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Martyrs and Missionaries: Strategies of Jesuit Sainthood between the Suppression and the Restoration

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Abstract

This article explores the promotion of “Jesuit sanctity,” in the delicate passage between the suppression and the restoration of the Society of Jesus, as a reflection of the process of revival of the order. The strategies of sainthood that were fostered by the ex-Jesuits during the suppression and by the restored Society reveal fundamental information about the self-image that the order wanted to show to the world. These strategies emerge clearly from the activity of the General Postulation for the Causes of Saints of the new Society of Jesus, which in the nineteenth century focused in particular on two models of sanctity: martyrs and missionaries (and often martyred missionaries). Presenting important case studies of Francesco De Geronimo and Andrzej Bobola, this article investigates the reasons why the Society of Jesus promoted these typologies of sanctity in lieu of the trauma of the suppression, which emerges as “martyrdom” in Jesuit sources, and in the process of re-establishment of the order. It eventually explores how this “policy” of sainthood fits more broadly in the history of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Keywords

martyrs – missionaries – Andrzej Bobola – Francesco De Geronimo – strategies of sainthood – Jesuit suppression – Jesuit restoration

Introduction

The strategies of sainthood of the restored Society of Jesus must be read in light of the troubling transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, in view of the persistence of identity-linked values connecting the old order to the new one through the suppression. Canonization processes, often overlooked, offer a valuable lens for exploring religious and cultural identities; different models of sanctity should likewise be seen as symbols of religious stances aimed at communicating specific messages. In the 1800s, the Society fostered two major sanctity models that both represented elements of Jesuit identity and honed the self-image the order wished to promote: the martyr and the missionary, often united in the same candidate for sainthood. After the suppression, defined as a martyrdom by Superior General Jan Roothaan (1785–1853, in office 1829–53) himself, the Society nourished the self-image of a persecuted order through a progressive development of procedures for recognition of martyrdom that clearly conveyed this sensitiveness.¹ The idea that the order itself was persecuted had been indeed part of Jesuit identity for centuries.²

In the context of a revival of global evangelization promoted by Pope Gregory XVI (1765–1846, r.1831–46) and fostered by Roothaan himself, the Society expressed identity-based values and behavioral models through

1 Roothaan's letter is presented in Guido Mongini, "1769–1839: Tribolazioni e martirio, morte e resurrezione della Compagnia di Gesù: Lorenzo Ricci, Jan Roothaan e l'identità gesuitica come 'corpo cristico,'" *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* 85–86 (2014): 158–208, here 204.

2 Sabina Pavone, "Anti-Jesuitism in a Global Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190639631.013.29 (accessed October 17, 2021); "El antijesuitismo, la antigua y la nueva Compañía de Jesús: Nuevas perspectivas de investigación," in *Antijesuitismo y filiojesuitismo: Dos identidades ante la restauración*, ed. Susana Monreal, Sabina Pavone, and Guillermo Zermeño (Ciudad del Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2014), 27–50; "The History of Anti-Jesuitism: National and Global Dimensions," in *Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Tom Banchoff and José Casanova (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 111–30; Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Catherine Maire, eds., *Les Antijésuites: Discours, figures et lieux de l'antijésuitisme à l'époque moderne* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

canonizations.³ These values and methods included the desire for evangelization, missionary strategies, martyrdom as the highest form of *sequela Christi* (following Christ), and suffering as a substantial element of Jesuit history.

The General Postulation of the Society endorsed the canonization processes of martyrs and missionaries of the old Society, Jesuits killed during the suppression and Jesuits slain in modern uprisings from the French Revolution (1789–93) to the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) in China. In the Society's hagiographical narratives, martyrs killed during the late eighteenth-century revolutionary phase are presented as victims of the delicate transition from the *Ancien régime* to the modern world.⁴ In this context, the suppression and the restoration were symbols of changing times, marked first by Catholic bloodshed and later by the need for religious revival.⁵ According to Roothaan's vision, the sacrifice made during the suppression served a higher aim, namely that of ensuring the church's survival in a critical period of its history when it was under attack from a number of anti-Jesuit opponents.⁶

The Jesuits' self-conception as innocent victims of persecution culminated with the suppression and became a substantial and definitive aspect of the Society's identity-linked values.⁷ Whether physical or moral (as during the suppression), self-abnegation and suffering to the point of martyrdom were considered forms of *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ), and thus sanctioned by Ignatian spirituality. This identification with the suffering of Christ dovetailed with the church's difficult transition to the nineteenth century, in a period characterized by estrangement from Catholic values and political and cultural attacks on the church.

This article explores the Jesuit policy of sainthood after the restoration as a reflection of the Society's resurrection and a way of relaunching the early modern order's identity-linked values. These values were defining components

3 Emanuele Colombo and Marco Rochini, "Ritorno alle missioni: Jan Philip Roothaan, Gregorio XVI e le missioni della 'Nuova' Compagnia di Gesù," in *I gesuiti e i papi*, ed. Michela Catto and Claudio Ferlan (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016), 103–30.

4 Eleonora Rai, "A 'martyred' Society: The Suffering of Suppression and the Jesuit Factory of Saints (18th–20th centuries)," in *Narratives and Representations of Suffering, Failure, and Martyrdom: Early Modern Catholicism Confronting the Adversities of History* (Lisbon: Catholic University of Portugal, 2020), 265–88.

5 Pierre-Antoine Fabre, "Abraham lui, avait épargné Isaac: La suppression et le rétablissement de la Compagnie de Jésus (1773–1814)," *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 11, no. 2 (2014): 265–84; John McGreevy, "Restored Jesuits: Notes towards a Global History," in *Jesuits and Globalization*, ed. Banchoff and Casanova, 131–46.

6 Mongini, "1769–1839: Tribolazioni e martirio," 202.

7 See *Las cartas de la tribulación* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Diego de Torres, 1988) for Ricci's and Roothaan's letters concerning the Society's troubles.

of the new phase of its history in the turbulent context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Catholicism. We examine the cases of Andrzej Bobola (1591–1657) and Francesco De Geronimo (1642–1716), which express sanctity models that are of the utmost importance to understanding Jesuit identity after the restoration. As we will see, the Society deployed the martyrdom of the Polish Jesuit Bobola both to shape the image of the perfect Jesuit martyr and to sanction the survival of the order in Russia. Later, in the 1920s and '30s, he also became a religious-political symbol. De Geronimo's beatification underlined the continuity between the old and the new Society in terms of its missionary identity and latent presence in Europe, even during the suppression. Embodying the models of martyr and missionary respectively, these two cases provide a remarkable prism for understanding the order's choices and identity between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

Portraying Bobola

Few cases in the history of the cult of saints intertwine confessional, nationalistic, and symbolic elements as densely and deftly as that of Bobola. His canonization process spanned two centuries, from 1719 to 1938, and is a significant model for Jesuit strategies aimed at building an enduring myth of sainthood. Indeed, the Polish-Lithuanian Jesuits who forged Bobola's cult proved highly capable of inventing the narratives of martyrdom and miracles required to construct such a myth.

Killed by the Cossack militiamen during the Khmelnytsky Uprising (1648–54), Bobola became an object of popular devotion in the 1710s. Over time, his hagiographic memory served multiple functions. Originally, it was used to emphasize the Catholic identity of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, before it came to legitimize the spiritual continuity between the old and the new Society. After the First World War, it eventually became a symbol of the restored Polish state as well as the church's struggle against Soviet communism. Bobola was proclaimed a national patron saint by the Polish episcopal conference in 2002. The latest episode in the Jesuit martyr's "political career" took place in 2015, when the custodian of his shrine in Strachocina, Poland, praised the conservative Right and Justice party's presidential candidate, Andrzej Duda (b.1972; in office 2015–), for his devotion to the saint.⁸

8 Rafał Leśniczak, "The Communicative Role of the Catholic Church in Poland in the 2015 Presidential Election and Its Perception by the Public," *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016): 268–85.

Despite Polish devotion to Bobola, no scholarly study of this case has been conducted due to the scarcity of records documenting the martyr's life. The available literature consists of hagiographical texts dating back to the opening of the apostolic process (1728), or to his beatification (1853) and canonization (1938) and relies on judicial sources derived from the canonical inquiries in the dioceses of Lutsk (in present-day Ukraine) and Vilnius in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁹

Jesuit archives indicate that Bobola was born in Lesser Poland to a noble family closely tied to the order. He entered the novitiate in Vilnius in 1611 and was ordained priest on March 12, 1622 (the very day of Ignatius's and Francis Xavier's canonizations, as his biographers underscore). He held the office of prefect and preacher in the Jesuit church of St. Casimir in Vilnius from 1624 onward. The profession of the fourth vow (1630) is one of the few existing manuscripts written by him.¹⁰ He was then active in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, dividing his time between Polotsk and Pinsk as a college superior, teacher, and missionary.

