

# Performing a Just Spirituality: A Liturgical Case Study

by Edward Foley

On November 18, 2017, over seventy-one thousand people gathered at Ford Field in Detroit, Michigan—the home of the Detroit Lions—for the beatification Mass of Solanus Casey. Another approximately 240 million viewed the event via live streaming.<sup>1</sup> This public ritual that recognized the holiness of a simple Franciscan friar, the final step before being officially declared a saint by the Roman Catholic Church, was organized under the auspices of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints (*Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum*), the local Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, and the Capuchin-Franciscan community of Friars to which Solanus belonged.

While the event could be analyzed from diverse perspectives—e.g., from the viewpoint of its daunting logistics or its spiritual impact on those who have fostered a devotion to the “doorkeeper of Detroit,” this essay will consider it as an act of public theology. More specifically, this study will explore the role of diverse performative arts and the people who enacted them as aesthetic metaphors for the values of accessibility, poverty, and concern for the marginalized that marked the ministry of Solanus Casey and the various communities that have nurtured his memory.

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We will first offer a brief introduction to the nature of public theology and its appropriateness as a frame for understanding liturgy. We will next provide some background on the life and legacy of Solanus Casey. Next, we will review significant events that transpired between his death in 1957 and the beatification process. Of particular interest will be a reflection on the construction of the Solanus Casey Center (2002)<sup>2</sup> as an aesthetic prelude that rehearsed some of the underlying values articulated above. Next, we will ponder some of the challenges (e.g., logistical and hierarchical) in shaping the public ritual and some of the values that needed to be upheld in view of those challenges. Finally, we will spend significant time on the ritual performance itself and examine how those who prepared the liturgy attempted to embody those values in the ritual enactment. Closing remarks will offer some external witnesses to the level of effectiveness of such embodiment.

This presentation is admittedly not objective. The author is a member of the Capuchin-Franciscan community to which Solanus belonged. He also chaired the commission that constructed the Solanus Center, chaired the com-

<sup>1</sup> A recording of the liturgy in its entirety is available at <http://solanuscasy.org/beatification>.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Foley, *Journey to Holiness: A Pilgrimage through the Solanus Casey Center* (Detroit: MarkWest, 2007).

mittee that designed and enacted the worship, and directed the music for the beatification. It is hoped that the prejudices of the presenter do not overly inhibit the interpretations that others might bring to this work.

## Liturgy as Public Theology

Over the years I have argued in presentations and publications, including this journal,<sup>3</sup> that worship—particularly Roman Catholic worship—is not only aptly understood, but maybe even best considered as a form of public theology. This perspective is an admitted counterpoint to that of too many liturgical and sacramental theologians who, in my opinion, continue to focus almost exclusively on texts and have not developed a hermeneutic for addressing both the “event” nature of liturgy as well as its essentially ecclesial and, therefore, fundamentally *public* nature.

Public theology is a relatively recently term in Christian theological discourse. Martin Marty is often cited as originator of both the term and its theological underpinnings. Marty, decades ago, spoke of “public theologians,”<sup>4</sup> drawing upon the writings of Benjamin Franklin (d. 1790) who in 1749 anonymously penned a pamphlet arguing for the necessity of “public religion” in education and its usefulness to society. Marty adapted Franklin’s term, suggesting that it was more helpful to speak about public church than civil religion.<sup>5</sup> Marty defined “the public church” as “a family of apostolic churches with Jesus Christ at the center ... that are especially sensitive to the *res publica*, the public order that surrounds and includes people of faith.”<sup>6</sup> According to Marty, this public church engages in “public theology,” which he defined as an effort “to interpret the life of a people in the light of a transcendent reference.”<sup>7</sup> Marty believed that the people whose lives are being interpreted in this process are not just Christians but the broader public with whom the church is more broadly engaged. Thus, for Marty, the public church is not so much concerned with the way individuals are saved or reconciled to God but is concerned instead with the contribution such a public church makes to shaping civil, social, and political life from a theological perspective.

While the term is relatively new, the form of theologizing here characterized as “public” is recognizable throughout the history of Christianity. Without rehearsing even a small part of that history, any Christian public theology, from my perspective, must be grounded in Jesus, whose life was that of a public figure, and whose death was that of a public criminal. He theologized with the coin of the realm in his hand (Mt 22:19-21), he publicly narrated parables about the nature of God’s reign and its in-breaking in human history (Mt 13:11-17), and he ritualized that parabolic in-breaking with multitudes on both the Jewish (e.g., Mk 6:34-44) and Gentile (e.g., Mk 8:1-10) sides of the Sea of Galilee. After trial before both religious (Mt 26:57) and civil (Mt 27:11) authorities, he was eventually executed in the public square we call Golgotha (Mt 27:33-40). From the perspective of Christian theology, Jesus was the aboriginal public theologian.

As a gifted ritual leader and improviser, the gospels provide pervasive evidence that Jesus ate and drank with sinners, a charge publicly leveled against Jesus by his critics (e.g., Mk 2:16, Mt 9:11). While on the surface the religious accusation may have been blasphemy and the political incrimination sedition, the psychological catalyst for crucifixion seems to have been the public theology that Jesus enacted through table ministry. It was his sustained

3 “Liturgy as Public Theology,” *New Theology Review* 22, no. 1 (2009): 70-79. Also see my “Preaching to the Choir or Reaching for the ‘Unchurched’? Pope Francis, Worship, and Public Theology,” *Anaphora* 9, no. 2 (2015): 1-20; “Liturgy as Public Theology,” *Studia Liturgica* 38, no. 1 (2008): 31-52 (with French and German versions); “Worship as Public Theology,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8, no. 1 (2004): 1-13.

4 Martin Marty, “Two Kinds of Civil Religion,” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 155.

5 Martin Marty, *The Public Church* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1981), 3.

6 Marty, *The Public Church*, 3.

7 Marty, *The Public Church*, 16.

and open dining with tax collectors and sinners that ultimately drove the authorities to plot his death. Norman Perrin summarizes: “Jesus welcomed these outcasts into table fellowship with himself in the name of the kingdom of God, in the name of the Jews’ ultimate hope, and so both prostituted that hope and shattered the closed ranks of the community against their enemy. It is hard to imagine anything more offensive to Jewish sensibilities.”<sup>8</sup> Given the centrality of the shared table with sinners in his public ministry, it seems at least credible to assert that the prayerful ritualization of Jesus at table can be evoked as a paradigm and foundation for considering our worship as an act of public theology.

