the official cause opened.

Trouble gaining access soon arose. A 1925 letter from one sister to another describes a religious brother’s attempts to get more letters from the St. Louis province of the Dominican fathers at the sister’s request. She quotes part of his letter:

Unfortunately, effort is all that I can report. After going from Pontius to Pilate for quite a while, all that I can discover is that the letters do actually exist, but where they are is another question. Reverend Kenny sent me to Msgr. Tannrath, the Monsignor sent me to Fr. Holweg, Fr. Holweg sent me back to Msgr. Tannrath, and there the search ended. An index ... showed that the [letters] ought to be in the archives, but I could not find them there... The Reverend Chancellor is about two degrees colder than an iceberg. The archives, you know, are in possession of the Chancellor, but he knows nothing about what they contain, and doesn’t seem to care. 27

By 1929, the sisters had moved beyond more obvious archival sources—those of the Dominican priests and sisters—and started to collect material from a great variety of resources. A letter directing the continuation of inquiries also expands the type of material sought, going beyond material written by or about Mazzuchelli, to include other evidence about parts of his life as well as clues about the culture in which he grew up. It cites a statement in a Galena, Illinois, obituary that Mazzuchelli had been sent to Switzerland in 1812 during political upheaval in Milan and asks for verification of the situation and of Mazzuchelli’s move. The founder’s education in its earliest stages became another area of research. The sister hoped to discover where and what he studied, the social status of the families of co-students, and whether any other students had risen to prominence. She believed that the school’s chronicles would have
information and that a certain Senator Luca Beltrami could help obtain less accessible information. Most of the sister’s inquiries seem to be detailed, giving the impression that the requested facts were necessary to fill gaps in an already substantial historical record, rather than to construct large sections of an unknown life.28

About 10 years later, the Dominicans took more official steps. First, the American province of the Dominican fathers contacted the postulator general in Rome, responsible for all Dominican canonization causes in the world. Here, one can see the obvious force of canon law. While the sisters may have been the most appropriate community to make initial contact since they had the archives and Mazzuchelli had founded their order, at the time a women’s community could bring the cause forward only through an ordained male actor and postulator. The fathers first contacted their provincial promoter, Fr. Timothy Sparks, who turned the matter over to the postulator general, Fr. Lanzetti. Unfortunately, the Second World War delayed the process until 1948, when a new postulator general, Fr. Berutti, worked for Dominican causes. Through his expertise and insight, he turned the attention of all who worked for Mazzuchelli’s canonization to the concept of historical causes. Fr. Berutti delineated that, among archival documents, there may be “no positive proofs contrary to Mazzuchelli’s virtue.” In addition, “positive proofs of his virtue” must exist, as well as proofs of “former and current reputation for sanctity” and evidence that intentions and prayers of devotees were answered through his intercession. Since Fr. Berutti had the most experience in predicting the success of the cause, he requested that documentation already collected be sent to him.29

Meanwhile, in 1949, Fr. J. B. Walker, a Dominican father, was released by his province to work for the cause on the local level.30 He contacted the Sinsinawa archivist, Sr. Paschala, about the necessary items, while Fr. Sparks contacted the general prioress, Mother Samuel, informing her of the move. This correspondence gives evidence of the excellent indexing that certainly saved the community time, postage, and uncertainty. Fr. Walker sent Sr. Paschala a list of all documents in several Roman repositories concerning the Dominican fathers’ St. Joseph Province. Sr. Paschala’s task consisted simply of checking the list against the holdings of the Sinsinawa archives, seeing which documents pertained to Mazzuchelli, and sending the catalog number of the documents to Fr. Berutti in Rome, who had the same list. Further, she made sure all the copies of relevant documents that she had already obtained from the archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith were on the list.31 This strongly implies that the sisters had copies of much or most of the pertinent material from Roman archives by 1948—more than 15 years before the official process began.

