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Media Relations

Catholic Scholar Available To Comment On Meaning Of Pope John Paul II's Beatification To U.S. Catholics

January 14, 2011

DURHAM, N.H. – Catholic scholar Michele Dillon, professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, is available to discuss what the beatification of Pope John Paul II means to U.S. Catholics. Pope John Paul II will be beatified May 1, 2011. Beatification is the first step to official sainthood in the Catholic Church.

"Most American Catholics will welcome John Paul II's beatification. He was a highly charismatic figure whose popularity remained intact despite many faithful Catholics' objections to the expansive way in which he reasserted Vatican authority over issues of everyday Catholic morality," Dillon says.

"John Paul was the first cosmopolitan pope for a cosmopolitan age, and his warm, energetic, and telegenic personality served him well on his many trips to all parts of the globe, allowing many Catholics to feel a close personal connection with him. American Catholics, in particular, appreciated his recognition of the importance of the American church to maintaining the vitality of Catholicism, something which was affirmed time and again by his several pastoral visits to the United States," she says.

"It will be interesting to see whether his beatification, at this time of uncertain commitment among the faithful, will reignite a new spark of church engagement especially among the generation who as teenagers turned out in force for John Paul's celebration of World Youth Day in Denver in 1993," Dillon says.

Dillon has written extensively on Catholicism in the United States and elsewhere, and has been especially interested in the institutional and cultural processes that enable Catholics who selectively disagree with aspects of Catholic teaching to remain loyal to Catholicism. She also has examined the political engagement of the Catholic Church, and of other churches and activist organizations in public moral debates in different western countries. She is the author of "Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power."

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Photo

Michele Dillon is a Catholic scholar and professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire. <http://www.unh.edu/news/img/liberalarts/micheledillon.jpg>.

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