Since I have rehearsed other historical precedents for thinking about liturgy as public theology in resources noted previously, it seems appropriate to catapult forward to the ministry of Pope Francis (b. 1936), who is a very gifted public theologian. He is not the first pontiff to understand his public ritualizing as a form of theologizing. John Paul II (d. 2005) was a very gifted ritualizer; a trademark ritual was his dropping to his knees when visiting a new country and kissing the earth in that context, thus honoring that ground as a place where God’s Spirit dwells. As he aged, he continued the tradition even though he could not make his full-body prostration, instead kissing containers of earth from the local context that were brought to him.<sup>9</sup>

Pope Francis, however, has escalated the public ritualizing of a Roman Pontiff in the midst of our most solemn liturgies as a form of public theology. Less than a month after he had been elected pontiff, he transferred one of the most solemn liturgies in the liturgical canon—Holy Thursday—from the sacred precincts of St. John Lateran, the Cathedral Church of Rome, to a juvenile detention center. There, with cameras snapping and digital images being recorded, he washed the feet of adolescent women and men—Muslim, Gypsy, and Christian—caressing and kissing them with remarkable reverence.<sup>10</sup> Deliberately relocating this radical statement of intergenerational, intercultural, and interfaith respect to the heart of the Triduum is nothing less than an intentionally rebooted and re-escalated statement about Roman Catholic worship as a mode of publicly theologizing about the way that adolescents, Muslims, Gypsies, and the criminalized young are actually triggers of grace and blessed beings whom society may have abandoned but whom the Holy Spirit cannot, has not, and will not.

As someone who presides and preaches regularly in a high-profile Chicago parish that draws US senators and street folk, civic officials and the civically overlooked, Fortune 500 CEOs and those without a fortune, I understand this Sunday extension of my ministry as a practical theological venture. I am not just preaching to the present assembly, not just choosing orations or a eucharistic prayer for special needs and occasions to support the spiritual development of a geographically limited and temporally defined assembly. These folk, like every assembly, live public lives. My task as a preacher and presider is to enable them to live not just personal piety but lives of public witness, evangelization, and societal transformation. I preside and preach as a public theologian, hoping to inspire worshippers to live their lives as public theologians as well.

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8 Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 103.

9 See an image of this at <https://www.gettyimages.fr/detail/photo-d'actualit%C3%A9/pope-john-paul-ii-leans-down-to-kiss-a-basket-filled-photo-d'actualit%C3%A9/51988168#pope-john-paul-ii-leans-down-to-kiss-a-basket-filled-with-earth-as-he-picture-id51988168> (accessed July 1, 2018).

10 See an image and reporting of this event at <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-washes-12-young-detainees-serve-them-heart> (accessed July 1, 2018).

## Solanus Casey: The Man and the Ministry

Bernard Casey was an unlikely candidate for public ministry and an even more unlikely candidate for sainthood.<sup>11</sup> Born in 1870 on a farm in Pierce County, Wisconsin, he was the sixth of sixteen children born to Irish immigrants. He left the farm as a teenager to help support his family, working as a logger, hospital orderly, and prison guard. While working as a street car operator, he witnessed the stabbing death of a young woman on the street car's tracks. This event shook him to his core, triggered serious reflection about doing good and opposing violence, and put him on the journey toward priesthood.

Bernard entered St. Francis High School Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the diocesan priesthood. Partly because he was an English-speaking Irishman studying in a German-speaking school, he had difficulty with his studies. It was recommended that he leave that seminary and take what was considered a less rigorous path by entering a religious order. He became a novice in the Capuchin Order at Detroit in 1897 and received his religious name of Solanus. Unfortunately for Solanus, the Capuchins also were German-speaking, so he continued to have difficulties with the requisite studies leading to priestly ordination. His superiors assessed that he had "meager talents" and, with Solanus' agreement, allowed him to be ordained a *simplex* priest, i.e., a priest permitted to celebrate Mass but not allowed to hear confessions or preach formal sermons.

The low expectations of his superiors resulted in his being often assigned to menial ministries, such as answering the door and greeting visitors. Solanus accepted his ministry with joy, and the cheerful porter soon became a favorite friar and sought-after spiritual guide by many. After a stint in New York, Solanus was reassigned to the monastery in Detroit where he answered the door for twenty-one years. Those years spanned the Great Depression, and Solanus's heart went out to the many hungry people who came to the back door of the monastery. Sometimes he gave away his own lunch, but his physical constitution was not one that could endure much stress. As many as two thousand people waited in line at that back door. At Solanus's urging, the Capuchin friars joined with their lay partners to collect food from farms, make soup, bake bread, and serve meals in the hall next to the monastery. Today this "Capuchin Soup Kitchen" comprises the largest private charity in the state of Michigan, serving over 600,000 meals a year. It also offers substance abuse programs; an urban farm; "On the Rise Bakery," which employs those previously incarcerated; a service center that distributes over five tons of food and 1,700 articles of clothing each year; and a children's program.<sup>12</sup>

In the last twenty years of his life, Solanus continued his unobtrusive ministry in Brooklyn and Huntington, Indiana. He came back to Detroit in 1956. By then he was celebrated for his spiritual insight, gentle spirit, and gift of healing. Reports of "favors received" by people who consulted Solanus were so numerous that already in 1923 his Capuchin superior asked him to keep a notebook of special cases and reported healings related to his consultations. By the end of his life, Solanus had compiled seven notebooks listing over six thousand such favors. When he died in 1957 at the age of 83, it is estimated that twenty thousand people paid their respects with over eight

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<sup>11</sup> The biographical information on Solanus is somewhat extensive. His official biography was read at the beatification ceremony on November 18, 2017. It was drawn from numerous sources, and edited by Michael Crosby, the author of volumes I and III of the official *positio* (official documents used in the process of declaring someone a person of heroic virtue); volume I, the biographical history of Solanus, is pivotal here, *Solanus Casey: The Official Account of a Virtuous American Life* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000). Crosby's later biography is among the other important sources here: Michael Crosby, *Thank God Ahead of Time: The Life and Spirituality of Solanus Casey* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2009); Bernadine Casey, *Letters from Solanus Casey OFM. Cap.* (Detroit: Solanus Guild, 2000); David Collins, *Magnificent Failure: The Story of Father Solanus Casey* (Boston: Pauline Books, 1999); Edward Foley, "Journeying in Holiness," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Cult of Saints in Past and Present*, ed. M. Barnard, P. Post, and E. Rose (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 223-45; Boniface Hanley, *The Doorkeeper: The Story of Father Solanus Casey, Capuchin* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony's Guild, 1987); Catherine Odell, *Father Solanus*, rev. ed. (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cskdetroit.org/> [accessed February 3, 2018].

thousand attending the funeral before he was interred in the backyard of the monastery, near that door where he received so many hungry and broken visitors.

### Keeping the Memory: The Solanus Center

From the day of his burial, pilgrims have journeyed to Solanus's gravesite in Detroit to pay their respects. Though official statistics were never kept, the consistent flow of pilgrims as well as the continued reports of "favours received" kept the memory of Solanus Casey alive. In 1966 the official process for the cause of his canonization as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church began with the opening of a diocesan investigation in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit.<sup>13</sup> As part of that process in 1987, Solanus's body was exhumed and permanently buried within a transept of the newly renovated chapel at St. Bonaventure. In 1995 Solanus Casey became the first US-born male to be proclaimed "venerable," the last step in the Roman Catholic Church's process before beatification.