While these actions show a genuine concern for the historical research that is the focus of more recent legislation, they can also be seen as preparation for the trial-like proceedings in Rome between the postulator of the cause and the tenacious Promoter of the Faith, or “devil’s advocate,” which characterized the canonization process before the mid-twentieth century. Fr. Walker’s letter confirms this by warning Sr. Paschala about the importance of sending the correct information to Fr. Berutti who could then make a solid decision on whether to pursue the cause.
Sister, perhaps you may think all this caution a lot of nonsense. Well, have you not often wondered why Blessed Imelda, who has been solemnly beatified has not been canonized? The cause has been pending for years and years and years. Everything seemed pretty well in hand; but the devil’s advocate, as they call him, [the Promotor of the Faith] threw a monkey wrench into the works. And now the historians are digging madly into every hole and corner of Italy in a frantic effort to save the situation. Will they succeed? I don’t know and neither does anybody else. Time alone will tell.

Now suppose that after years spent in gathering materials . . . years spent in studying the documents from every angle; years spent in gathering all evidence available on Fr. Samuel’s virtues and sanctity of life; and then on arrival in Rome, the case was dropped because there was no probability of satisfying the “devil’s advocate,”—I think you see the wisdom of benefitting by the experienced judgement of Fr. Berutti in the first place.32

By 1949, Fr. Berutti via Fr. Walker expanded his requests to a listing of all available materials and information about them, such as the scope, nature, availability, and conditions of Mazzuchelli’s writings. The ability of a document to prove virtue should accompany its citation in a list. The archivists should comment on the authenticity of documentation containing testimony from Mazzuchelli’s contemporaries. Here, Fr. Walker asked for exact information in preparation for the juridical process. “The witnesses are all dead,” he wrote. “They cannot testify for themselves and cannot be questioned. The evidence has to be such that it could stand up in court on all points considered . . . . So you see this is not child’s play.”33

The next step, one common to all causes of canonization in this period, involved the preparation of articuli. The researcher created a series of brief factual statements about the candidate’s life and virtues, each rooted in a specific documentary source. This very objective and fundamental work took time, since every gap had to be filled, which might involve spending months tracking down new manuscripts. On May 15, 1950, Fr. Berutti assigned this task to Fr. Walker. Unfortunately, since he lived 160 miles from Sinsinawa, he had only infrequent and hurried access to the archives. Hoping to avoid any delay in the cause, Fr. Walker assigned the task to Sr. Paschala.34 “The work will devolve upon you or some other who steepes herself in the archival and historical material that has been preserved. The work cannot be done in a week or a month, but it has to be done if Fr. Berutti is to see how the positive statement of [Mazzuchelli’s] heroic virtue can be substantiated from the records that have been preserved.”35

In 18 months Sr. Paschala had finished the rough draft, and a year later two others had translated the work into the required Italian. Although Fr. Berutti and Fr. Walker praised the translation, the articuli fell short in two regards: The amount of evidence or kind of evidence for Mazzuchelli’s virtues was weak, and archival sources were not cited specifically enough. The name of the repository did not suffice; the citations should have included the series, where available.34 This foreshadowed current require-
ments. Archival references must now include the most exact citation possible. By 1955, the sisters had not completed this research although a strong sense of provenance began to pervade letters of the period. Younger archivists wrote to veterans asking where various incoming manuscripts and microfilms should be filed.

Around this time, the sisters sought evidence in nonreligious archives. These included a search in the National Archives for school reports, letters about the situation of Indians in the 1830s, and passenger lists for the ships on which Mazzuchelli came to America in 1828 and made other voyages between here and Rome. The sisters consulted newspaper archives locally and as far as New York and San Francisco, especially in search of obituaries. They visited the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and found 40 items. The Davenport, Iowa, public museum had correspondence and Mazzuchelli’s contracts for wood and stone used in the construction of an area church. A descendant of a Galena, Illinois, pioneer informed the sisters that the New York Public Library’s rare book collection contained a copy of Mazzuchelli’s prayer book for the Winnebago in their native language.