9 For the relevant bibliography, see Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 12 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1890–1932), 11:1402–4 and *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, ed. Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín M. Domínguez, 4 vols. (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), 1:465–66. For this article, we relied on the following biographies of Bobola: Filippo S. Del Pace, *Istoria breve del venerabile martire P. Andrea Bobòla sacerdote professo della Compagnia di Gesù* (Rome: Salviucci, 1833); Filippo Monaci, *Vita e martirio del beato Andrea Bobola della Compagnia di Gesù libri due* (Rome: Civiltà cattolica, 1853); Victor de Buck, *Essai historique sur le bienheureux André Bobola de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Brussels: Vandereydt, 1853); and Jan Popłatek, *Błogosławiony Andrzej Bobola Towarzystwa Jezusowego: Życie – Męczeństwo – Kult* (Kraków: Nakładem Wydawnictwa Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1936). We are thankful to Dr. Lidia Sichowa for her translation of the texts in Polish. See also *Memorie istoriche della vita e martirio con gl'atti della beatificazione del ... Andrea Bobola sacerdote della Compagnia di Gesù*, in ARSI, *Post.* 622, no. 1, 1748–50 ca. (the dots in the title were likely meant to have been replaced by the title “blessed”), which must be considered an archetype of the texts mentioned above. These biographies use testimonies collected during the processes of 1711, 1719, 1728, and 1730. The apostolic process was published in *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino Polona seu Luceorien. beatificationis, seu declarationis martyrii Ven. Servi Dei Andreae Bobola* (Rome: Typis Rev. Camerae Apostolicae, 1728, 1739), and *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Aldrovando Polona seu Luceorien. beatificationis, seu declarationis martyrii Ven. Servi Dei Andreae Bobola* (Rome: Typis Rev. Camerae Apostolicae, 1745, 1749). Sommervogel lists an adespotata *Vita et mors Andreae Bobola martyris, apostoli Pincensis* (Würzburg: n.p., 1725). Jan Rosiak and Romuald Gustaw, *Andrzej Bobola*, in *Hagiografia polska: Słownik bio-bibliograficzny* [Polish hagiography: Bio-bibliographical dictionary], 2 vols. (Poznań: Księg. św. Wojciecha, 1971), 1:55–79, also mentions eighteenth-century texts that are not listed by Sommervogel.

10 ARSI, *Lit.* 2, 51–52. A copy of the manuscript is included in the 1877 edition of Stanisław Rostowski's *Lituanicarum Societatis Iesu historiarum libri decem* (Paris – Brussels: Palmé – Lebrocq; orig. 1748), 385–86.

As noted in the anonymous *Memorie istoriche* (ARSI), Bobola's eighteenth and nineteenth-century hagiographers claimed that most archival records on his life had been destroyed during the wars that ravaged the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the second half of the seventeenth century. This explanation of the lack of historical information is repeated in the biographies of Monaci and De Buck, published on the occasion of Bobola's beatification.¹¹

Bobola was undoubtedly a prominent Jesuit in the golden age of the Counter-Reformation in Poland and Lithuania, the Union of Brest (1595–96) and the birth of the Ruthenian Catholic Church. He was primarily charged with leading the theological offensive against the Orthodox Church and consolidating Catholic hegemony over the aristocracy of the *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów* (Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth).¹² His virtues and deeds (i.e. obedience, humility, spirit of sacrifice, pastoral care, and zeal in the struggle against “heretics” and “schismatics”) are described by hagiographers in conventional terms, and none of them bear a specific place or date, except for the dates marking his institutional career. The reader is thus left with a sense that the accounts lack historical depth. The celebration of the saint's virtues resembles a rhetorical exercise drawing on Counter-Reformation models and the hagiographical narratives of religious orders in particular.¹³

Even Bobola's iconographic tradition (his archetypal portrait probably dates to the 1710s) must be considered fictitious. The descriptions of his appearance provided by his confrère Jan Łukaszewicz (1716–79) and a Jewish surgeon Wolf Abrahamowicz in approximately 1713 are extremely vague, simply describing a squat man “with a rounded head, face, and body” with prematurely white hair and beard.¹⁴

11 *Memorie istoriche*, 3rd; Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, 3 ff.; De Buck, *Essai historique*, 3 ff.

12 Wiesław Müller, “Les jésuites en Pologne aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles,” in *Les jésuites parmi les hommes aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (Clermont-Ferrand: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Clermont-Ferrand 11, 1987), 323–30; Józef Umiński, “The Counter-Reformation in Poland,” in *The Cambridge History of Poland 1, From the Origins to Sobieski (to 1696)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 392–415; Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland 1, The Origins to 1795* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 166 ff. For a recent survey on the historiography on this topic, see Krzysztof Fordoński and Piotr Urbański, “Jesuit Culture in Poland and Lithuania, 1564–1773,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 5, no. 3 (2018): 341–51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00503001> (accessed October 17, 2021).

13 On early modern Catholic models of sainthood, see Peter Burke, “How to Be a Counter-Reformation Saint,” in *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe 1500–1800*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 45–55; Jean-Michel Sallmann, *Naples et ses saints à l'âge baroque (1540–1750)* (Paris: Puf, 1994); *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento: Contrasti, intersezioni, complementarità*, ed. Giulia Barone, Marina Caffiero, and Francesco Scorza Barcellona (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994), 265 ff.

14 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino, 1728, Summarium*, 8.

The Construction of Bobola's Martyrdom Myth

The core question in this case is how Bobola's cult developed and what makes this hagiographical model nearly a *unicum*, or at least extremely uncommon in the history of early modern Christianity. It was not Bobola's life but rather his death—the atrocious martyrdom he suffered in Janów, Polesie, now Ivanava, Belarus—that formed the true touchstone of his sainthood. In this sense, Bobola's hagiographical narrative has more in common with early martyrs' *passiones* describing imaginary lives and cruel, spectacular deaths, than with the accounts of early modern saints canonized on the basis of abundant documentation and testimony.

The celebration of martyrdom is a recurring feature of Counter-Reformation (especially Jesuit) propaganda, as shown by depictions of the cult of Japanese (1597), Canadian (1642–49), and English martyrs (during the Elizabethan and early Stuart ages).¹⁵ Yet, nowhere does the description of the pure technique of martyrdom hold as prominent a place as in this case, where it constitutes the very core of the meaning of the entire hagiographical narrative. “This Holy Congregation has almost never, or never, been handed the case of a martyrdom as cruel as this,” as the Congregation of Rites remarked in 1853.¹⁶ As Monaci specifies,

a martyrdom so extraordinary and wondrous by virtue of the atrocity of the sufferings and robustness of spirit in bearing them, like that of Blessed Andrzej [...], was necessary to ensure that not just any memory but a lively and beloved one remain among those peoples, being also highly worshipped in the Church as a whole.¹⁷

15 Stefan Samerski defines martyrdom as a seminal aspect of Counter-Reformation sainthood: “*Wie im Himmel, so auf Erden?*”: *Selig- und Heiligsprechungen in der Katholischen Kirche 1740–1870* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 374 ff. According to Samerski, this model reached its height with Urban VIII's opening of a beatification process for 205 Japanese martyrs in 1627, eventually losing ground during the eighteenth century. A more general view on this topic can be found in *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. Johan Leemans (Leuven: Peeters, 2005). Other authors, such as Burke (the essay quoted in footnote 13), point out that, on the contrary, the Counter-Reformation church was not interested in promoting the model of sanctity of martyrs, favoring instead triumphant personalities such as mystics and founders of orders.

16 Giuseppe Stella, “Libellus supplex addressed to Pius XI,” in *Romana seu Luceorien. canonizationis beati Andreae Bobola sacerdotis professi Soc. Iesu positio super reassumptione causae* (Rome: Guerra et Mirri, 1924), 1.

17 Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, “Avvertimento al lettore.”

As his canonization process unfolded over two centuries, the account of Bobola's torture and execution became ever more elaborate, reaching its final form around the mid-eighteenth century. In the early stage of the trial, the depositions by witnesses (considered eyewitnesses by the postulators, but not by the Congregation of Rites) consisted of disjointed and even contradictory accounts. In the early eighteenth century, the Uniate archpriest of Janów, Samuel Szalka, reported seeing the Cossacks bind Bobola to a table and excoriate his back around the hips before cutting off his nose, tearing out some of his teeth, burning his fingers and, finally, extracting his tongue through a cut in his neck.¹⁸ These horrifying details would become extremely relevant to the construction of the myth of the saint.

Łukaszewicz declared in 1713 that, as a young novice, he had witnessed Bobola's corpse being carried from Janów to the college of Pinsk, even though he had been prohibited by the superiors to see it "because of the enormous cruelty exerted on that body."¹⁹ Experienced surgeon Abrahamowicz testified to seeing Bobola's corpse in the house of Janów's parish priest. Bobola had been emasculated, the flesh of his back lacerated, and his "whole face tumefied with blows, to the extent that it wasn't possible to distinguish either the nose, or the eyes and ears."²⁰

Two more witnesses *de visu* were added in the following years. In the Lusk inquiry phase (1719), Jakób Czetwerynka recounted that he had only heard Bobola screaming under torture ("Jesus Maria"), while Maciej Zasymowicz stated that he saw him just after having been captured, his head bound with a ring made of flexible boughs.²¹ All other witnesses were indirect (*de auditu*), and only aware of Bobola's reputation for sanctity or tales concerning his martyrdom. They often referred indistinctly to "various torments."