By the mid-1990s, it was estimated that people were making over 60,000 visits a year to Solanus's tomb. Believing that this phenomenon was only going to grow, the leadership of the Detroit Province of Capuchins decided that "a new Fr. Solanus Casey Center was to be built."<sup>14</sup> The process of designing and building the center would take almost seven years to complete.

Two key prisms for envisioning this space were the personal charism of Solanus himself, and the importance of "mission" in Solanus's vision and that of his Capuchin community. Solanus is an accessible "saint," someone whom ordinary folk could both approach and emulate. He was not a stigmatic nor a learned mystic. Having performed poorly in school and never having been entrusted with any position of leadership, Solanus has great natural appeal to very ordinary folk. It was agreed that any center bearing his name should emphasize that sanctity was something ordinary people could attain. Thus, the decision was not to develop a shrine where people would go to touch the extraordinary and then return to their ordinary lives. Rather than a shrine that would house the holy, the center was envisioned as a place of pilgrimage,<sup>15</sup> one symbolizing a centrifugal rather than centripetal image of holiness. The return home in a pilgrimage experience is as important, if not *more* important, than the outward journey toward the pilgrimage site, for a returned pilgrim is to be a transformed pilgrim and agent of change in her community of origin. Thus, this center was foreseen as a mission sending place, returning people to their own homes and cities with a renewed sense of Jesus's mission to the poor and the marginalized.

Respecting these aspects of the simple man whose name this center would bear was coupled with a wider Franciscan vision in which Solanus found his own vocation and ministry. Rooted in the natural aesthetics of Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), the progenitor of this mendicant movement, Franciscans through the centuries have cultivated a particular regard for and interpretation of the beautiful. As Duns Scotus scholar Mary Beth Ingham summarizes:

13 Canonical norms regarding the procedure to be followed for causes of saints are contained in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, promulgated by John Paul II on January 25, 1983; available online at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_25011983\\_divinus-perfectionis-magister.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_divinus-perfectionis-magister.html).

14 "Triennial Report (1996-1999)" of the Solanus Commission for the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order, p. 1; much of what follows on the Solanus Center is drawn from my "Journeying in Holiness: From Shrine to Pilgrimage Center," *Liturgia Condenda* 18 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 223-45.

15 The literature on pilgrimage is vast. A recent sampling of that literature across traditions and disciplines includes: Rodney Aist, "Pilgrimage in the Celtic Christian Tradition," *Perichoresis* 15, no. 1 (2017): 3-19; Anna Davidsson Bremborg, "Creating Sacred Space by Walking in Silence: Pilgrimage in a Late Modern Lutheran Context," *Social Compass* 60, no. 4 (2013): 544-60; Kory Goldberg, "Pilgrimage Re-oriented: Buddhist Discipline, Virtue and Engagement in Bodhgayā," *The Eastern Buddhist* 44, no. 2 (2013): 95-120; Donna Honarpisheh, "Women in Pilgrimage: Senses, Places, Embodiment, and Agency: Experiencing Ziyarat in Shiraz," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2013): 383-410; Hillary Kaell, "'ABible People': Post-conciliar U. S. Catholics, Scripture, and Holy Land Pilgrimage," *U. S. Catholic Historian* 31, no. 4 (2013): 85-106; Hillary Kaell, "Notes on Pilgrimage and Pilgrimage Studies," *Practical Matters* 9 (2016): 1-10; Matthew T. Loveland, "Pilgrimage, Religious Institutions, and the Construction of Orthodoxy," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 3 (2008): 317-34. Darren Middleton, "Dead Serious: a Theology of Literary Pilgrimage," *Cross Currents* 59, no. 3 (2009): 300-18; Maciej Ostrowski, "Das christliche Leben als ein Weg—Elemente der Wallfahrtstheologie," *The Person and the Challenges* 6, no. 1 (2016): 105-17; Frederick J. Ruf, "Pluralistic Pilgrimage: Travel as the Quest for the Strange," *Cross Currents* 59, no. 3 (2009): 268-82.

Franciscan life centers around, is unified by and understands itself in terms of a foundational experience of beauty. In this, the tradition celebrates that deep and central insight: that Beauty is a transcendental attribute of being, unifying the true and the good. Beauty is not just one aspect of reality, not just one element among many. Rather beauty is *the deepest* foundation of reality. Beauty can be another name for God.

Beauty is foundational and unifying. In beauty we recognize how all things fit together, how apparently opposing elements contribute to a larger picture composed of dark shades and bright colors, of sharps and flats, of important unimportant. In its affirmation that beauty is a central lens through which we understand all life, the Franciscan tradition offers something quite new, one might even call it scandalous .... It is a broader, more expansive and more inclusive vision of reality and human rationality.<sup>16</sup>

This view of the beautiful moves beyond the standards of conventional aesthetics or the taste of a certain class of elites. It has resonance with the theological aesthetics of Alejandro R. Garcia-Rivera<sup>17</sup> that recognizes beauty in the community of the lowly that God has lifted up according to Luke’s Marian hymn (1:46-55). To that end, this center—which was to be constructed on the site of the original Capuchin soup kitchen—required an aesthetic calibration that would invite and inspire both pilgrims and the poor and Roman Catholics and seekers of truth across the believing spectrum, as well as Solanus aficionados and skeptics.

Liturgical consultant Richard Vosko developed the conceptual frame that served as the basic guideline for the development of the center focused on 7 C’s:

Creation→Christ doors→Christianity→Catholicism→Capuchin→Canonization→Casey

The first C is the creation garden, inspired by St. Francis’s celebrated “Canticle of the Creatures,”<sup>18</sup> inviting pilgrims to transition from a busy street to a beautiful place of reflection [photograph 1]. A pathway winds through this garden, landscaped with dramatic shrubs and river birch trees, leading to seven commissioned sculptures, each depicting a key image from the “Canticle of the Creatures.” The artists reflect the cultural and religious diversity of the metropolitan landscape and Capuchin ministries and symbolize Solanus’s inclusive spirit and ministry.