In 1956, a new postulator general, Fr. Tarcisio Piccari, replaced Fr. Berutti. Although the former postulator general had named a vice-postulator in order to begin the actual cause in the diocese, Fr. Piccari suggested certain changes in the articuli before this step. Since Fr. Walker had been doing special research on several objections to the canonization process raised by some American Dominicans, Fr. Piccari wished the results of that investigation to be included in the articuli. While Fr. Berutti asked for the necessary research, Fr. Piccari seemed nothing short of a zealot for solid documentation. He often pointed out how archival material was the sole basis for a historical cause. In view of the objections raised about Mazzuchelli, Fr. Piccari noted how other saints weathered attacks after their cause officially opened only because “the documents have the last word.” He favored facing the opposition squarely and examining each objection thoroughly, proving with archival material that each problem was false or circumstantially unobjectionable. Thus, he prepared for the trial with the Promotor of the Faith. Fr. Piccari created a sort of checklist of nine items to anticipate the diocesan process.

Bishop O’Connor of Madison began this process on July 10, 1964, by appointing a historical commission to review all documents. The centenary of Mazzuchelli’s death had catalyzed the event, as did the urging of Fr. Walker and the two Dominican archivists, perhaps hoping that their hard work would soon bear fruit. While the appointment of the commission meant the opening of the process in the diocese, it signified the closing of archival research. Fr. Walker believed that “few if any further documents might be brought to light.” The commission studied extant documentation, hoping to inform the bishop about the amount of information, its compliance with the CCS, and the condition and authenticity of all documents. Fr. Walker presented a one hundred-page list of all collected documents by or about Fr. Mazzuchelli, including the provenance and relevant information. In all, the Sinsinawa Dominicans had gathered 1,130 documents, 417 by Mazzuchelli, all but one handwritten, and 713 about him. The historical commission sent a proud report of all research to the bishop, with Fr. Walker’s regret that better or more material had not been recovered. “These observations afford
a sad confirmation of the justice of those who complain that American Catholics are not noted for their sense of history.”

Despite this difficulty, the historical commission completed its work, and the bishop initiated the informative process, requesting witnesses to testify on September 15, 1966. It proceeded simultaneously in the archdioceses of Milwaukee, Dubuque, and Milan. This stage required only a little over one year, and the process moved to the CCS, which assigned it to its historical section. With the assignment, the section received 22 boxes of copied records compiled by Fr. Walker and the sisters. Their deliberation and the writing of the positio extended until February 10, 1989. On July 6, 1993, John Paul II declared Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli “Venerable,” 115 years after the first research into his life began.

**The Archivist-Postulator Encounter in Other Causes**

Similar experiences with other causes can speak to archivists about how postulators and other workers use archives and the problems they might encounter. One important note for the profession concerns the wide use of nonreligious archives to ascertain facts about the lives of candidates, their cultural milieux, and their family background. The vice-postulator for the cause for Solanus Casey visited the University of Wisconsin–River Falls archives to obtain basic biographical and genealogical information. County records told of places about which Casey wrote in letters, and the museum in Stillwater, Minnesota, provided the vice-postulator with photographs of places the candidate worked, such as Stillwater State Prison and a logging camp. He also combed archives in Ireland to find birth information on Casey’s father. Finding nothing, he searched national immigration archives and found information on Casey’s father and his mother. In another case, Fr. Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., postulator for the cause of Fr. Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, searched the Connecticut State Archives and the Yale University Archives among many other archives of dioceses and religious communities. While all but one cause surveyed confirmed the use of nonreligious archives in researching candidates, Sr. M. Thomasine Treese, postulator for the cause of Sr. M. Emilie Engel, Schoenstatt Sister of Mary, submitted the most detailed list. She recently visited or otherwise contacted 21 archives, 12 of which were nonreligious/nondiocesan repositories. Schools, hospitals where the candidate stayed during illness, family archives, and that of a former teacher’s union supplied information for Sr. M. Emilie’s cause.

While the surveyed postulators and vice-postulators generally felt satisfied by their encounters with archives, some problems did occur, which fall under the larger category of “access.” Only a few had trouble determining the repositories suited for their purposes. Postulators read correspondence and checked the archives of the area mentioned, or determined the diocese, region, and groups to which a candidate could have belonged and then systematically mined the archives. One postulator started with one obvious archives and networked. Several mentioned that one archives pointed to another as a further source of information.

