

Pool Report: Canonization Mass

September 23, 2015

All times in EDT

On day two of a six-day US trip, Pope Francis celebrated the much-anticipated Canonization Mass for Blessed Junipero Serra.

Some 25,000 people gathered for Mass on the east lawn of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, adjacent to the campus of The Catholic University of America. Attendance was limited at the ticketed event.

The seating was divided into two major sections, with lots of room to walk around, and lots of space for paramedics and other security officials to move through the crowd.

The crowd was respectful and patient as the Knights of Columbus led the procession at 3:35PM. The choir was singing the beatitudes in Latin and English: "Rejoice and be glad great is your reward in heaven."

Then the bishops processed to their seats directly in front of the altar. There were some 400 bishops and priests concelebrating.

As a helicopter flew overhead, a song began in Spanish and the crowd got what it thought was the first glimpse of the Pope, but it was a false alarm.

At 3:48 P.M., the bishops were still processing. It was sunny and a warm (79°) in the direct sun with very little opportunity for shade. The crowd was mostly quiet; many had been on site since early morning. It was a well-dressed crowd, with men wearing suit jackets, long-sleeves, and ties. Women were walking on the grass in heels.

Crowds lined up around the anticipated route of the "Popemobile," a white Jeep Wrangler, and after a few false alarms, the first images of the Pope appeared on the large screens at 3:52 p.m.

The applause was more sustained as people began to see the Pope in person. He made one pass through the crowds, and excitement rolled through the crowd as he turned around and made a second pass. The crowd rushed back to the gate.

After greeting the crowd in the Popemobile, he entered the Basilica where he met for a moment with the seminarians and religious gathered inside. The crowd was quietly waiting for the Pope to exit the east door of the Basilica.

At 4:19 p.m., an announcement was made to encourage the crowd to participate with reverence in the Mass. Cardinals began to exit the Basilica, including Cardinal Wuerl, and the Pope arrived to the altar at 4:26 p.m.

The pope incensed the altar and a statue. The Pope began Mass in Spanish: "En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espritu Santo."

The choir sang "Come Holy Spirit" in Latin, and Cardinal Wuerl petitioned the Holy Father in Spanish to enter Junipero Serra into the book of Saints.

The crowd was asked to stand during the Litany of the Saints due to the lack of kneelers at the venue. Various American and English-speaking saints were included in the Litany, which was prayed in Latin, including St. Katherine Drexel, St. Francis Cabrini, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John Neumann, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Philippine Duchesne, among others.

Included in the litany were St. John Paul II and St. John XXIII, both canonized in 2014, St. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, and several blessed, including Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Many hope she will be canonized in the upcoming Jubilee Year of Mercy, which will begin on December 8th, 2015. Also included in the litany was Blessed Paul VI and Mexican martyr Blessed Miguel Pro.

Pope Francis pronounced the Formula of Canonization: "We declare and define Blessed Junipero Serra to be a Saint and we enroll him among the Saints..."

The first reading was read in Chochoyeno, a Native American language.

The DC Fire Department was actively assisting those for whom the heat was too much. Golf carts were circulating with water bottles. At least half a dozen firemen on bikes circulated through the crowd. Police, ATF, Secret Service, and others in brown uniforms watched the crowd. There was also a large contingent of volunteers.

One woman in front of the media riser was carried off in a small first aid truck.

As the sun began to set at 5 p.m., shade gave welcome relief to the crowds.

The second reading was in English.

The Gospel was from the book of Matthew and was read in Spanish. The last lines of the Gospel reading are known as the "Commissioning of the Disciples." It is the passage where Jesus assures the disciples that he will be with them "until the end of the age."

The Pope gave the homily, reading from a prepared script in Spanish. English subtitles appeared on the screen for the benefit of those who didn't understand Spanish. The Pope changed a few words that wouldn't have changed the translation.

After the homily, most of the crowd was sitting comfortably in the shade as the petitions were read in Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Igbo, Creole, and signed in American Sign Language. These language groups represent many of the growing immigrant Catholic populations in the United States.

The offertory hymn, "¡Albricias, mortales! que viene la aurora" [rejoice mortal ones, the aurora comes] was composed by Mexican composer Manuel de Sumaya (c. 1678 – 1755), in the Baroque style. The work was written for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The temperature dropped to a comfortable level at the moment of the consecration. The crowd was mostly standing due to the lack of kneelers, but there were faithful scattered throughout the crowd that kneeled at the consecration.

The communion procession was well-organized, without event.

Cardinal Wuerl thanked the Holy Father for his visit, and the crowd applauded. Cardinal Wuerl said, "I greet you in the love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He called the Pope's pastoral visit "a blessing for all of us."

Shouts came at the end in Spanish. "¡Viva el papa!" "¡Viva el papa Francisco!" "¡Viva Santo Junipero Serra!" "¡Que viva!" Pockets of applause were interrupted by the Pope giving the final blessing.

The Pope then proceeded to offer a Rosary to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He greeted some cardinals as he processed out. All of the cardinals went out first, then the Pope followed.

The exit hymn was sung in English.

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