Photograph 2



Photograph 1

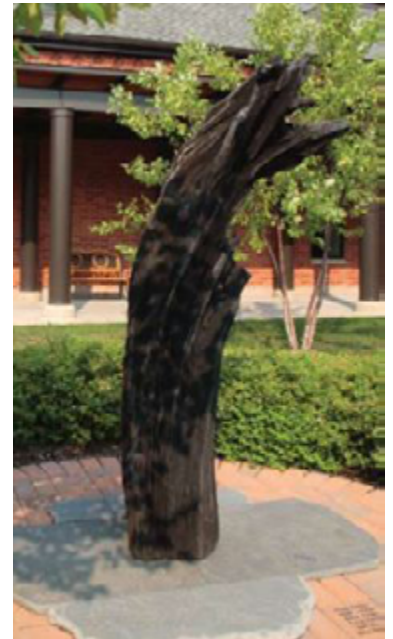
The first, Brother Sun, is a seven-foot-tall functioning sundial, fashioned by David Aho, accompanied by a plaque with the “Canticle” text in English

16 This wonderful summary of Ingham’s lifelong work on Duns Scotus, Franciscanism, and Beauty is taken from her lecture at Siena College, “Liberal Education in the Catholic Franciscan Tradition” (October 2015), online at [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKewjw5-28q5TZAhUJ64MKHa8LAskQFggTMAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fcommunity.siena.edu%2Fassets%2Ffile\\_manager%2F insecure\\_file%2FMary\\_Beth\\_Ingham.pdf&usq=AOvVaw2Poxj1leIN5xHINCu90pXp](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKewjw5-28q5TZAhUJ64MKHa8LAskQFggTMAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fcommunity.siena.edu%2Fassets%2Ffile_manager%2F insecure_file%2FMary_Beth_Ingham.pdf&usq=AOvVaw2Poxj1leIN5xHINCu90pXp); for the scholarship behind this summary see her *Rejoicing in the Words of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2010).

17 See his *The Community of the Beautiful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000).

18 “Canticle of the Creatures,” *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. I: *The Saint*, ed. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman, and William Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 114-115.

and German. Sister Moon is a more abstract design by artist Nancy Frankel, marked by the prayer text in English and Spanish [photograph 2]. Sister Water is the work of Islamic artist Dr. Hashim Al-Tawil, consisting of richly decorated ceramic pillars depicting the four rivers of paradise and incorporating verses from the Qur'an in Arabic calligraphy, with the Canticle text in English and Arabic. Brother Fire is a collection of painted electro-polished stainless steel abstract flames shooting toward the heavens by Rob Fischer, whose corresponding text is in English and Hebrew. Sister-Mother Earth, an earth-toned female figure rising out of the earth, was created by Native American artist Johnny Bear Contreras, accompanied by a text in English and Lakota. Sister Death by Irish artist Fergus Costello is an abstract piece of bog-oak trunk rising from a base made of Kilkenny slate with a text in English and Celtic [photograph 3]. Brother Wind is a large wind chime in African nouveau style by African American artist Woodrow Nash.



Photograph 3

The second C is the set of Christ doors that recalls the Christian tradition of translating the “sheep gate” imagery (cf. Jn 10:7) into “door” imagery. Embodying Solanus’s years of ministry as a doorkeeper, the exterior Christ doors are rich but unadorned wood, emulating the wooden doors of the old monasteries Solanus served.



Photograph 4

The interior doors of kiln-formed glass designed by Stephen Knapp are marked by river-like patterns on the doors and matching transom and are punctuated with the gospel imperatives “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” (Mt 7:7) [photograph 4]. A favorite of Solanus, this gospel passage was proclaimed at his beatification Mass.

Passing through the Christ doors, the pilgrim enters a large concourse, the architectural spine of the Solanus Center, with various rooms and services branching off this central axis. First encountered, on the left, is a gallery of life size figures—the third C for Christianity—embodying the Beatitudes as found in the gospel of Matthew (5:3-12). The individuals depicted in this display were Christians (but not necessarily Roman Catholics) who embodied the Beatitudes across a wide range of contexts (including Detroit) and ministries [photograph 5]. The eight are

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit”: Dorothy Day (d. 1980), Roman Catholic lay woman, social justice advocate, and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement;
2. “Blessed are those who mourn”: Jean Donovan (d. 1980), American Roman Catholic lay missionary, native of Michigan, martyred in El Salvador at the age of 27;
3. “Blessed are the meek”: Dr. Takashi Nagai (d. 1951), Japanese physician and convert to Roman Catholicism, peace advocate who experienced the atomic bombing of Nagasaki that hastened his death;



Photograph 5

4. “Blessed are the merciful”: Mother Teresa of Calcutta (d. 1997), Albanian-born Roman Catholic woman religious, who founded a community to serve the poorest of the poor in India [photograph 6];

5. “Blessed are the clean of heart”: Catherine de Hueck Doherty (d. 1985), Russian-born Orthodox Christian, later Roman Catholic, who pioneered lay leadership in faith communities in North America;

6. “Blessed are the peacemakers”: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (d. 1968), African American Baptist minister, pivotal figure in the civil rights movement in the United States, and martyred apostle of nonviolence;

7. “Blessed are the persecuted”: Oscar Romero (d. 1980): Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador, advocate for the poor and voiceless, assassinated while celebrating the Eucharist;

8. “Blessed are those who suffer for justice”: Monsignor Clement Kern (d. 1983), Detroit’s “Labor priest,” pastor of a church at the heart of the Mexican barrio in Detroit, and champion of the poor.



Photograph 6

The next three C’s—Catholicism, the Capuchins, and Canonization—serve the pilgrims by narrating the context in which Solanus developed his vocation. They include a museum section that relates, among other things, a panel depicting his work as a trolley car conductor in Superior, Wisconsin, when he witnessed the previously noted stabbing death of a young woman that was pivotal in providing new direction for his vocational journey.

The seventh C, for Casey, is a circle of saints that leads either to his tomb or a chapel of Reconciliation. This circle of saints includes figures of eight holy women and men whose spirit resonated with that of Solanus [photograph 7]. Their larger than life images are etched on big panes of architectural glass—the work of Ken von Roenn—creating a hemisphere of sanctity in glass and light,



Photograph 7

overlooking a meditation garden. On the semi-circular wall opposite the circle of saints are fourteen large murals, crafted from a celebrated local Detroit product, Pewabic ceramic tiles [photograph 8]. The murals, designed in subtle pastels by artists from the Pewabic Tile Company, depict the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.<sup>19</sup>

Before moving to the tomb of Solanus, pilgrims can take the circle of saints to the chapel of reconciliation: a meditative space adjoined by two reconciliation rooms allowing for the sacrament of reconciliation. Within the chapel

<sup>19</sup> The spiritual works of mercy are: pray for the living and the dead, bear wrong patiently, forgive all injuries, comfort the sorrowing, admonish sinners, instruct the uneducated, and counsel the doubtful. The seven corporal works of mercy are: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.





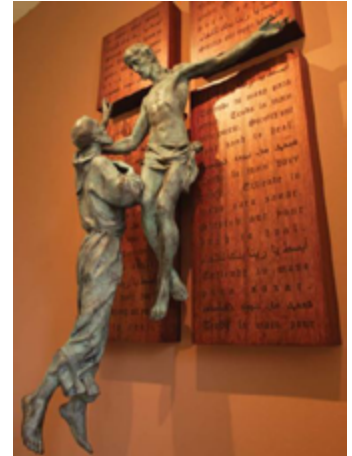
Photograph 8

hangs a sculpture of St. Francis embracing a responding crucified Christ. This classic Franciscan image has been rendered by Detroit artist Sergei Metrofanov in bronze and wood, the wood cross etched with the phrase “stretch out your hand to heal” (Acts 4:30) in English, Arabic, Spanish, and French [photograph 9].

