

Pope Francis, while you're handing out blessings (10, 08, 13)

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The headline read, "Pope blesses hundreds of Harley-Davidsons," and despite the fact that I do not own a Harley, I am impressed that Pope Francis embraced biker culture by blessing thousands of Harley-Davidsons and their riders, celebrating the manufacturer's 110th anniversary in a Roman parade with racing motors and bikers adorned with leather accoutrements for a true Italian stylish occasion.



A thundering Harley motor easily drowns out oral recitation of prayers, so it's a gutsy move for the Pope compared to the much easier job of blessing scooters and their drivers or even Leaf hockey fans, which both tend to be much quieter than the motorcycle crowd.

Pope Francis has quickly acquired a reputation for mixing in with ordinary and disadvantaged folk; thus, it's more in keeping with that initiative if he hangs out with Leafs' Nation. A blessing before each game might help in some mysterious, intangible fashion, causing Leafs for example, when they have a three-goal lead in a deciding Stanley Cup series game, not to blow it.

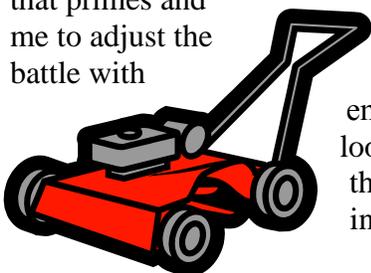
The Pope doesn't have to appear at each game. With his vast organization, he could assign a local priest. I know there's a shortage of priests, but one has to look at the number of Leaf fans versus those who still attend church. Think of the positive spin if the Leafs actually started to win. Thousands might return to celebrate Mass. Holy water could be sold in vast quantities for parents to sprinkle over their child's hockey stick as they pray that little Billy or wee Jackie gets a hat-trick at the local arena in the next rec game. More people, more money. Isn't that the key issue for churches these days?

Actually, as a senior, I would be much more appreciative if the Pope blessed a few other items rather than Harleys. For example, I desperately need someone to bless my computer. Perhaps a willing and technologically skilled priest might first perform an exorcism.

You have all heard the phrase, "God works in mysterious ways." Well, so does the Devil. The Devil in fact has embraced high tech more firmly than Francis has embraced Harleys. The Devil has zeroed in on computers in particular, knowing that they can easily come between husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter and any other genealogical permutation that you care to consider. The computer can also cause me to scream outlandish oaths and even occasionally take the good Lord's name in vain.

The Devil knows precisely how to invade my hard drive. He knows how to contaminate my browser with his filthy agenda, and he even keeps a history of my wrong doings on the computer itself so that we may both refer to it when adding up good deeds versus bad. When the Devil really gets rolling, he can cause my screen to freeze, my system to shut down. If there was anything in this world that needed the Pope's blessing, it's certainly not Harleys. It's our computers.

If I was to entreat the Pope to grant yet one more blessing, I think it might be for my lawn mower. Sure, when I was younger and more energetic, I scoffed at motorized lawn mowers as preventing me from getting a good workout, but now, as a senior, each time that I pull the rope that primes and sparks the engine, I pray for success and the quick start that allows me to adjust the engine idle speed, then lower the cutters, and I am off to wage battle with grass that has seen so much water this spring that anyone who has employed fertilizer, well, it's a rather sad affair because their lawns look like the sort of jungle that would inspire Joseph Conrad to write the Canadian version of Heart of Darkness, which was a chilling tale indeed.



That's it for blessings. It's not really considered proper to ask for more. One has to be balanced when one approaches such ecclesiastical matters. Otherwise, things can quickly get out of hand. Don't get me started on that!