In 1739, *Promotor fidei* Ludovico Valenti (1695–1763) lambasted the reliability of the eyewitnesses to the martyrdom, prompting the congregation to reject the accounts, relying only on indirect witnesses instead. According to Valenti, Czetwerynka and Zasymowicz provided insufficient evidence, while the surgeon had only observed a corpse. The depositions of Szalka, Łukaszewicz, and Abrahamowicz were invalid because they were considered extrajudicial, having been collected before the ordinary process was officially underway. Moreover, Szalka's deposition was only a signed declaration provided

18 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 7–8.

19 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 8.

20 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 8–9.

21 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 11; *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1739, *Summarium*, 32–33.

by the bishop of Pinsk, who had previously heard the story from him. Even more damaging to his trustworthiness was that Szalka had apparently been seen fleeing into a tower immediately after catching sight of the approaching Cossacks. In his severe admonitions, Valenti accused the postulators of “dis-simulating the praxis and censure” of the congregation, submitting two dozen indirect accounts, rife with contradictions, to compensate for the insufficiency of direct testimony. Not only the circumstances surrounding Bobola’s martyrdom but even its very nature were highly uncertain:

From all these [declarations] it can be clearly understood that the Cossacks’ raid in Janów did not take place out of hatred for the Catholic faith, rather out of hatred against the Poles and their lords, given that the Cossacks did not kill only the Catholics, but also the Jews without distinction, as well as all those who used to cut their hair short on the sides of the head.²²

It was only in the twenty years following the earlier testimonies that the narrative of Bobola’s passion took on what would be its conclusive structure. Łukaszewicz was interrogated again in 1727, and, this time, recounted further details. According to his testimony, Bobola was tied to a pole and flogged, before his nails were torn out. He was dragged to Janów tied to two horses, and, through all this, he prayed that Mary might intercede on behalf of his killers as he publicly professed his Catholic faith.²³ The same narrative can be found in a lengthy undated necrology kept in the Jesuit archives of the Lithuanian province and submitted by the postulators during the ordinary part of the process, in 1728.²⁴ In the *Memorie istoriche*, the sequence of tortures is almost exhaustive; nineteenth-century biographers later added details such as the burning of Bobola’s wounds with torches and the excoriating of his head and back. Monaci implicitly refers to Christ’s passion by portraying a bleeding Bobola, a rope around his neck, being interrogated by the captain of the Cossacks and then mocked while tortured (“‘Now, where is your Pope,’ they asked him, ‘where are your Romans?’”).²⁵ Only the detail of Bobola’s emasculation disappeared from the records. This final version of the *passio* was cited extensively by Vatican

22 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1739, *Animadversiones [...] super dubio an constet de martyrio, et causa martyrii*, 6–7, 10.

23 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium additionale*, 6.

24 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 9.

25 Del Pace, *Istoria breve*, 24 ff.; Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, 30 ff.

Secretary of Briefs Antonio Bacci (1885–1971) in the homily for Bobola’s canonization on April 17, 1938.²⁶

We can interpret the choice to stress such an excess of torture as reflecting the symbolism of martyrdom in Jesuit self-representation strategies. During the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, many Jesuit martyrs sealed the new church’s missionary fervor overseas with their blood, while English martyrs were represented as a vanguard of Rome’s next victory over heresy. The *Relations des jésuites*, drafted by the Canadian missions from 1642 to 1647, describes in detail the torments the Iroquois inflicted on the best known of the Canadian martyrs, Isaac Jogues (1607–46). On a visit to France before returning to North America for good, Jogues—who had survived—stopped over in Paris, where he was welcomed as a living martyr and guarantor of the future success of Catholicism in the New World, thanks to the torture he had already experienced (e.g. his fingers had been cut off).²⁷

This theology of martyrdom was celebrated in the Jesuit martyrology of the four continents, which Mathias Tanner (1630–92) published in Prague in 1675: “It is nearly impossible to find another religious order that has suffered more cruel persecutions in any part of the world, by men of any sort and condition,” the text noted.²⁸ Indeed, several witnesses in Bobola’s process mentioned his religious affiliation as a reason for his martyrdom. As Łukaszewicz declared in his second deposition, aside from the cruelty of the Cossacks and his loyalty to the Roman Church, “the third and main reason [for the martyrdom] was the exceptional hatred of the Jesuits.”²⁹

A second, fundamental reason for the prominence of torture in Bobola’s hagiographies lies in the importance of his body in the overall process of the construction of his cult. Witnesses to exhumations of his body (in 1702, 1719, and 1730) reported that it had been miraculously preserved from corruption.

Bearing all the marks of his torture, Bobola’s body remained evidence of the truth and atrocity of his martyrdom. The incorruptibility of these marks ranks first in the series of miracles attributed to him—at least until other miracles

26 Regarding Bobola’s canonization, see also *L’Osservatore romano* (April 18–19, 1938), 1–2.

27 Michel Morineau, “Les jésuites parmi les hommes: La soif du martyr,” in *Les jésuites parmi les hommes*, 47–63; on Jogues, see Paul Perron, “Isaac Jogues: From Martyrdom to Sainthood,” in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500–1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (London: Routledge, 2003), 153–68.

28 *Societas Iesu usque ad sanguinis profusionem militans, in Europa, Africa, Asia et America [...] pro Deo, fide, Ecclesia, pietate* (Prague: Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandae, 1675), “Praefatio,” 4. It should be noted that, eighteen years after his death, Bobola is not mentioned in the book.

29 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino, 1739, Summarium*, 37.

were chosen in 1853 as his likely beatification drew near.³⁰ According to one of the four Jesuits who recovered the saint's relics, "the entire body was incorrupt, it had never decomposed, indeed it was soft everywhere as if it were alive, and the wounds and the clotted blood appeared clearly, especially on the clothes."³¹ The proceedings report an array of testimonies from physicians, clerics, and laymen describing in detail every part of Bobola's relics (bones, blood, skin, and wounds) and the scent emanating from them.³²

The *promotores fidei* (Valenti in 1739; Vincenzo Pescetelli in 1830) criticized the reliability of this miracle, pointing to inconsistencies in the witnesses' different inspections, especially regarding the wounds and the state of conservation of the corpse. Many spoke of a relic composed of only skin and bones, suggesting a natural process of mummification.³³ Nevertheless, the fact remains that Bobola's corpse, and the visible, touchable evidence of his martyrdom, lay at the heart of his cult.

Incorrupt Relics: The Birth of Bobola's Cult

Devotion of the saints' *corpus incorruptum* is a long-standing feature of hagiographical narratives, in part due to its immediate link to the archetype of Jesus's body, which remained unaltered in the tomb until his resurrection.³⁴ From the mid-fourth century onward, public translation of relics often celebrated the integrity of holy bodies.³⁵ This symbolic model remained largely unchanged until the early modern age. Indeed, the reputation of the new saints of the Counter-Reformation was often strengthened by the uncorrupted state of their

30 Bobola's process under Pius IX is analyzed in Samerski, *Wie im Himmel, so auf Erden?*, 251 ff., 376 ff.

31 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1739, *Summarium super dubio an constet de martyrio, et causa martyrii*, 103.

32 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1739, *Summarium super dubio an constet de martyrio, et causa martyrii*, 103–34.

33 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Aldrovando*, 1745, *Novae animadversiones*, 2 ff.; *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo ac R.mo D. cardinali Pedicinio Polona seu Luceorien. beatificationis, et canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei Andreae Bobola* (Rome: typis Rev. Camerae Apostolicae, 1830), *Novissimas animadversiones*, 2 ff.

34 Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 149 ff.

35 Ursula Swiniarski, "Der ganze und der zerteilte Körper: Zu zwei gegensätzliche Vorstellungen im mittelalterlichen Reliquienkult," in *Hagiographie im Kontext: Wirkungsweisen und Möglichkeiten historischer Auswertung*, ed. Dieter R. Bauer and Klaus Herbers (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 58–68.

remains, carefully preserved, displayed, and governed by the religious communities to which they had belonged.

In his authoritative treatise on canonization procedures, Prospero Lambertini, later Pope Benedict XIV (1675–1758, r.1740–58), devoted a lengthy chapter to the miracle of the preservation of saintly bodies. He mentioned several examples from the Counter-Reformation onward, such as Francis Xavier as well as Caterina de' Vigri (1413–63), whose mummified corpse, seated in her niche, is still on display in the Clarisses' convent in Bologna.³⁶

Defying convention, the preservation of Bobola's relics was, uniquely, not presented as evidence of a sainthood that had already been foreseen and acknowledged during his life. Instead, it was the finding of his uncorrupted body that kindled his fame as a saint, fame that had previously been completely nonexistent.