Once inside the archives, finding aids posed an occasional problem. Some postulators complained of vague, incomplete finding aids, but from an archivist’s point of
view, the candidate may not be famous enough to justify a document-level index of writings or special citation in other collections. School and family records are often too numerous to catalog. Also, postulators who are accustomed to a religious community's small archives focused on holy personalities may be dismayed at the general series-level description found in public archives, which must serve a variety of constituents and house very large quantities of documents. Nevertheless, some actions are inexcusable. One positio writer complained that in a Roman archives, the archivist had just changed the numbering system of documents as she completed the positio. Needing the number of each document in this very official work, the writer called to request the new numbers, which the archivist refused to give out. This incident constituted the sole complaint against unhelpful archivists among the postulators.

Even if one can find archival material, restrictions may prohibit access. The Mazzuchelli cause encountered restricted records at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, but the Episcopal bishop of Milwaukee gave the vice-postulator access to the requested letter. Two postulators mentioned restriction difficulties in European archives. One explained that copyright and privacy laws are more stringent in some European countries. Time restrictions were more of a problem in Europe as a few reported that archives had hours both inconvenient and few for public access. No archives forbade photocopying for other than practical reasons, such as preservation, and in this case photography of documents was allowed. Old newspapers proved to be the most difficult copying problem, and one postulator complained that city and state archives do not always keep copiers in good repair.

Most surveyed postulators and archivists mentioned authenticity of documents as a concern. For the Church, which pronounces a candidate a saint, the final infallible statement may rest on the authenticity of archival sources. The newest legislation asks the bishop to call at least two experts in history and archival science to verify authenticity of written works. When asked about authenticity of originals, meaning here that the documents are what they propose to be, postulators and most archivists seemed very trusting, with no real exceptions. If held in a parish, diocesan, or religious community, postulators and archivists felt that there was no reason authenticity should be questioned. Statements such as "I just presumed authenticity" or "The minute books have been here forever" reveal this. In some cases, archivists or communities were close enough timewise to the creation of documents to vouch for their authenticity. Because the CCS requires a notarized seal to prove that the documents they review are faithful to the original archival manuscript, most archival material is either notarized or stamped with the seal of the archives, diocese, or bishop.

Similarly, typed copies of handwritten documents require notarization. The office of notary is a Church appointment. In Solanus Casey's cause, John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit appointed a notary solely for this task, as bishops under the 1983 legislation must do. When the cardinal made a public appeal for all writings by or about Casey, he mentioned that if individuals wanted to keep their originals, they could send notarized copies. In Mazzuchelli's cause, the primitive means of copying in the early part of this century meant that "many of the documents gathered over the years were full of errors and anything but authentic." Therefore, those concerned with the cause had to regather documents. Microfilm proved helpful.
Since postulators had minor problems with archives, it is also fair to ask if archivists experienced any difficulties with those seeking information on a candidate for sainthood. Archivists admit that they often do not know why a person requests certain information and that saint patrons may come and go without the archivist’s awareness. When archivists know the saint patron’s purpose, time may be the greatest inconvenience. For small requests, normal reference interview time may suffice. Other repositories, dealing with larger requests, reported 20 or more hours of reference work. Like any reference, the time and effort depend on the clarity of the researcher’s knowledge of what he or she wants. Several archivists reported researchers requesting “everything there is” on their candidate. This involves no more work than a similar genealogical inquiry, but ideally, the saint patron should have some idea of at least the general type of record required.62

While the policies of certain archives and authenticity concerns created problems for some causes, the quickly changing rules governing canonization frustrated others. Solanus Casey’s cause, for example, had the unfortunate experience of doing archival research during the 1960s to the 1980s, just when the legislation was developing fastest. How information was to be gathered had not changed, but why one gathered it or the form of its ultimate use dictated strategy. When these goals changed, researchers had to shift gears.