Finally, the tomb resides in what was the north narthex of the existing St. Bonaventure Chapel, a space now separated from the rest of the chapel by glass and brass gates. The tomb was originally designed as a wooden shell etched with one of Solanus’s favorite sayings, “Blessed be God in All His Designs.” As part of the beatification process, the body was exhumed from this burial place and relocated to a new coffin which is now visible through a Plexiglas cover

in its final resting place below ground [photograph 10].

While in some ways the Solanus Center is its own “performance” in brick and glass, inspiration and art, it is also symbolic of the values that have surrounded the cause of Solanus that were on full display during his beatification liturgy. The space was designed to be accessible to pilgrims of every stripe, yielding a polyphonic experience that resonated across languages, age groups, genders, and even faith stances. The center was intentionally designed so that folk of varied backgrounds and needs could be in touch with the transcendent, however they might interpret that. It was also meant to be artistic and elegant in a *Volkkunst* mode. While the space is filled with original art and unique artistry, it is meant to be touched, encountered, and engaged by folk from virtually every social location. One does not need to be educated to admire the garden, wonder at the beauty of the Christ doors with their simple “seek, knock, ask” inscription, or weave a path among the Beatitude figures. There is signage throughout the space giving basic information written at an eighth-grade level about every piece, showcase, or room. While there are multiple volunteer docents and full-time staff who can offer a tour of the center, it is designed to be engaged in a self-directed way. Pilgrims can choose to follow any path without fear of becoming physically or spiritually lost.



Photograph 9



Photograph 10

Most importantly, the space has a strong subtext about care for the poor; the dignity of every race, ethnicity, and language; the value of multiple faith traditions; and the distinctive care for the marginalized. The word “justice” is explicitly apparent only once in the space, i.e., with the final Beatitude (“Blessed are those who suffer for justice”) associated with Clement Kern noted above. On the other hand, the vision of justice as a civic virtue<sup>20</sup> and not simply a personal spiritual inclination reverberates throughout the space. The Solanus Center consistently generates a subliminal message that the journey to holiness always traverses the lives of the oppressed, marginalized, and broken. A subtle image of that is the “refectory” off the left of the main corridor, situated immediately after the life-size images of the Beatitudes. It is not an elegant dining room but a place to sit at tables and eat. There is a kitchen in the space for preparing meals. While there is a wide-open window between the kitchen space and the dining space, the delineation is marked with square glass bricks that were preserved from

20 See, for example, the PhD dissertation by Thomas J. Bushlack on “Justice in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas: Rediscovering Civic Virtue” (University of Notre Dame, 2011), abstract online at <https://curate.nd.edu/show/9p290863420> [accessed January 14, 2018].



Photograph 11

the original Capuchin Soup Kitchen of the 1930s and are now a permanent fixture of the new building [photograph 11]. Roman Catholics have a long tradition of honoring relics, and the beatification process required taking physical relics from the body of Solanus Casey. From a justice perspective, however, maybe the true relic in the new center is not so much the body of the blessed but the relics of that fabled building where tens of thousands were fed in a time of national crisis.

### The Beatification: Announcement and Logistics

On May 4, 2017, Pope Francis affirmed that a miracle had occurred through the intercession of Solanus Casey, and thus that he was to be named Blessed.<sup>21</sup> The date for the beatification would not be made public until the end of June and was eventually announced as November 18, 2017. The main reason for the lag between the announcement of impending beatification and setting the date was largely logistical. It was necessary to secure an appropriate venue within the Archdiocese of Detroit for staging the celebration. After some negotiations a contract was secured with Ford Field, a large indoor stadium—the home of the Detroit Lions—with a seating capacity of sixty-five thousand seats. An additional six thousand seats on the arena floor brought the capacity to around seventy-one thousand.

The logistics were made even more complicated because immediately before the beatification ceremony was to take place, Ford Field was to host an annual black-tie fundraiser event known as “Hob Nobble Gobble.” The design of that fundraiser included a carnival midway in the arena and a dining area that accommodated thousands [photograph 12]. According to officials at Ford Field, while the fundraiser would close at 10:30 p.m. on the evening of the 17th, the arena would not be cleared until 3:00 a.m. or so. Furthermore, because of union rules, set up for the beatification could not begin before 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the 18th. The liturgy was eventually scheduled to begin at 4:00 p.m., which provided about a six-hour window for the setup; attendees would be allowed to enter starting at 2:00 p.m., and various musical/liturgical rehearsals would also commence at that hour.



Photograph 12

Besides the physical logistics, the hierarchical and political logistics were also formidable. This was to be a papal liturgy, presided over by the pope’s personal representative, Cardinal Angelo Amato, the prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Since it was taking place within the Archdiocese of Detroit, the Archbishop of Detroit had canonical oversight of this liturgy like any other public worship that takes place in his diocese. On the other hand, the primary sponsor of the event and longtime keeper of the Solanus legacy was the Midwest province of Capuchin Franciscan friars, whose administration is in Detroit. However, since the Capuchins are an international community of about eleven thousand men, their general administration in Rome was also involved in the planning.

To address the complexity of the physical and political logistics, businesswoman Gerarda Tobin<sup>22</sup> was appointed by the Archbishop of Detroit and Capuchin Provincial to head the oversight committee. She was assisted by Michael O’Callaghan, vice president of the city’s Convention and Visitors Bureau, as well as multiple high-profile Detroiters

21 Mike Stechschulte, “Pope Francis Announces Fr. Solanus Casey to be Declared ‘Blessed,’” *The Michigan Catholic* (May 9, 2017), online at <http://www.themichigancatholic.org/2017/05/pope-francis-announces-fr-solanus-to-be-declared-blessed/> [accessed February 18, 2018].

22 Gerarda Tobin worked for the city of Detroit in various capacities for seventeen years and is currently a Government Services Manager for the 3M Company. Her brother is the Cardinal Archbishop of Newark, Joseph Tobin.

including a deputy mayor, a former deputy chief of police, a former mayoral chief of staff, and key members of the Capuchin community. The marketing and event planning agency George P. Johnson was hired, as was the publicity firm Lovio George. Corporate Optics was engaged to handle the challenging audio-visual aspects of the event for the 71,000 scanned ticketholders<sup>23</sup> and the live-stream international audience of an estimated 240 million.

This author, a member of the Capuchin Detroit Province, chaired the liturgy committee for the event. Close allies were Dan McAfee, director of the Office of Worship for the Archdiocese of Detroit, and Joseph Balistreri, Archdiocesan director of music. Eventually the liturgy committee would expand to include thirteen subcommittees for coordinating key aspects of the worship and its preparation.<sup>24</sup> Mark Joseph Costello, also a Detroit Capuchin and an award-winning architect and interior designer, collaborated in many aspects of planning and led the design team for the space.