For over forty years after his death, Bobola was wholly unknown or, at best, nothing more than the protagonist of a vague memorial tradition restricted to the Pinsk area. Valenti underscored the "high silence" surrounding the martyr's fame of sanctity for decades, among both locals and Jesuits.³⁷ Unlike many other contemporary cases, Bobola's relics were also neglected for years.

Bobola is an unusual case, especially in the early modern age, of a saint promoting his own cause after death, and it is precisely this feature that reveals the devotional strategies pursued by the Jesuits. Several witnesses (1719, 1730) testified that, around 1702, Bobola appeared in a dream to Marcin Godebski, rector of Pinsk College, who sought a saint protector for his community during the troubled time of the Great Northern War. On this occasion, Bobola affirmed his own sanctity by presenting his body as a relic: "I am Andrzej Bobola, one of your brothers, who was slaughtered by the Cossacks for his faith. Look for my body and remove it from among those of the others."³⁸

Following this vision, Godebski, unfamiliar with Bobola, failed to find his coffin in the common graveyard. Two nights later, the martyr himself appeared and revealed to the sacristan of the college church the true location of his tomb.³⁹ The coffin was then found, albeit through less supernatural means, namely a list of twenty-seven fathers and coadjutors buried in the crypt between 1634 and 1666, provided by the sacristan. Among them, Bobola was

36 *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, 2nd ed. (Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1748; orig. 1734–38), 4/1, chapter 30, 276.

37 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Aldrovando*, 1745, *Novae animadversiones*, 4.

38 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 5. The event is reported by all biographies: Del Pace, *Istoria breve*, 29; Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, 50; De Buck, *Essai historique*, 77–78; Popłatek, *Blogostawiony Andrzej Bobola*, 138.

39 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 13.

the only one whose death was briefly described: “On May 16, 1657 [he was] most cruelly killed by the impious Cossacks, variously tortured, and finally skinned, then laid down before the main altar.”⁴⁰

Bobola was not the only Jesuit to have fallen to Khmelnytsky’s gangs. Lithuanian Simonas Maffon (d.1651) had been tortured to death just one day before at Davyd-Haradok, and the deputy superior provincial of Lithuania, Andrzej Guzewski, briefly informed Superior General Goswin Nickel (1582–1664, in office 1652–64) about both deaths.⁴¹ Furthermore, Łukaszewicz mentioned four other fathers of the Njasvizh college by name who were killed on the same occasion, and, in 1665, Father Zuchowicz wrote a detailed report about the massacres of Jesuits that took place during the Cossack insurrection.⁴² In any case, the point is that, in 1702, Godebski could only count on a single candidate to fulfill the role of saint protector of the college—Bobola, because both the details of his death and the location of his body were known. His remains thus became relics. The search for the corpse was carried out under the eyes of the entire college and, once transferred into a separate tomb, it immediately became an object of veneration with many graces apparently granted by devotees.⁴³

The spectacular success of Bobola’s thaumaturgic relics should also be considered a sign of the effectiveness of the hagiographical propaganda circulated by the Jesuits. In 1720, even Augustus II, king of Poland (1670–1733, r.1697–1706 and 1709–33), petitioned Clement XII (1652–1740, r.1730–40) to launch the beatification process. In 1726, Augustus was himself miraculously healed of a case of foot gangrene, after which he expressed his gratitude by sending an offering of gold to Pinsk.⁴⁴ In the dossier delivered to the Rites in 1739, the Jesuit postulators submitted testimony attesting to approximately 250 miracles.⁴⁵

40 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 13–14.

41 *Annuae litterae Collegii Pincensis Societatis Iesu 1657*, in ARSI, *Lith.* 40, fol. 44^v, reported by Popłatek, *Błogostawiony Andrzej Bobola*, 132.

42 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 8. Andreas Bober and Miecislaus Bednarz, “Relatio de caedibus patrum ac fratrum S.I. in provincia Poloniae a P. Ioanne Zuchowicz S.I. collecta A.D. 1665 (1648–1665),” *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 29, no. 2 (1960): 329–80.

43 Prokop Łukaszewicz, 1719, in *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 13.

44 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1728, *Summarium*, 35–36, and *Summarium additionale*, 16.

45 *Sacra Rituum congreg. E.mo et R.mo D. cardinali Corradino*, 1739, *Summarium super dubio an constet de martyrio, et causa martyrii*, 103 ff. According to Valenti, the manuscript originally submitted to the congregation was divided into five volumes and included more than four

This ability to mobilize devotees was a sign of the Jesuit hegemony over the easternmost areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and a key factor in the success of the early stage of the canonical process focused on Bobola's martyrdom, conducted under Benedict XIV.⁴⁶ During the process, the pontiff himself chose to proceed *per viam casus excepti*, circumventing his own requirement that, in the cases of martyrs, "the death [be] proven by witnesses *de visu*, reporting all its circumstances."⁴⁷ In 1794, the Congregation of Rites unanimously rejected the evidence of Bobola's martyrdom due to a lack of reliable first-hand witnesses, but, a few days later, the pope allowed the process to be retried on the basis of indirect witnesses.⁴⁸ On February 9, 1755, Bobola was proclaimed a martyr by Benedict XIV through a special procedure justified by the vast number of witnesses *de auditu*, that is, almost three hundred.⁴⁹

In reality, purely diplomatic reasons played a decisive role in this decision and had little to do with defending the Catholic faith in eastern Europe. At the time, the Congregation of Rites was dealing with no less than eleven processes of Jesuit canonizations. The thorniest of these was that of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) that was opposed by both the French monarchy (which rejected the thesis of the pope's indirect power) and the head of the Italian Jansenists, Cardinal Domenico Silvio Passionei (1682–1761). Cardinal Secretary of State Silvio Valenti Gonzaga (1690–1756) reassured the French ambassador, who was worried about potentially dangerous developments in Bellarmine's process, as

a session of the Congregation of Rites has already been summoned and it is now forthcoming to address the process of another Jesuit [...] called

hundred miracles: *Positio super signis, seu miraculis* (Rome: Ex Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1752), *Summarium additionale super tertio, in secunda vero positione octavo miraculo*, 1.

46 See Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, "Before and after Suppression: Jesuits and Former Jesuits in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, c. 1750–1795," in *Jesuit Survival and Restoration: A Global History (1773–1900)*, ed. Robert A. Maryks and Jonathan Wright (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 52–66.

47 *De servorum Dei* 3, 3, 11.

48 *Decretum Summi pontifici Benedicti papae XIV in causa Polona, seu Luceoriensi beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii venerabilis Servi Dei Andreae Bobola* (Rome: Ex Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1749), May 22, 1749.

49 *Decretum Summi pontifici Benedicti papae XIV in causa [...] Bobola* (Rome: Ex Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1755), February 9, 1755.

Bobola, killed [...] by the Cossacks [...]; this implies a tacit exclusion of any choice in favor of the process of Cardinal Bellarmine.⁵⁰

To compensate for the weakness of the evidence proving martyrdom, Benedict XIV required evidence of four miracles instead of two. However, from the late 1750s onward, the process remained dormant for decades, likely because of growing political challenges to the Jesuits.⁵¹ It was not until 1822 that Leo XII (1760–1829, r.1823–29) granted the Jesuit assistant of Poland, Rajmund Brzozowski (1763–1848), the authority to reopen the examination of testimony regarding the eight miracles already selected in 1748, and especially Katarzyna Brzozowska's healing from dysentery in 1722. Katarzyna was probably a member of the family of Tadeusz Brzozowski (1749–1820, in office 1805–20), the postulator and first general of the restored Society.⁵² The latter, who died in 1822, supervised the 1808 transfer of Bobola's body from Pinsk to Polotsk, the administrative center of Jesuit activity during the years of their survival in White Russia.⁵³

Viewed from this perspective, it seems clear that the Jesuits selected Bobola's relics as a symbol of continuing of the order's vitality during the suppression, as demonstrated by the upsurge in its cult. The idea was that divine will had chosen White Russia as the place where the miracle of the preservation of Bobola's body was to take place, in order

to glorify him especially in those regions that, forty-three years later [that is, in 1773], were to become the safe shelter where the Brothers of Blessed Andrew Bobola, martyr of the Roman Faith, took refuge [...] for the benefit of Catholic religion, from the most cruel and universal persecution exercised against them by Jansenists and atheist philosophers.⁵⁴

50 Benedict XIV to cardinal Guérin de Tencin (1680–1758), November 27, 1754, in *Le lettere di Benedetto XIV al Card. de Tencin dai testi originali*, ed. Emilia Morelli, 3 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1965), 2:187. See also Samerski, *Wie im Himmel, so auf Erden?*, 251 ff.

51 Samerski, *Wie im Himmel, so auf Erden?*, 253n727.

52 Samerski, *Wie im Himmel, so auf Erden?*, 280–81.

53 ARSI, *Post.* 623, no. 1, *De translatione et recognitione corporis ac manutentione sepulcri 1807, 1808, 1924, 1933*. Cf. Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, 65 ff.; Poplatek, *Blogosławiony Andrzej Bobola*, 195 ff. On the relevance of Polotsk in Jesuit activities during the years of suppression, see Sabina Pavone, *Una strana alleanza: La Compagnia di Gesù in Russia dal 1772 al 1780* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2008), 60 ff.; Marek Inglot, "The Society of Jesus in the Russian Empire (1772–1820) and the Restoration of the Order," in *Jesuit Survival and Restoration*, 67–82.

