

Archbishop Lori, Cardinal O'Brien reflect on boost of canonizations

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ROME - The Sunday forecast calls for rain - and another boost for a revived Catholic Church.

With millions of pilgrims already attempting to find elbow room in St. Peter's Square for the April 27 canonizations of Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II, Archbishop William E. Lori and Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, his predecessor as the archbishop of Baltimore, see the day as another springboard for the new evangelization.

That cause began to gain momentum in March 2013 with the election of Pope Francis, who will canonize a humble man from Italy who convoked Vatican II, and the first pope from outside this country in more than four centuries, one who promoted and restored religious freedom in his native Poland and beyond.

"Sunday is going to be a tremendous day," Archbishop Lori told the Catholic Review April 25, after celebrating Mass for pilgrims from Baltimore at Santa Maria in Trastevere. "Rome will be absolutely jammed with people, but what a lovely thing.

"People from all over the world will express the universality of the church, but it will also be an expression of the beauty and strength of the papacy in the times in which we lived, and are continuing now with Pope Francis."



Archbishop William E. Lori celebrates Mass at Santa Maria de Trastevere April 25.

(Paul McMullen | CR Staff)

The archbishop noted that he was a grade-school student when John XXIII became pope.

"It was like having one's grandfather become the pope," the archbishop said. "He was so kindly, even as a child I could perceive what a nice man he was. I later came to understand what a visionary leader, not only in his kindness, but in his courage."

The archbishop was ordained one year before John Paul II was elected pope.

"So many of us bishops and priests found in John Paul II a true spiritual father. He was a teacher, bar none, of the transcendent dignity of the human person."

Archbishop Lori emphasized that John Paul II coined the phrase the new evangelization, one that Pope Francis has embraced and that has particular resonance in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Premier See of the United States, which is celebrating its 225th anniversary.

Cardinal O'Brien spoke to the Catholic Review April 25 after celebrating Mass for pilgrims from Illinois at the Pontifical North American College, the seminary where he served as rector from January 1990 until August 1994.

"I was privileged to meet John Paul II when I was rector here," Cardinal O'Brien said. "I would go to his morning Masses, and bring visitors and seminarians to him.

"Just as he revolutionized the world with a peaceful resolution of eastern Europe, he revolutionized the church as well, with World Youth Day, the synods he led, in his clarification of so much confusion that had taken place after the second Vatican Council."

As grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, based in Rome, the cardinal will be part of the papal delegation when Pope Francis visits the Holy Land next month.

With Christians there embattled, Cardinal O'Brien connected the popularity of Pope Francis to the two men being canonized.

"Good weather or not, this feeling has been building the last several weeks," the cardinal said. "Poles are going to show real strength and devotion, and show that they are still a Catholic country, and that they are not afraid to profess their faith openly.

"I hope we can learn something from them in other parts of the world. ... We Catholics should be grateful and have an explanation for it (the gathering here), show how grateful we are for the faith that will be represented in these two canonizations."

Cardinal O'Brien is archbishop emeritus of Baltimore, as is his predecessor, Cardinal William H. Keeler.

Monsignor Robert J. Jaskot, who is leading a pilgrimage here sponsored by the archdiocese and the Catholic Review, became Cardinal Keeler's priest secretary in 2001.

Monsignor Jaskot's paternal grandmother fled Poland alone "to make a new start for herself" in the United States. He was well-versed in the story and teachings of John Paul II, and once he learned he would be spiritual director on this pilgrimage, dug into learning more about John XXIII.

"He was formed by God instead of the world," Monsignor Jaskot said. "He was often misunderstood, and mocked for his simplicity. The great things I'm seeing in Pope

Francis, I saw in Pope John. The excitement then is being recast now.”

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