Vice-postulator Br. Pascal Siler began his work with great motivation. In the very first issue of the Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter, published to keep the memory of the candidate alive, to make his life known to others, and to gather information about his life and work, he wrote an article explaining that he believed in compiling very complete documentation. Br. Siler claimed that one reason processes moved so slowly in Rome was a lack of documentation. Just as Fr. Walker had in Mazzuchelli’s cause, Br. Siler planned to give all documentation to the expert postulator general in order that he might review it to see if the cause were worth pursuing.63 By the summer of 1970, he had compiled 312 brief biographical statements, most backed up by archival material, although he still lacked a few documents. He reminded guild members that, although he had 11 notebooks from Casey and 274 letters, he would need all documentation before a diocesan tribunal could be set up.64

Unfortunately, much of Br. Siler’s work and worry suddenly became unnecessary in the wake of Sanctitas Clarior, the 1969 Apostolic Letter of Paul VI (1963–1978), which eliminated repetitive steps in the canonization fact-finding process. Fr. Bernardine of Siena, the postulator general in Rome, wrote to Br. Siler, warning of complete changes. Br. Siler later complained in the public forum of the newsletter that the lack of progress in the canonization cause was due to a need for clear directives from the Sacred Congregation of Rites.65

Br. Siler escaped the vexing process in 1974 when the Capuchins named a new vice-postulator, Br. Leo Wollenweber.66 From 1976 to 1982, the cause proceeded well. Br. Wollenweber collected documents from Capuchin, diocesan, and public archives. Cardinal Dearden of Detroit, Casey’s home diocese, furthered the cause by officially requesting all known writings to be sent to Wollenweber by March 31, 1977. He added that if a person did not have material but knew of someone else who did, he or she should inform the vice-postulator.67 By 1980, Br. Wollenweber had collected all docu-
ments. With them notarized and bound, he headed for Rome. The 1,230 pages of documents were passed to two theological censors and by 1982, the CCS and the Holy Father gave consent to begin the informative process in the diocese, including the interrogation of witnesses. However, a few flaws appeared in this rosy picture when the 1983 legislation came into effect. Two diocesan censors replaced the two Roman ones, and this stage started over. It progressed rapidly and by 1987, work on the positio began. With its completion, the process moved to Rome, where on July 11, 1995, the CCS declared Solanus Casey “Venerable” in the presence of John Paul II.

The positios required by each process after the completion of the diocesan procedures are perhaps the crowning achievement of archival research. Each contains the selection of the best documents supporting the cause, and each becomes evidence of the rigorous search of archives in the years preceding and accompanying the process. All positios contain a brief history of the cause; a note on the sources and their usefulness, with a historically critical evaluation; the life story of the candidate, focusing on virtue or martyrdom; and the proofs of the reputation of sanctity, such as the testimony of witnesses, which is also examined for historical accuracy. The most outstanding component is the chronologically structured biographical text in which each statement is supported by specific documents, copies of which appear in the work itself. One writer said, “All documents should speak for themselves, but the positio must build up the frame around it and use formal reference to the documents.” Historical consultants examine each positio regarding the quality, completeness, and relevance of documentation. Satisfying them, it may progress to theological consultants for judgment on the sanctity of the candidate. For the archives involved, the joy of having material used for an important work is significant, and the obvious publicity of each archival source in the positio may be rewarding.

Canonization causes, despite some complaints and difficulties, benefit greatly from archives. Archives may benefit reciprocally from canonization causes by adding to their collections but, more importantly, by increased use and publicity and, thus, the enhancement of the reputation of usefulness so important in the public eye. Canonization procedures do add to archival collections: to those of religious communities or other groups who search for any evidence of their candidates, to dioceses in the same way and through the receiving of the archetypum of acts and procedures for a process in the diocese, and to the archives of the CCS, which receives a copy of all positios and all acts.

**The Increasing Use of Archives in Canonization Causes**

Most archives surveyed in this study experienced some publicity and greater use because of canonization causes, although this cannot be easily measured. Sr. Christiane Althaus claimed that involvement in the Mazzuchelli canonization process brought a great increase of researchers to the archives of the Sinsinawa Dominicans, mostly scholars writing articles on the candidate. Further, the cause aroused interest among genealogists who requested Fr. Mazzuchelli’s baptismal records. Similarly, the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Archives benefitted from the cause of Fr. McGivney, also in an increase of genealogists trying to confirm kinship with the candidate. The archi-
vist additionally reported many calls from newspapers at the time of the cause's opening. 76 Others surveyed acknowledged greater public use without relating further details.