54 Monaci, *Vita e martirio*, 63.

The history of Bobola's miraculous body was destined to endure. In the summer of 1922, his body was exhumed by order of a Soviet commission during the campaign against relic-based superstition organized by the Council of People's Commissars. It was temporarily exhibited in the Moscow Hygiene Museum before being recovered in the autumn of the same year by Jesuits Edmund Walsh (1885–1956) and Louis Gallagher (1885–1972). Walsh and Gallagher had been appointed by Pius XI (1857–1939, r.1922–39) to head the mission charged with distributing humanitarian aid in famine-plagued Russia.⁵⁵ The body reached Rome, where it was provisionally entombed in Saint Peter's. Shortly after Bobola's canonization in April 1938, the body was relocated to Poland on a special train, greeted by venerating crowds as it traveled through Slovenia, Hungary, and Slovakia. Even in this second part of its life, the relics played a key role in the development of Bobola's cult by enacting a hagiographical strategy that dated back to the early eighteenth century but proved extraordinarily deft at adapting to new historical contexts.

Time of Suppression: Francis De Geronimo's Beatification

Francesco De Geronimo's case is the product of Jesuit identity strategies developed during the delicate transition from the old to the new Society of Jesus, and thus, in this sense, resembles Bobola's process. De Geronimo (also Di Girolamo) was the only Jesuit who was beatified during the suppression, in 1806 (the same year the Jesuits were expelled from Sicily).⁵⁶ His beatification was a success for the soon-to-be-restored Society, which was still active in Russia at the time and was reintroduced only two years later in the Kingdom of Naples, where De Geronimo spent his life, as significantly recalled by Cardinal Giulio Maria Cavazzi della Somaglia (1744–1830) during the beatification ceremony. In the early 1800s, the Society was welcomed once more to Naples during an anti-revolutionary and anti-Jansenist attempt to re-establish a conservative government after the brief 1799 Neapolitan Republic, which was headed by pro-French Jacobins with Jansenist policies. De Geronimo's beatification came only

55 Hansjakob Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans 1917–1975* (Munich: Piper, 1975), 64 ff. For a discussion of the Soviet campaign against relics, see Steohen A. Smith, "Bones of Contention: Bolsheviks and the Struggle against Relics 1918–1930," *Past and Present* 204 (2009): 155–94. On the Vatican's humanitarian mission in Russia, see Marisa Patulli Trythall, "Russia's Misfortune Offers Humanitarians a Splendid Opportunity": Jesuits, Communism, and the Russian Famine," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 71–96, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00501005> (accessed October 17, 2021); Louis J. Gallagher, "The Recovery of the Relics of Blessed Andrew Bobola," *The Woodstock Letters* 53, no. 1 (1924): 1–16.

56 Regarding De Geronimo, see Giulio Sodano's works (quoted in the following pages) and journalist Francesco Occhibianco's educational books.

a few years before the global restoration of the order and at the dawn of the church's nineteenth-century reaction to anti-Catholic movements, lending the beatification new meanings. In this context, it became a symbol of the order's re-emergence in the Catholic world, starting in the Kingdom of Naples, where De Geronimo was renowned and venerated in an anti-revolutionary mood.⁵⁷

De Geronimo's case involves three peculiar aspects that can be identified from the rich archival documentation and early hagiographies about him.⁵⁸ Firstly, it shows the Society's strategic acknowledgement that De Geronimo had beatification potential; in Naples, indeed, he was considered a living saint. Secondly, De Geronimo's model of sanctity expressed a specific dimension of Jesuit identity, namely a missionary calling focused on popular preaching and apostolate values that were particularly relevant in the transition between the old and new Society. And, thirdly, there was the timing of his beatification and canonization, carefully supervised by the superior general himself, which reveals Jesuit political and symbolic strategies of sanctity.⁵⁹

A Living Saint

In mid-May 1716, De Geronimo lay in repose in his coffin when reports of miraculous healing occurring in the funeral parlor started to circulate in Naples. The accounts described paralytics and cripples walking, as the sick were cured thanks to De Geronimo's intercession soon after passing away.⁶⁰

57 For a discussion of the Jesuits in Naples, see Jennifer D. Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (London-Rome: Routledge-IHSI, 2017).

58 Several writings by De Geronimo (e.g. sermons and panegyrics) have survived and can be consulted in ARSI (see M. Volpe, *L'apostolo del Napoletano attraverso i suoi scritti autografi predicabili*, in *Nel secondo centenario della beata morte di S. Francesco di Geronimo S.J. [1716–1916], Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo-Napoli* [Naples Tipografia e Libreria Pontificia Andrea e Salvatore Festa, 1916]). Two major types of sources have been considered here: the rich documentation gathered for the canonization process and the hagiographies that shape the defining elements of De Geronimo's model of sanctity.

59 Giulio Sodano, "Francesco De Geronimo: Motivi e contesto di un successo devozionale," in *Atti del Convegno di Studio "... Nelle Indie di quaggiù": San Francesco De Geronimo e i processi di evangelizzazione nel Mezzogiorno moderno* (Galatina: Edipan, 2006), 159–72, here 166.

60 Biographical data, narration of miracles, letters, and canonization records are stored in ARSI in the Archive of the General Postulation (APG), 237–58. Often, pages are not numbered, records are not dated, and it is not clear to whom letters and reports are addressed. However, they were clearly sent to the General Curia or Postulation; in some cases, to Jesuit superiors who successively delivered or sent the documents on to Rome. The first biographies were composed by Jesuits: Carlo Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo della Compagnia*

The sufferers included the daughter of Duke Adriano Ulloa of Lauria (d.1740), an influent figure with political assignments in Naples, who had slipped into a vegetative state. She was brought before the corpse, where the rector of the Jesuit house, Antonio De Angelis, blessed her with De Geronimo's hand. An immediate healing occurred.

A large crowd gathered to bid farewell to the Jesuit father, who had a reputation for being a holy man. The first hagiographies paid particular attention to the father's holy death and funeral, in keeping with a consolidated narrative scheme. De Geronimo's agony is described as an example of perfect Christian death sealed, toward the end, by the kind of demonic attacks believed to affect holy men, particularly as they were dying.⁶¹ De Geronimo's death resembles the passing of well-known early modern Jesuits, as described by biographers (for example Bellarmine and Leonard Lessius [1554–1623]). Such narratives were employed to publicize examples of Christian death and confer the features of a saint on dying Jesuits. For instance, in Bellarmine's case, the death of the cardinal became a theatrical occasion for staging a public display of his virtues.⁶²

An undated report written by De Angelis states that the corpse did not show the typical signs of death, although, in contrast to Bobola's case, such signs were later seen during an examination of the body. The author highlights repeatedly that the body was unaffected by *rigor mortis* (temporary rigidity of muscles occurring after death), even at the time of burial and that fresh blood (immediately collected in a jar) continuously gushed from one foot, which had been wounded by the removal of a callus, to be kept as a relic.⁶³ Women stopped by the coffin and dipped their handkerchiefs or even bare hands in the blood. It was a common belief that, after death, the charismatic power of a

di Gesù (Naples: Michele Luigi Muzio, 1719) and Simone Bagnati, *Vita del servo di Dio P. Francesco di Geronimo della Compagnia di Gesù* (Naples: Felice Mosca, 1725). Carlo De Bonis, S.J. composed a hefty biography in Latin: *Vita Ven. Francisci de Hieronymo* (Naples: Felice Mosca, 1734), translated into Italian in 1747 (Naples: De' Muzi). See also Pietro degli Onofri, *Elogi storici di alcuni Servi di Dio che vissero in questi ultimi tempi [...] cioè del Ven. P. Francesco di Girolamo* (Naples: Tipografia Pergeriana, 1803).

61 Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo della Compagnia di Gesù*, 127.

62 On Bellarmine's agony, see Franco Motta, "La politica degli istanti ultimi: Morte, santità, autorità nella devozione gesuitica del secolo XVII," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 13 (2000): 217–73, and Motta, *Bellarmino: Una teologia politica della Controriforma* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), 459 ff.