## The Beatification: Values and Challenges

There were multiple—and sometimes competing—values in play during the planning of the beatification ritual. The enormity and design of the venue had the potential to turn the beatification into a spectacle to be observed rather than worship inviting active participation as mandated by the Second Vatican Council. The presence of a papal representative, multiple cardinals, and archbishops and other prelates besides a variety of religious and civic dignitaries might have drawn attention away from the poor and the needy that Solanus and his legacy continue to serve. The ritual pomp that ordinarily marks such a high-level ecclesiastical event—Solanus is only the second US-born male to be beatified—was in stark contrast to the utter simplicity and unpretentiousness of Solanus himself. The need to involve world-class professionals in the planning and execution of the ritual had the potential to alienate the thousands of volunteers who have supported the beatification process and the Capuchin Soup Kitchen with their time and treasure.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the very cost of mounting the beatification liturgy—rental of Ford Field alone for a single day was about a half million dollars—could have been scandalous in view of the plight of today's poor as well as the vow of poverty that Solanus and all Capuchin Franciscans profess.

As these values and challenges were multiple, the strategies for maintaining the most essential values and minimizing their competing challenges would also have to be polyphonic. The remainder of this essay will highlight three of these interactions: the people, the music, and the art and environment.

## The People

The beatification liturgy was envisioned as a “catholic”—and not simply “Roman Catholic”—event. That catholicity or universality first needed to be reflected in the people who would perform key actions or assume visible roles in the liturgy. Beyond the control of the planners was the liturgical leadership in the sanctuary, composed entirely of Caucasian male clerics, all of whom, except the thirty-year-old Capuchin deacon, were senior citizens. In many ways, it was the liturgy committee's unspoken task to counterpoint that profile particularly with the prominent inclusion of women and youth and representatives of various ethnicities and languages, as well as those with varying degrees of mental and physical abilities.

<sup>23</sup> Tickets were free.

<sup>24</sup> These committees and their areas of responsibility were (1) bishops' vesting and seating, (2) concelebration, (3) communion, (4) environment, (5) music, (6) platform party, (7) procession of relics, (8) prayer of the faithful, (9) sacristy, (10) servers/acolytes, (11) preparation of the gifts, (12) ushers, and (13) programs. A separate committee, not under the supervision of the liturgy committee, took responsibility for coordinating the sacrament of Reconciliation [confessions], which the local Archbishop insisted must be available before the beatification Mass.

<sup>25</sup> The volunteer “Solanus Casey Choir,” for example, which had assembled on an ad hoc basis to offer music at various celebrations commemorating his memory, resigned *en masse* when it was clear that they would not be the primary musical force at the beatification, nor every singer invited into the newly constituted festival choir unless they could meet various criteria, e. g., read music, be able to stand for two hours, and apply to the festival choir in quartets [SATB voicing] rather than as individuals since we needed a balance of all voice parts.

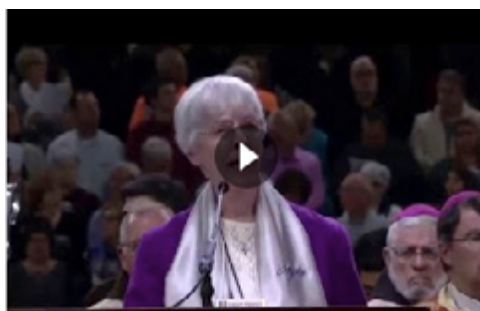
The regional superior of the Capuchins, Michael Sullivan, aptly captured this spirit. While he should have been a key figure with the platform party—since canonically for the Capuchins he was the parallel to the Archbishop of Detroit—he relinquished that position at the request of Paula Medina Zarate of Panama who asked Michael, who is fluent in Spanish, to be at her side since she had a pivotal role in the beatification liturgy.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, in his introduction as well as in his decision to participate as a brother and not as a concelebrating priest, he put the congregation on notice that the first welcomed were not high-ranking ecclesiastics, donors, or civic officials but the people whom Solanus particularly loved.

The opening of his greeting was “Welcome my brothers and sisters to this joyous occasion. We welcome most especially those whom Fr. Solanus especially loved: the poor and the sick; those who were without hope ... we also greet your eminences ...”

This inclusive view was further symbolized in the lay people chosen to proclaim the first two readings of the liturgy: a middle-aged African American male and a young Latina. The two cantors who took the lead inviting the congregation into song as well as performing much of the music were similarly a young African American male and a young Latina.

The multiple processions that marked this special liturgy were equally polyphonic in their composition. The procession that brought forth the relic of the new blessed was led by a Panamanian woman, the recipient of the verified miracle. At her request she was accompanied by two Capuchin priests fluent in Spanish, neither of whom concelebrated; one was Michael Sullivan, as noted above. Children, a woman religious, and a person with a severe physical and mental disability were also part of this entourage. The procession of gifts for the Eucharist included a grandnephew and grandniece of Solanus, representatives of those who work with various social agencies, a Capuchin brother from Nigeria, and a gentleman who was a regular guest at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

One of the most richly symbolic displays of this hoped-for diversity was the prayer of the faithful during which women and men of various ages, ethnicities, and abilities offered prayers for the Church and for the world in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chaldean, Polish, and Tagalog. In response to these petitions, the congregation sang a refrain<sup>27</sup> in English, Spanish, and Polish, three dominant languages within the Archdiocese of Detroit.



<sup>26</sup> To be discussed below.

<sup>27</sup> “Trilingual Intercessions/Intercesiones Trilingues” by Mike Hay (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 1994).

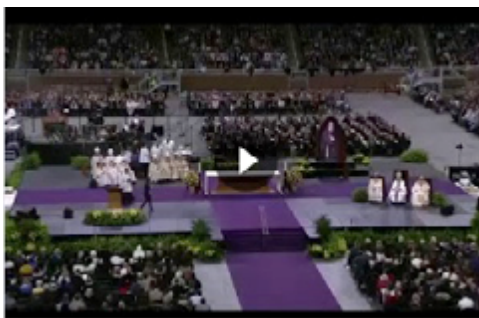
## The Music

The prayer of the faithful with its multilingual musical refrain by a contemporary US liturgical composer is an apt transition from considering the variety of people who punctuated the ritual with their ministerial gifts to the diversities of music that served as the soundtrack for the ritual. The musical program was extensive, including twenty individual compositions across a wide range of musical styles and languages with a total run time of over seventy-five minutes. The musical program, in the spirit of the artwork that graces the Solanus Casey Center, was designed to be congregationally accessible, stylistically broad, beautiful according to the dictates of its own musical genre, and joyful.

Besides choosing some classics that would have been familiar to the over seventy thousand participants in the arena,<sup>28</sup> we also employed a “self-rehearsing” principle, i.e., the congregational parts were largely repeated refrains that could easily be learned during the singing. A sixteen-page worship aid including all of those refrains was distributed to all participants in the arena.<sup>29</sup> For the deaf community, signers were projected on the arena’s jumbotrons for the whole of the liturgy.