Some archives become indirect beneficiaries of canonizations. The archives of the University of New York at Buffalo holds the papers of a German philosopher, Marvin Farber, who corresponded with the recently canonized Edith Stein and wrote of her in other letters. At the time of her canonization, the archives got a story in a local newspaper and a "major mention" in an article in America. Both philosophy and theology scholars became interested in the holdings due to this publicity. 77

**The Benefits of Canonization Causes to Archives**

The Marquette University archives in Milwaukee also received indirect attention due to canonization processes. John Paul II beatified Kateri Tekakwitha in 1980. Marquette University holds the archives of the Tekakwitha Conference National Center, which pursued faith stories of Native Americans devoted to Kateri Tekakwitha. The archives collected 50 oral histories over two summers. The vice-postulator for the cause requested some of these for use in the effort for the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha, and other holdings became part of paper and on-line exhibits. ABC-TV sent a filmmaker to the Marquette University archives to use photos as part of a 90-minute documentary concerning Saint Katherine Drexel (1858-1955). 78 The publicity due to the broadcast may be significant.

A number of repositories surveyed mention exhibits as an important use of their materials, and several variations of the standard exhibit exist, such as traveling displays, memorial rooms, and even commemorative festivals such as Baraga Days, which promotes the canonization of Bishop Frederic Baraga. 79 The Sinsinawa Dominicans have created a permanent museum-quality documentation room depicting the life of Fr. Mazzuchelli. Original documents such as the handwritten sermon diary complement interpretive texts and images created with archival information. Contrasting this impressive overview of the founder's life, the sisters also compiled a "chronotaxis" containing a file card for each day of their founder's life for which they could discover some fact about him or his activities, as minute or great as these might be. Each statement appears next to the archival source from which the researchers gleaned the information.

A final use and source of publicity for archives consist of the extensive publishing that many causes undertake in favor of their candidate. All processes require one biography of the life and virtues of the Servant of God, 80 but most develop several, with various accents over the years. Guild bulletins, pamphlets, holy cards with photos, slide presentations, and videos often depend on archival research and credit archives in their text. Because of the dual need of promoters of causes to both document and publicize a candidate as completely as possible, archival materials related to a candidate for sainthood will be well used once discovered.

While researchers for processes of canonization may use many types of archives and, thus, spread the blessings of use and publicity liberally, perhaps diocesan archives stand to gain the most from saint patrons. Every cause surveyed or studied for this
report used at least one and often many diocesan archives as sources for information on their candidate. The amount of information a diocesan archives can provide depends on several factors, including the candidate’s position or lack of it in the diocesan hierarchy, the age of a diocese, the development of the archival program and, fundamentally, the collection policy of the diocese that determines the appraisal and accession decisions of the archivist.

Although diocesan archives and those of religious communities play an essential role in the process of canonization for ordained candidates and members of religious and secular institutes, a broader range of archives is necessary for thorough proof of biographical details, historical milieux and, possibly, reputation of sanctity. Nonreligious archives, however, can hope to serve even more saint patrons in the future if predictions about the trend toward more lay saints prove true. Church members, scholars, and hierarchy seem to agree that increasing proportions of laity will be considered for canonization.

As people studying and working in the world and interacting more with society by nature of their vocation, laypersons will create proportionately more records found in nonreligious archives than those of other candidates for canonization. Archives of universities, professional associations, the military, corporations, unions, fraternities, and city archives may all become treasure chests for saint promoters. Some authors feel the focus on canonization of laity has its roots in the Second Vatican Council when delegates emphasized the value of the lay vocation and took steps toward realizing what had been a truth in the Church for centuries: the universal call to holiness. Laypersons themselves called for saints that could be models specifically for them.