63 APG 241. Information taken from a report by Antonio De Angelis and other anonymous reports.

person who passed in a state of sanctity shifted from his body to his relics, the latter acquiring thaumaturgic abilities.⁶⁴

De Geronimo's corpse was immediately acknowledged as a relic and devotees strove to secure even a little piece of it. His corpse attracted pilgrims asking for blessings and looking for relics. Second-class relics, that is, objects (such as clothes) that had been in contact with the deceased are easier to obtain than fragments of bones or flesh. When De Geronimo died, Jesuit brethren cut fragments of his shirt, while the wooden confessional in which he usually exercised his duties as a confessor was torn apart by devotees. A child who was "rotto dalla parte sinistra nelle parti secrete" (broken in the left side of his private parts) was fed scraps of the confessional mixed into a gruel, and reportedly healed.⁶⁵ An undated letter written by Jesuit Giuseppe Gambatesa states that at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in Sulmona, devotees asked for fragments of De Geronimo's clothes even when he was still alive.⁶⁶

As a matter of fact, devotion of De Geronimo did not increase with his passing, because it was already quite widespread in the Neapolitan area where he actively performed his priestly and missionary duties as a "vir vere apostolicus," or "real apostle," as highlighted in the records of the process.⁶⁷ The Jesuit was actually considered a living saint, as confirmed by the stories of his reported miraculous healing and prophecies. Only a few days after his death, reports concerning his life, virtues, alleged miracles, and passing had already begun to circulate within the Society and were sent to the General Curia, a sign that De Geronimo's Jesuit brethren were keen to launch his canonization process. Within a decade after his death, political and religious authorities (including none other than the Habsburg Emperor Charles VI [1658–1740, r.1711–40]) began to address postulatory letters to the pope, pleading for his beatification. They often mentioned the value of De Geronimo's example and the importance of his possible beatification for all of European Catholicism. For example, the letter of the archbishop of Cologne, Clemens August of Bavaria (1700–61), claims that all of Catholic Europe wanted De Geronimo to be a saint (June 6, 1728).⁶⁸ This comment is not entirely convincing, given that, in the eighteenth century, the Society increasingly came under the attack of various Catholic factions,

64 Giulio Sodano, *Modelli e selezione del santo moderno: Periferia napoletana e centro romano* (Napoli: Liguori, 2002), 167–93.

65 APG 241, anonymous report on De Geronimo's death.

66 APG 243, letter by Giuseppe Gambatesa, undated.

67 *Sacra Rituum Congregatione [...] Neapolitana Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei P. Francisci De Hieronymo* (Rome: Ex Typographia Camerae Apostolicae, 1729), 1.

68 *Sacra Rituum Congregatione [...] Neapolitana Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei P. Francisci De Hieronymo*, 2.

ultimately leading to the suppression. But the remark is also completely understandable, given the role of the Jesuits in early modern Catholic religiosity in Bavaria. The archbishop was the son of a great elector of Bavaria and had even been educated in a Jesuit college.

De Geronimo's holiness had been detected from the very beginning of his Jesuit life, when Andrea De' Mari, rector of the novitiate in Naples, commented on his entering the house in 1670 by stating that "today the Society earned a holy priest."⁶⁹ The sources collected for the beatification process tell us about the visible signs of this particular election. On the one hand, stereotypical accounts played a seminal role in the construction of his sanctity, including the dramatic conversion of sinners thanks to his preaching and stories about his ability to read hearts. On the other hand, reports on De Geronimo's life left space for the intervention of a vengeful God, who was said to punish those who refused to repent before the Jesuit, thus confirming his sanctity and divine mission. This was the case, for example, of a "meretrice" (a high-class prostitute) named Caterina, who died after having sniggering during De Geronimo's preaching. The sources tell us that the merciful Jesuit visited her body and asked the dead woman: "Where are you?"; "I am in hell," the corpse replied.⁷⁰ Narratives of such episodes, and especially his connections with the afterlife, served as a manifesto of the Jesuit's sanctity and status as God's chosen, and a strategy for confirming his, and thus the Society's, missionary work and methods. In this sense, the propaganda methods employed by the Society through eyewitnesses were successful: De Geronimo's sanctity hinged on his performance of miraculous feats, which are narrated extensively in both the trial records and hagiographies.

The statements regarding extraordinary events, which were collected for the beatification, provide an insightful overview of the "living saint" model of sanctity. In addition to traditional elements, such as the ability to read hearts and induce lasting conversions, the sources document dozens of cases of miraculous healing. These were said to have occurred during his missions (thanks to his simple presence—he was even said to have the gift of ubiquity—prayer, and the use of St. Cyrus's relics) and when he was summoned by the needy

69 Giuseppe A. Patrignani, *Menologio di pie memorie dalcuni religiosi della Compagnia di Gesù [...] dall'anno 1538 fino all'anno 1728*, 3 vols. (Venice: Pezzana, 1730), 2:74–84, here 75.

70 *Breve ragguaglio della vita del venerabile P. Francesco de Geronimo della Compagnia di Gesù: Ricavato dalla vita di lui più diffusamente scritta, e data alla luce l'anno 1747* (Naples: Pellicchia, 1748), 8.

to cure a wide range of illnesses or alleviate specific medical issues, including labor and childbirth. The records even present cases of resurrecting the dead.⁷¹

In 1806, Postulator Alfonso Muzzarelli (1749–1813), following well-established conventions, noted that De Geronimo's beatification did not depend on such extraordinary feats, because they were merely ancillary. Rather, it rested on statements asserting his heroic virtues and the confirmation of posthumous miracles, as established by Prospero Lambertini's regulations.⁷² But the attention paid to the miraculous events in De Geronimo's life is indicative of a devotional strategy focused on the extraordinary nature of his life, presenting the miracles, in particular, as a sign of God's predilection. Oral and written narratives of the Jesuit's exceptional qualities served to boost and catalyze the spread of his cult.⁷³ Thanks to the programmatic diffusion of knowledge about these events, devotees mobilized to pray for De Geronimo's intercession with a view to bringing about miracles for canonization.⁷⁴ This is why Muzzarelli, in a biography written in the year of De Geronimo's beatification, describes a nun, Maria Paola della Croce, who allegedly received a divine revelation promising that God would grant the requests for blessings of De Geronimo's devotees, thanks to his immense love for the Jesuit.⁷⁵

A Jesuit Model of Sanctity: The (Popular) Missionary

On July 10, 1716, two months after De Geronimo's death, his missionary companion, Gaspare Ferrucci (d.1729), sent a report detailing his life, virtues, and alleged miracles to the Jesuit superior provincial Giacomo Pavrescia.⁷⁶ This particularly significant report reveals interesting details of De Geronimo's

71 For example, the narration of the resurrection of a baby brought by his mother to De Geronimo's confessional to ask for burial. APG, 242, I; *Sacra Rituum*, 188–90. For a list of miracles performed during his life, see *Sacra Rituum Congregatione [...] Neapolitana Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei P. Francisci De Hieronymo*, 27–29.

72 Alfonso Muzzarelli, *Raccolta di avvenimenti singolari e documenti autentici spettanti alla vita del B. Francesco di Geronimo della Compagnia di Gesù estratta dai processi* (Rome: Pagliarini, 1806), xxiv.

73 On miracles and relics in early modern southern Italy, see Giulio Sodano, *Il miracolo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia dell'età moderna tra santi, Madonne, guaritrici e medici* (Naples: Guida, 2010).

74 On the role of Neapolitan miracles in canonization, see David Gentilcore, "Contesting Illness in Early Modern Naples: *Miracolati*, Physicians and the Congregation of Rites," *Past & Present* 148, no. 1 (1995): 117–48.

75 Muzzarelli, *Raccolta di avvenimenti singolari*, xxxi.

76 APG 243, *Vita virtù e miracoli fatti interessantissimi* (P. Ferrucci S.J. *Compagno d'apostolato*).

activities. First of all, it describes him as an exorcist, with the ability to purge houses infested by demons. Secondly, it presents his strategies for defusing social tensions during internal missions, including emotional penitential practices.⁷⁷ Finally, the author states that, seventeen years earlier, De Geronimo himself had revealed to Pavrescia that he had healed hundreds of sick people by employing relics of St. Cyrus (d.311) or praying for the saint's intercession. De Geronimo was deeply devoted to this saint and helped bolster Cyrus's already widespread cult significantly. Cyrus's relics were treasured in the Gesù Nuovo Church in Naples and De Geronimo usually brought them along on missions to bless the sick. This was a conscious strategy of connecting with devotees, who were already acquainted with St. Cyrus.⁷⁸ The narrative of miracles constitutes a significant component of hagiographies about De Geronimo and show that his fame as a living saint increased because the public acknowledged his personal connection with St. Cyrus. Indeed, this connection was so well known that he was frequently summoned by the families of the sick to act as their mediator in front of Cyrus and God.⁷⁹ Stradiotti's biography (1719) touches on various Jesuit devotional strategies and explains De Geronimo's use of Cyrus's relics as a humble means of diverting attention from his own role in the healing.⁸⁰ Gerolamo Alessandro Vicentini (1672–1723), the archbishop of Thessalonica and papal nuncio in Naples, even expressed the concern that, after De Geronimo's death, St. Cyrus might stop interceding on behalf of the people of Naples.⁸¹

In order to corroborate De Geronimo's virtues and supernatural gifts, Jesuit sources strategically (and stereotypically) highlight that peasants were not the only ones to venerate him and asked his advice. The nobility, ranging from educated families in southern Italy to German noblemen, also sought him out and even visited him on his deathbed to receive his blessing.⁸² Yet, very few nobles were summoned as witnesses during the process, probably due to the Society's rocky relationship with aristocracies in that period.⁸³

77 For a discussion of Jesuit popular missions, see Bernadette Majorana's works, including "Une pastorale spectaculaire: Missions et missionnaires jésuites en Italie (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècle)," *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales* 57, no. 2 (2002): 297–320; Orsolya Száraz, "Tears and Weeping on Jesuit Missions in Seventeenth Century Italy," *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 85, no. 1 (2017): 7–48.

