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## Curating the Saints: Making History at American Catholic Shrines

During the canonization process, Catholics collect testimonies, writings, and objects related to the sainthood candidate to demonstrate the saint's holiness. American Catholics developed a tradition of creating not only shrines but educational spaces and museums that foster devotion. Shrine museums demonstrate how religious institutions adopt and modify best practices in public history, despite the sparse scholarship on interpreting religious objects. These sites balance visitors' needs by providing educational and spiritual spaces to contemplate the saint. This paper examines curatorial decisions at the National Shrine of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, the National Shrine of Saint John Neumann, the Seton Shrine, and the Blessed Solanus Casey Center before proposing several best practices for shrine museums.

PRESENTER

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Dr. Emily Arledge is an Assistant Professor of History at Belmont Abbey College where she teaches public history, American history, and directs the Public History program. She earned her Ph.D. in 2023 from Loyola



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Her research "Enshrining Memory: The Production of American Catholic Past," explores American Catholic memory and material culture. Emily grew up in Jefferson County, WV and attended St. James the Greater in Charles Town. She has fond memories of summer camps and kayaking at Priest Field.



Gateway to the Solanus Casey Center in Detroit, Michigan. Image taken from Stan & Pam Williams' feature documentary: "EXTRAORDINARY: Stories about Solanus Casey for Children" (2017).