One significant response of the Holy Father materialized in his convoking the 1987 Synod on the Vocation and Mission of Laity in the Church and World. Among the many issues, canonization of laity arose. One Chicago bishop related the hope for canonized models among the laity of his diocese. He complimented John Paul II on three recent canonizations of laity and asked that soon mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, married and single persons, athletes, entertainers, and workers be counted among the hallowed. This synod opened many causes for canonization of laypeople. In the preceding months, the CCS presented all the lay causes with decisions pending to the Holy Father, who canonized or beatified a number of them during the synod. In 1974, the official cause of Louis and Azelie Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, opened. In 1989, the relator finished the positio for this first joint cause of a married couple in four hundred years.

Pope John Paul II also has committed himself to the greater canonization of laity. Diversity of vocation among saints seems to be his aim. In his Apostolic Letter, Tertio Milenio Adveniente, the Holy Father writes: “In particular, there is a need to foster the recognition of the heroic virtues of men and women who have lived their Christian vocation in marriage . . . proposing them to the whole Church as model and encouragement.” He confirmed this commitment in the past year by acknowledging a miracle worked by a layman, Giuseppe Tovini, and the heroic virtue of Maria Giora, a parish director, and Paolo Perazza, a railwayman.

How might this trend affect archives? Along with the increasing number of canonizations and beatifications during this pontificate and the growing demand for exacting
historical research for each case, the investigation of virtues of the laity may increase saint patrons in archives considerably. The shrinking number of religious vocations may encourage a display of more lay models for a new type of sanctity in the coming millennium. Religious communities may be less and less able to house their archives, turning to more public facilities for assistance. But conditions are ripe for increased use of all types of archives for canonization procedures right now. A number of observers feel the longer and, thus, more expensive procedure of pre-1983 canonizations prohibited many lay candidates from the honors of the altar, but the more expedient and historically-oriented new legislation might change that. CCS member Msgr. Robert Sarno declared, “What the Congregation’s new legislation of 1983 has sought to do is to make it more possible for any candidate to get through the process.” Will archivists be ready?

Appendix 1

**Overview of the Current Canonization Process**

1. **Preliminary Phase**

   Petitioner begins unofficial collection of information, documents, support of the faithful. Petitioner names a postulator.

2. **Diocesan Process**

   Diocesan bishop or his delegate:

   Approves postulator.

   Applies for the *Nihil Obstat* from Rome.

   Appoints theological censors for published writings.

   Oversees collection of documentation by postulator by appointing a historical commission for this task, including experts in history, archives, and theology.

   Collects testimony of witnesses to determine reputation of sanctity.

   Bishop of the diocese in which a possible miracle has occurred inquires into possible miracles.

   Sends materials to Rome.
3. Roman Process

CCS:

Studies material.

Appoints relator to supervise the writing of the positio.

Relator appoints a person external to the CCS and familiar with the cause to write positio on heroic virtue or martyrdom.

Historical consultors judge the authenticity, completeness, and historical value of documents.

Passing this stage:

Theological consultors judge contents of positio.

Decision by CCS.

The pope promulgates a decree of heroic virtue of the person in question.

Following the confirmation of a miracle that the candidate has performed after death, he or she is beatified. A post-beatification miracle allows canonization.

Appendix 2

Survey for Archives Involved in Canonization Processes

1. Name.

2. Name of candidate for canonization. His/her religious order and religious name, if applicable.

3. On what dates, at least approximately, was information requested from the archives?

4. What is the relationship of the client who requested material for the canonization to the cause of canonization?

5. Which diocese did he or she represent?
6. What information did the client request?

7. Why did he or she want that kind of information?

8. Could you provide it? In what type of record?

9. How much time and assistance did the inquiry require?

10. Were you asked about the authenticity of the material? If so, what did you say?

11. Were there any follow-up requests by the client? If so, describe briefly.

12. Did you create a reference file on the candidate for canonization as a result of the inquiry?

13. Did this inquiry affect your archives in any other way, for example, greater use due to publicity of the matter?

14. Do you know of any other archives that have been involved in a canonization process?

15. Additional comments.

Appendix 3

Survey for Postulators and Diocesan Representatives on the Role of Archives in the Canonization Process

1. Name.

2. Name of candidate for canonization.

3. Diocese and/or community represented.

4. Which archives did you consult? When? How did you determine that the particular archives would be the best place to look?