78 Cyrus of Alexandria, medical doctor martyred in 303.

79 For example, Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo*, 110–13.

80 Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo*, 109.

81 Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo*, 120.

82 APG 241.

83 Sodano, "Francesco De Geronimo," 168.

During his missions in Naples and Apulia, De Geronimo is said to have made prophecies on matters concerning daily life, from weather forecasts to household finances. These revelations may strike modern readers as commonsensical rather than supernatural, but they played a crucial role in the construction of his sanctity. The way the sources repeatedly emphasize these aspects of De Geronimo's work tells us how important they were for his "public"—rich and poor trusted his advice and help with tangible, contingent issues. The weather, for instance, was a very serious challenge for many—a matter of life and death for the inhabitants of rural areas who lived from harvesting crops. Wonders attributed to De Geronimo often related to the general needs of the communities where he conducted missions or the cities where he simply stopped over when travelling. This occurred in Monopoli, for example, where the Jesuit was begged by a local priest to preach to the community because the town had been plagued by drought. Marvelously, the report states that it started to rain as the Jesuit delivered his sermon.⁸⁴ From the many depositions and documents sent in to support his trial, the portrait that emerges is one of a (living) saint devoted to relieving the suffering of the people. Sources claim that he had the power to make it rain, to heal crops by exterminating plant parasites, and, with a wave of his hand, to stop a herd of livestock from destroying plantations.⁸⁵

Such sources present his deeds as indicative of a unique connection with God that De Geronimo used for the wellbeing of the needy, going way beyond simple apostolate. Devotion of the Jesuit was deeply rooted in the Neapolitan area thanks to his tireless counselling and "healing," alongside his pastoral duties of acting as confessor and providing assistance to inmates. One of these deeds, as reported by witnesses during the process, was De Geronimo's successful conversion of many Turks, thus playing a memorable role as a traditional evangelizer in a period when the Turkish threat loomed over Europe.⁸⁶ His mediation with the Turks became almost prophetic after his death when, appearing to a sick acquaintance in a dream, he claimed he was going to preach to the Turks (at the time laying siege to Belgrade) and to "eradicate the stones from the foundations." When an explosion caused a tower to collapse in Belgrade, burying many Turkish soldiers, those who knew about the apparition read the event as an act by De Geronimo.⁸⁷

84 Sodano, "Francesco De Geronimo," *Report by Leonardo Antonio Albanese*.

85 APG 242, 1, X.

86 *Sacra Rituum Congregatione [...] Neapolitana Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei P. Francisci De Hieronymo*, 50.

87 Bagnati, *Vita del servo di Dio P. Francesco di Geronimo*, 329.

Ultimately, De Geronimo represents a traditional model of popular sanctity: a religious man, preacher, apostle, missionary, and—central to this study—a Jesuit, who sometimes became entangled with contemporary European politics. His religious affiliation is essential to gain a better understanding of his process. Recalling his many posthumous apparitions, the hagiographers underscored that he appeared in a typical Jesuit garb. This did not escape the notice of the witnesses to the visions and takes on a significant symbolic weight in terms of religious identity. Evangelization was the original foundational purpose of the Society. Although *ad gentes* missions were prioritized in the early years of the order, Jesuits soon also devoted themselves to internal missions, re-evangelizing areas of Europe that had turned Protestant or where religious disaffection and ignorance of dogma ruled. The so-called *Indie di quaggiù* (Indies down here), particularly central and southern Italy, became important sites for missions of Catholic orders, including the Jesuits. De Geronimo's activity was therefore positioned as part of a larger missionary plan, which was a seminal element of Jesuit identity.

De Geronimo employed the theatrical missionary methods of Paolo Segneri Senior (1624–94), a renowned Jesuit preacher. His methods enjoyed enormous success, so much so that they were recognized by the fledgling order as the only possible successful way of conducting a religious mission. Like his predecessor, De Geronimo constantly did penance by fasting, flagellation, and sleeping on a chair, the bare floor or a cross placed on the ground (on Fridays, as a form of atonement and imitation of Christ). During missions, he wore a noose around his neck and had himself pulled around villages, publicly flagellating himself with chains to induce sinners to repent. He also wore a cilice for years. When he died, his brothers found his room to be an “arsenale di penitenza” (an arsenal of penitence), discovering a huge array of instruments of self-mortification.⁸⁸ Nocturnal processions, self-penance, and the use of images and statues of the Virgin or the Passion were highly emotional, and Jesuit sources documented that such methods had been extremely successful in De Geronimo's missions, as he preached about hell and damnation.

In 1806, the year of De Geronimo's beatification, Jesuit Luigi Mozzi (1746–1813) wrote a *Piano per le missioni* (Plan for missions), in which he declared Segneri's penitential and preaching-based style as the only valid communication method for Jesuit missions.⁸⁹ He highlighted the fundamental

88 *Breve ragguaglio*, 54–55, here 55.

89 ARSI, Ital. 1004, X-3, 1^r–10^v, Luigi Mozzi, *Piano per le missioni*; ARSI, Opp. NN., 157, Luigi Mozzi, *Regole per le missioni*. On Mozzi, see Emanuele Colombo, “Jesuit at Heart: Luigi

role of dramatization and the evocative power of images, gestures, and songs, to be added to preaching “in tono tetro” (in a lugubrious tone). Segneri’s method was considered a timeless strategy capable of moving the audience and inducing the kind of emotional turmoil necessary for internal conversion, even after the church began to rationalize cults in the eighteenth century. De Geronimo’s beatification confirmed the validity of such a missionary method and the brand-new saint provided an official model of missionary sanctity. De Geronimo had proved, only a few years before the order’s restoration, that there were elements of continuity between the old and the restored Society in terms of models and intentions. Emanuele Colombo rightly points out that the Jesuits made a conscious identity choice when, instead of publishing a new biography of the blessed, they republished the text that had been approved years before by Superior General Lorenzo Ricci (1703–75, in office 1758–73), before his death in prison after the suppression. In the dedication to Pius VII (1742–1823, r.1800–23), the Jesuits praised the pope for having been the one to identify a universal missionary model in De Geronimo.⁹⁰ As Jesuits re-evaluated the continuity and discontinuity between the old and new Society, there was no shortage of diverging opinions on missionary methods, and thinkers often pointed out the need for missions to adopt more traditional Jesuit attitudes.⁹¹

Strategies of Canonization

In 1830, Pietro d’Agostino (1756–1835), bishop of Agrigento, fueled a devotion already deeply rooted in Sicily when he sent a postulatory letter to Pius VIII (1761–1830, r.1829–30) asking the church to proceed with De Geronimo’s canonization for the greater glory of God and the church in such “calamitosi

Mozzi de’ Capitani (1746–1813); *Between Suppression and Restoration*,” in *Jesuit Survival and Restoration*, ed. Maryks and Wright, 214–30.

90 Longaro degli Oddi, *Vita del B. Francesco di Girolamo sacerdote professo della Compagnia di Gesù* (Rome: Pagliarini, 1806), v–ix; first edition: *Vita del venerabile Servo di Dio Francesco di Girolamo* (Rome: Rossi, 1760). See also Emanuele Colombo, “Identità e missione: Gesuiti italiani e missioni popolari tra Antica e Nuova Compagnia,” *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 11, no. 2 (2014): 285–302, here 296.

91 See Emanuele Colombo and Marina Massimi, “Cartas de un viaje interior: Una investigación en curso sobre las cartas *indipetae* italianas de la Nueva Compañía,” in *Las misiones antes y después de la restauración de la Compañía de Jesús: Continuidades y cambios*, ed. Leonor Correa Etchegaray, Emanuele Colombo, and Oscar Wilde (Mexico City: Iberoamericana, 2014), 69–100. See also other chapters in this publication for a proper understanding of continuity and changes in missions between the old and new Society.

tempi" (calamitous times).⁹² Since the second half of the eighteenth century, the church had faced massive societal change and major upheavals, from the French Revolution and the spread of secular, reformist, and Enlightenment ideals, to the imprisonment of two popes by Napoleon (1769–1821) and the outbreak of revolutionary movements in Italy after the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