Apart from an instrumental work employing traditional Irish instruments recalling Solanus’s Celtic heritage, there were no solo works, motets, or exclusively choral pieces. Rather, the soloists and more than three hundred choral voices had as their primary responsibility supporting congregational song and enhancing it with their particular musical gifts. It was also decided that—in the spirit of Solanus who struggled with the official language of the church—there would be no Latin sung in the liturgy.

An example of such accessible, self-rehearsing music in which the cantors engaged the assembly with choir and instruments providing their own artistry to enhance the beauty of assembly song was the gospel acclamation, composed by James Chepponis of Pittsburgh.<sup>30</sup> While necessarily acclamatory, as this liturgical unit has the function of preparing the way for the proclamation of the gospel, in design and performance such music was nevertheless conceived as a musical enactment of justice:



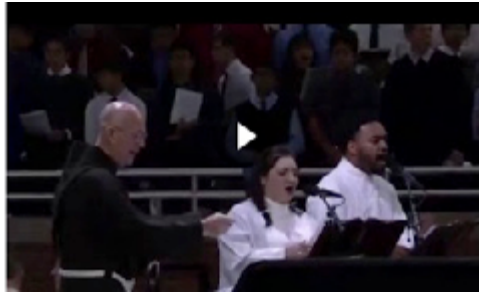
A similar example—but in a completely different musical genre—was the communion hymn “*Ang Katawan ni Kristo*” (“Behold the Body of Christ”) with a refrain in Tagalog by Ricky Manalo.<sup>31</sup>

28 For example, the “Glory to God” from the *Mass of St. Ann* by Ed Balduc (Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2011), and the communion hymn, “Gift of Finest Wheat,” by Omer Westendorf and Robert E. Kreutz (Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 1977).

29 This worship aid can be downloaded from <http://solanuscasy.org/beatification>.

30 “Festival Alleluia” by James Chepponis (Fenton MO: MorningStar Music, 1999).

31 “*Ang Katawan ni Kristo*/Behold the Body of Christ” by Ricky Manalo and Pia de Leon (Portland, OR: OCP Publications, 2003).



A final example of music as a symbol of inclusivity and simplicity in the context of this festal worship was the commissioned hymn in honor of Solanus Casey. Dolores Dufner is a celebrated librettist and composer whose texts such as “Sing a New Church into Being” populate innumerable hymnals and liturgical music collections across many denominations in the English-speaking world. Commissioned to write a hymn for the beatification, the composer settled on the common pattern of four doublets of 8.7 meter after reading biographies of Solanus and consulting with various individuals. Although singable to a variety of hymn tunes, it was especially the tune “Beach Spring” that framed this textual composition: imaged as joyful, hospitable, and unpretentious.



God, be praised for humble service,  
loving care of sick and poor,  
boundless trust and great compassion,  
open heart and open door;  
for the holy men and women  
who have showed us how to live,  
for Solanus, faithful friar,  
who has taught us how to give.

God, be praised for human kindness,  
for the patient, list'ning ear,  
for the prayer that wins your blessing,  
quelling doubt and calming fear;  
for Solanus, son of Francis,  
joyful in his faith and zeal,  
interceding for the suff'ring,  
those in pain you chose to heal.

For a Church that follows Jesus,  
sowing hope like fertile seed,  
making peace and doing justice,  
reaching out to those in need,  
in advance we thank and praise you  
for the Spirit's gifts and call.  
Send us forth on Gospel mission,  
Christ's disciples, serving all.<sup>32</sup>

## Art and Environment

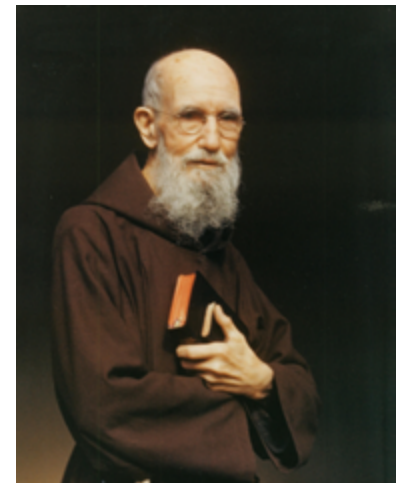
As previously noted, the very scale of the venue and its design presented many obstacles. One was related to the logistics of converting the scene of a black-tie fundraiser, with its accompanying dining area, full bar, and carnival midway into a worship space in less than eight hours. Almost as daunting was the challenge of converting a football stadium designed for spectator sport into a welcoming faith environment for participatory worship. Finally, there was the overriding goal of maintaining a sense of simplicity and quiet dignity amid this large-scale papal liturgy.

### *People*

The liturgy committee attempted to set the larger atmosphere for welcoming worship first through the presence of thousands of volunteers, garbed in yellow t-shirts. While these volunteers represented many segments of the local church, we made a concerted effort to put the young in the foreground.

### *Images*

Part of the welcoming design was also achieved through selecting images of Solanus that presented him as a simple Franciscan and not some inaccessible heavenly being. Solanus believed that the call to holiness occurred within the ordinary life of every human being, no matter what their social or ecclesial status. To convey that vision of inclusive sanctity—perhaps representing the ultimate act of justice—we rejected any images that appeared as caricatures of sanctity. Instead the only image we employed throughout the facility and in the worship—even gracing the front of the worship aid—was the simple “halo-less” rendering of Solanus by Michael Gaffney, Capuchin. This was modeled after a photograph one of Solanus's brothers took of him towards the end of his life [photograph 13]. This image graced the 31-foot x 36-foot welcoming supercolumns and the almost 27,000-square-foot jumbotron that looms over Ford Field. Accessible holiness that modeled care for the hungry and broken was the hope here, even on America's gridiron.



Photograph 13

### *Sanctuary and its Appointments*

Given the proximity of the Hob Nobble Gobble event to the beatification ritual, it was decided for financial and strategic reasons to work with the large stage that had been constructed as the bar and food service area as our sanctuary—metaphorically transitioning from one form of table to another. The challenge was to accent the centrality of the sanctuary while maintaining a spirit of Franciscan simplicity, even poverty. It was decided to mark the

32 Dolores Dufner, “God, Be Praised for Humble Service” (St. Joseph, MN: Sisters of St. Benedict, 2017).

space with an enormous purple carpet in the shape of the sign of the cross, a simple yet effective special delineation that clearly marked this central space in an unpretentious way. The space was further accented with simple green ferns and yellow poinsettias around the perimeter of the sanctuary [photograph 14].



Photograph 14

Because the altar space was so enormous—60 feet x 76 feet—it was essential that the altar appointments were in proportion. A prevailing aesthetic in Capuchin liturgical spaces is one that emphasizes wood over marble or other precious elements. The goal in the beatification liturgy was to appoint the sanctuary with elements crafted in this manner. Capuchins have a tradition of “questing” (i.e., begging), and, in a spirit of poverty and ecological sensitivity, we excavated “lost” furniture from previous papal worship in Detroit. (St. Francis is, after all, the Roman Catholic patron of ecology.) Central was the 8-foot x 12-foot wooden altar [photograph 15]

crafted for the papal liturgy presided over by John Paul II in 1987, which had sat in storage for thirty years. Wooden chairs for the presider and deacon and a wooden processional cross and candles, as well as a wooden credence table, were similarly acquired from local churches.