5. What types of material did you hope to find? What would the ideal document have been?

6. Why did you need this information, i.e., in what ways do these materials serve the cause?
7. Was the information available?

8. Which of the following obstacles did you encounter in the search for information? Please explain.

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|   |   | Records/archives difficult to locate
|   |   | Inadequate finding aids in archives
|   |   | Information in records hard to find
|   |   | Restricted access to records
|   |   | Records illegible/unreadable
|   |   | Problems making copies
|   |   | Unhelpful archivists
|   |   | Archives not open during convenient hours

9. How did you verify the authenticity of documents? Was document authenticity ever a problem in your search?

10. Is there anything you would have liked to change about your experience in the archives? What could the archives have done to better facilitate your inquiry?

11. In what particular steps of the canonization process did you consult archives?

12. Additional comments.

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NOTES


2. Canonization is the third and final step in the declaration of a Catholic saint. The first step is the declaration that the candidate has led a life of heroic virtue or undergone martyrdom. He or she is then declared “Venerable.” The second step, beatification, requires a verified post mortem miracle, sometimes waived in the case of martyrdom, after which the candidate is called “Blessed.” Canonization requires a second verified miracle and gives the candidate the title “Saint.” This step is considered an infallible declaration of the pope.


12. Positio—short for positio super vita et virtutibus or positio super martyrium—are reports on the state of virtue or martyrdom that contain a chronological presentation of all documents relevant to the life and sanctity of the individual, as well as testimonies of witnesses.


15. Veraja, 43; Sarno, “Diocesan Inquiries,” 63.


17. Pope John Paul II, DPM, 6.


22. “Minutes of the Meeting of the Diocesan Historical Commission in the Cause of Father Mazzuchelli,” May 11, 1966, collection labeled “Cause of Samuel Mazzuchelli: Development,” SDA. Hereafter, all citations to material in the SDA will be to items in this collection.


25. Fr. Thomas Esser, letter to Mother Mary Samuel, June 15, 1912.


29. Fr. J. B. Walker, typed notes on the history of Fr. Mazzuchelli’s process of canonization, undated, SDA.

34. Walker, typed notes, SDA.
36. Walker, typed notes, SDA.
37. Veraja, 41.
39. Untitled typed list of record sources, 12–15, SDA.
40. Walker, typed notes, SDA.
49. Fr. Gabriel O’Donnell, E-mail survey response to author, February 16, 1999.
50. Sr. M. Thomasine Treese, E-mail survey response to author, February 13, 1999.
51. Fr. Leo Wollenweber, telephone interview by the author, February 19, 1999, notes in possession of author; Treese, survey.
52. O’Donnell.
54. Untitled typed list of record sources, 14, SDA.
56. Nolan.
57. Veraja, 39.
58. O’Donnell.
60. Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 8:2; Veraja, 31.
61. Walker, typed notes, 10, SDA.
62. Kevin Cawley, letter to author, February 8, 1999; Phil Runkel, letter to author, February 5, 1999; Ericson, survey; Rodriguez, survey.
63. Allen Gruenke, Sandal Prints (Capuchin Fathers, no place or date of publication available); Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 1:1.
64. Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 4:1; 1:2.
68. Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 10:2.
69. Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 17:2; Sarno, “Diocesan Inquiries,” 56.
70. Solanus Casey Guild Newsletter 2:2.
73. Veraja, 67.
74. Most of the surveyed repositories were the central ones connected with a cause. Repositories in which researchers for the candidate pursue only marginal information will, of course, receive less publicity.
75. Christiane Althaus, telephone interview by the author, February 12, 1999, notes in possession of author.
76. O’Donnell.
77. Christopher Densmore, E-mail survey response to author, February 6, 1999.
78. Mark Thiel, E-mail survey response to author, February 9, 1999; Runkel. On October 1, 2000, Katherine Drexel was canonized by Pope John Paul II.
80. Veraja, 35.
84. Woodward, 340–347.