In the troubled transition between the old and new Society, De Geronimo's beatification and canonization assumed Jesuit identity-linked values. His beatification in the time of suppression sent a strong signal to the Catholic world, celebrating a resurrecting order whose values and models, as embodied by De Geronimo, were still relevant and universally recognized by the Society as part of its identity. The Society had urged De Geronimo's canonization since the day of his beatification, as we have seen in Muzzarelli's work. De Geronimo was canonized in 1839, during Gregory XVI's (1765–1846) pontificate (1831–46) and Roothaan's generalate (1829–53); an index and symbol of the novel role the Society of Jesus played in the church's move to once again take up the evangelization program promoted by the pope. It is extremely significant in this sense that Roothaan himself acted as a postulator of the canonization process. The Society's keen interest in the canonization is reflected in letters by Paolo Capelloni (1775–1857), who later also became a candidate for sanctity. Capelloni complained about the slowness of the postulator of the process, before Roothaan took over, and curiously threatened him, attributing to De Geronimo the habit of castigating those who were not devoted to him: "Badi, che il B. Francesco castiga chi non s'impegna per lui, come abbondantemente benefica chi cerca di farlo glorificare, onde faccia bene i suoi conti" (be careful, as Blessed Francis punishes those who do not commit to him as much as he generously benefits those who try to allow him to be glorified, so you do the math).⁹³

A hundred years later, De Geronimo's missionary and preaching methods were still so remarkable to the order that a Jesuit from the Neapolitan province started to collect and transcribe the sermons of his long-dead predecessor, aiming to present them at the 1942 celebrations commemorating the anniversary of De Geronimo's birth.⁹⁴

The speed at which the first reports were written and delivered to the Jesuits, the amount of information on De Geronimo's supernatural deeds—in life and death—collected, and the behavior of the Jesuits who immediately salvaged relics from his dead body, suggest that De Geronimo's Jesuit peers had

92 APG 249, Pietro d'Agostino to Pius VII.

93 APG 247, Paolo Capelloni to Serafino Mannucci, June 5, 1830.

94 APG 258.

planned it in advance. They had begun to look at De Geronimo as a saint while he was alive, and since then had systematically contributed to building a case for his sainthood by preserving witness accounts and taking notes of miraculous healing that happened soon after his death. In the years that followed, while the process was officially underway, they promoted and studied his reputation for sanctity in terms of virtues, heavenly gifts, and posthumous miracles. Moreover, the General Curia did not leave anything to chance after De Geronimo's death; it strategically constructed his cause by promoting his cult and fostering the publication of biographies aimed at building the image of a candidate for sainthood.⁹⁵ The process was launched only two years after De Geronimo's death and, after 120 years (including forty of suppression), it was successfully completed with the 1839 canonization of a man who symbolized the Jesuit identity, missionary program, and continuity after the watershed of the suppression.

Giulio Sodano has hypothesized that the drive to achieve De Geronimo's canonization was influenced by at least two factors. First, it was part of a Jesuit attempt to maintain consensus by nourishing Jesuit devotions and the cult of Jesuit saints in the context of mounting anti-Jesuit, atheist, and jurisdictionalist sentiment in the Kingdom of Naples. Second, it was a way of upholding De Geronimo's model of apostolic sanctity in opposition to the typical sixteenth and seventeenth-century mystic model, and especially a potential quietist drift.⁹⁶ This last element helps us understand the universal value attributed to De Geronimo's process with a view to the evolution of models of sanctity within Catholicism in the transition from the *Ancien régime* to the modern world.

From his origins as a local object of veneration, a sort of patron saint of Naples and Apulia, De Geronimo soon became a legend on the wider European stage—especially within the empire, due to Habsburg control of the Kingdom of Naples. The Jesuit was even said to have intervened in the battle of Belgrade (1717), and the emperor himself publicly supported his beatification. His international reach, and imperial support in particular, surely fostered De Geronimo's cause in the delicate transition to the age of restoration. By 1814, the Society was once again thriving and ready to act as a fierce defender of the pope and the Catholic faith in an increasingly secularized society. The Society advertised the value of its own missionary and catechetical methods through De Geronimo's example.

95 Sodano, *Modelli e selezione di un santo moderno*, 13–37.

96 Sodano, "Francesco De Geronimo," 169–72.

Conclusion

In the 1800s and 1900s, a long list of Jesuit martyrs and missionaries were beatified, canonized, or at least made candidates for sainthood. Their ranks included members of both the old and the new Society, overseas evangelizers, popular preachers, and missionaries martyred in the American Indies and Asia as well as in early modern and revolutionary Europe.⁹⁷ The promotion of models of sanctity served different purposes. The martyr and missionary were the two main identity-linked models employed by the Postulation to bind the old and the new Society, although other models were also circulated, such as the hagiographical model of theologians like Bellarmine or Peter Canisius (1521–97), whose canonizations aimed at the theological legitimation of the order. These models corresponded with Jesuit identity-linked and spiritual values that survived the suppression and constituted the backbone of the Society in the second phase of its history.

Martyrdom is considered the highest form of *sequela Christi*, and it has been pursued by hundreds of Jesuit missionaries and even candidate missionaries through the centuries. Bloody episodes—such as the crucifixion of the Japanese martyrs, the atrocious skinning of missionaries in Canada, or the torments Bobola suffered at the hands of the Cossacks—became the symbol of the persecution of the Society and the Jesuits' resemblance to the Christ of the passion.

The suppression, initially viewed as a time of tribulation and then as a sort of martyrdom, revitalized this model, and the order strategically pursued it to prove its crucial role in the history of salvation and that of the church. The Jesuit sacrifice during the suppression allowed the church to survive, just as the many martyrs killed while conducting missions made Catholicism stronger and facilitated conversion. A study of almost five hundred *litterae indipetae* addressed by young Italian Jesuits to Roothaan—asking to be sent on missions at the height of the second Jesuit evangelization season—demonstrates that offering one's blood for Christ was a major goal for the correspondents.⁹⁸ Reports

97 For an early approach to Jesuit martyrs, consult the many related entries in the *Diccionario histórico* under the titles “Victimas” and “Mártires.” In the 1900s, Jesuit authors and postulators (for example, Celestino Testore and Carlo Miccinelli) published several biographies of candidates for canonization, including martyrs.

98 Eleonora Rai, “Religious Emotions in Italian *indipetae*: Novel Perspectives of Investigation on the Desire for Indies in the Restored Society,” *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu*, forthcoming; Rai, “Come le anime del Purgatorio: Le emozioni dell’attesa nelle *indipetae* italiane durante il generalato di Jan Roothaan,” *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* 88 (2017): 67–88.

of martyrdom and sources collected for canonization trials often speak *ante litteram* of charity martyrs (those who died to save other people) besides the more traditional category of martyrs *in odium fidei*, most likely broadening the category in order to include more Jesuits.⁹⁹

Martyrdom is a structural element of Jesuit identity. Besides being considered the most valuable form of *imitatio Christi*, it was a likely consequence of evangelization. In the first decades of colonization, in particular, missionaries were killed in the colonies for being Europeans rather than Catholic priests. They were thus associated with the unwelcome invaders, rather than with the Catholic faith, as was, for instance, the case for proto-martyr Antonio Criminali (1520–49), who was killed in 1549 during an attack on the Portuguese garrison in India. Cases such as Bobola's, or that of the English martyrs, by contrast, were a product of European political-religious quarrels. They became Catholic symbols of intra-Christian religious division and confessional counterattacks.

Conversion was also a substantial part of De Geronimo's religious missions, both in terms of moving hearts and preaching among Turkish people. Hagiographers emphasize the fact that he died of consumption as a result of having put so much effort into his missionary duties.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, he became the icon of a resurrecting order, and symbolically contributed to propelling the Society forward toward its newly renovated form built on a venerable bedrock. Thus, the Society implied, more or less explicitly, that the order did not need any substantial restyling but ought to be restored in keeping with its traditional cornerstones in terms of spirituality, missionary engagement, and martyrdom. This was a communicative act of the highest importance, publicly asserting that the suppression had been unjust and, ultimately, represented the martyrdom of an innocent sacrificial lamb—just like Christ.

In the final analysis, a desire to re-establish original Jesuit spirituality and methods, as well as the traditional idea of persecution, contributed to shaping the strategies of sanctity used by the Jesuit Postulation after the restoration. They were supported by the church, which, in that age, presented itself as a martyred institution and needed her longtime ally in the campaign for Catholic revival.

In the nineteenth century, the Society reappeared as a restored (but not thoroughly restructured) order. The Society had been born under different

99 See, for example, witnesses in Antonio Criminali's process: APG A, 34, *Processus super martyrio*, 40v, 75. See also Eleonora Rai, "La legge e il martirio: Morte e normativa nel processo di canonizzazione del 'protomartire' gesuita Antonio Criminali (xvi–xx secolo)," *LEXIA: Rivista di semiotica* 31–32 (2019): 205–24.

100 Stradiotti, *Della vita del P. Francesco di Geronimo della Compagnia di Gesù*, 126.

circumstances three hundred years earlier, but, in the 1800s, it strove to maintain its original Jesuit identity and traditions.¹⁰¹ Canonization processes still remain relatively underutilized as ways of understanding the evolution of Jesuit identity after the suppression. Researchers tend to opt for more traditional—and still very useful—sources, such as Roothaan's government records and the network of Jesuit letters. However, canonization documentation, the Postulation's strategic choices, the spread of devotion to living and dead Jesuits, and the adoption of certain models of sanctity rather than others must be explored as powerful means of securing a proper understanding of the Society's identity-linked values and propaganda.

101 Colombo and Massimi, "Cartas de un viaje interior," 78.