Photograph 15

Part of an attempted declericalization of the sanctuary was designing it so that it would not be overfilled with prelates and dignitaries but rather remain an open, uncluttered space. Thus, while numerous archbishops and bishops attended the ceremony, only eight clerics were seated in the sanctuary, assisted by various acolytes and masters of ceremonies, positioned at the back of the platform.

### *The Relic and Shrine*

One of the peculiarities of this ritual is the presentation of a relic of the blessed as part of the official rite. The unveiling of the picture of the honoree is also an ordinary part of the ritual. While planners had hoped to employ the jumbotrons for this “unveiling,” the local archbishop insisted upon a physical unveiling. It was decided that the reliquary containing the physical relic of Solanus and the structure containing his picture would be of a piece.

The veneration of relics is an ancient Christian practice, and reliquaries are often ornate, frequently crafted from precious metals and gems. One of the most extravagant is Sainte-Chapelle on the Isle de France, designed as a reliquary for the purported crown of thorns worn by Jesus. While contemporary reliquaries are seldom as expansive, there is still a tendency to craft them in precious metals in a somewhat baroque style.



Photograph 16

To preserve a sense of poverty and human scale in the official “shrine” and accompanying reliquary, a different approach was taken. We have already noted the Capuchin aesthetic preference for wood. The designer went into the community’s archives and found a wooden plate, dating from the time that Solanus lived [photograph 16]. Capuchins until the mid-twentieth century ordinarily ate off of wooden plates or out of wooden bowls; the plate selected could well have been used by Solanus himself. This refinished wooden plate became the nimbus or “halo” behind the simple reliquary,





Photograph 17

which was also crafted from wood [photographs 17-18]. The design of the reliquary was based upon that of the simple wooden cross that is ordinarily part of the large wooden rosary that Capuchins wear on the rope belt of their habits.

This necessarily moveable reliquary is traditionally carried in procession by the person who received the favor through the intercession of the Blessed, in this case Paula Medina Zarate of Panama. She was accompanied by children, a woman religious, and a person with a severe physical and mental disability. They carried the relic, flowers, and candles to the wooden shrine revealing a larger than life-size double-sided portrait of Solanus:



Photograph 18

the now familiar picture of the simple friar without halo or other celestial motifs, held in a rich but simple wooden frame [photograph 19].

### Summary

A wooden two-and-a-half foot reliquary in a building whose interior height soars to 128 feet; a sanctuary punctuated by natural wood in a stadium constructed of concrete, steel, and glass; snippets of texts or lyrics in contemporary idioms and multiple languages in a ritual whose current English translation tends toward obscurity, clericalism, and patriarchy; the scattering of unadorned brown robes among miters, pectoral crosses, and other papal accoutrements; the strains of traditional Irish music alongside Latin proclamations of blessedness and deferential words of holy obedience: these all might appear as relatively insignificant gestures in an extravagant ceremony whose rubrical requirements and archiepiscopal preferences might have all but obliterated them. On the other hand, each of these as well as multiple unnamed details could each be considered as ritual threads that were woven together into a liturgical tapestry with a persistent subtext hymning poverty, accessibility, inclusivity, and participation. In a ritual where ecclesial pomp and hierarchical privilege can visually and verbally predominate due to elaborate ritual choreography and a multitude of clerical participants, the poor were welcomed, relatives were honored, diversity was embraced, humility was extolled, an aesthetic of poverty was underscored, and the just vision of an unpretentious man who answered every door and fed every human and spiritual hunger was celebrated as the true definition of what it means to be a saint.



Photograph 19

While these prejudicial musings of one of the key planners of the ritual and music might be dismissed as an apologetic, there is empirical evidence that this beatification was actually of the people, by the people, and for the people. While such a democratic standard might seem out of place in assessing Christian—especially Roman Catholic—worship, the sanctification of the people and not simply the glorification of God essentially defines worship in a post-Vatican II era.<sup>33</sup> For Roman Catholics, sanctification presumes participation, and there was clear evidence in

<sup>33</sup> *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Second Vatican Council (1963): n. 5 speaks of “the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God”; n. 7, “Christ indeed, always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified”; n. 10, “From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a font, grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way”; n. 61, “There is hardly any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God”; and n. 112, “the purpose of sacred music, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.” These quotations can be found online at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concili-](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concili-)

singing and applause, sung and signed responses, septuagenarians moved to tears and children inspired to dance, that the 71,000 attendees were transformed from audience to assembly.

While there are many collateral affirmations of this perspective thriving in news reports and the blogosphere, only one is cited here, by a priest from Massachusetts, part of the Vatican's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations. Father Roger J. Landry writes:

I have been to bigger Catholic Masses ... canonizations in Rome ... but never to a Mass so big that retained such a "small feel." Ford Field was like the first Blessed Solanus Casey Parish.

Everyone sang with gusto the hymns and Mass parts. The lectors, including a member of his family, were normal, unpolished, sincere, and prayerful, like those you'd find on any Sunday in a parish near you. Everyone laughed in unison—a sign of how much everybody was paying attention—at Cardinal Angelo Amato's joke that Father Solanus had "one little defect in his life," namely, he was a "bad musician."

On the field, with big "VIP passes" ... there were many of Father Solanus' special friends, the homeless, poor, blind, crippled and otherwise handicapped. There was a well-dressed boy with Downs [sic] Syndrome who read one of the Prayers of the Faithful and, while I was distributing Holy Communion, I was approached by what must have been a community of Downs adults, all dressed to the nines, who received the Lord with heart-rending devotion.

There was something beautifully ordinary and simple about a liturgy that was by its nature extraordinary and elaborate .... [it was] poised [and] down-to-earth.<sup>34</sup>

This author would only add that the ritual performed and celebrated in a unique fashion the very justice of God, through the vessel of a simple friar whose mortal life is now officially and publicly embraced as an enduring blessing.

## Picture Credits

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Photograph 2. *Journey to Holiness*, 7.

Photograph 3. *Journey to Holiness*, 12.

Photograph 4. *Journey to Holiness*, 16.

Photograph 5. Photo by author.

Photograph 6. Photo by author.

Photograph 7. *Journey to Holiness*, 32.

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34 Roger J. Landry, "Go to Detroit," *The Boston Pilot* (November 29, 2017) at <https://www.thebostonpilot.com/opinion%20-%20Copy/article.asp?ID=180913>.

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Photograph 8. *Journey to Holiness*, 32.

Photograph 9. *Journey to Holiness*, 46.

Photograph 10. Photo by author.

Photograph 11. *Journey to Holiness*, 44.

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