

# Cardinal Cushing dies, 75

BOSTON — (Reuter) — Richard Cardinal Cushing, former Catholic Archbishop of Boston and confidante of the Kennedy family, died of cancer yesterday at the age of 75.

The son of an immigrant Irish blacksmith died "a very peaceful death," a diocesan spokesman said. Cardinal Cushing retired Oct. 7 because of his illness.

The cardinal had a long history of illness, dating back to his childhood, but managed to overcome his physical handicaps to become a leader in the ecumenical movement that swept the Roman Catholic Church.

## MANY OPERATIONS

The urbane cleric, a leader of the church's liberal wing and renowned for his down-to-earth humor and his close ties with the family of the late President Kennedy, was stricken with cancer in 1956 and had many operations for it.

The cardinal will be entombed in the Portiuncula Chapel on the grounds of Saint Colletta's School for Exceptional Children in Hanover, Mass.

Cardinal Cushing officiated at the wedding of John Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953, delivered the invocation at Kennedy's inaugural in 1961, then presided over the slain president's funeral in November, 1963, and that of his assassinated brother Robert in 1968.

In 1968, when Jacqueline Kennedy married divorced Greek shipowner Aristotle Onassis, Cardinal Cushing spoke strongly in her defence.

"Why can't she marry whomever she wants to marry, and why should I be condemned?" the cardinal asked in a speech to a men's club in Boston a few days after the wedding of



CARDINAL CUSHING

Jacqueline and Onassis in a Greek Orthodox Church on a Greek island.

The cardinal asked people to extend charity in their judgment of the new Mrs. Onassis. He said suggestions that she be excommunicated by the Catholic Church or labelled "a public sinner" were ridiculous, although he

termed the situation "irregular."

## PONDERED RESIGNING

On Oct. 25, 1968 he said that he would offer to resign at the end of the year because of adverse publicity and the "hate mail" following his defence of Jacqueline's marriage.

"I don't want to stay in office if after 47 years as a priest around here they don't understand me any better than the mail reveals," he said.

Cardinal Cushing often spoke in a down-to-earth way that made some listeners tend to forget his high office. He often made headlines through his outspokenness.

Richard James Cushing was born in Boston Aug. 24, 1895, and was ordained in 1921. He became the youngest archbishop in the Roman Catholic hierarchy in 1944 at the age of 48. He was created cardinal in 1958.

Noted for his charity, gaiety and work with young people, the genial prelate made a point of attending a dinner for the old, the lonely and the poor every Thanksgiving Day. He often led the singing at the dinners and on one occasion danced an Irish jig.

## NO SCHOLAR

On a visit to Ireland in 1965, Cardinal Cushing, a supporter of the removal of Catholic restrictions on mixed marriages, said he did not know what went on at the Vatican Council because translation facilities there were inadequate.

"I am no scholar. I have never earned a degree. And when I go to the Ecumenical Council I don't know in the name of God what is going on," he said.

He also made his mark on the international scene. He

who never sought to be internationally known is the most beloved of all in the far-flung missions of the church in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America," Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of New York once wrote about him.

Cardinal Cushing originally planned to retire to the South American missionary field, but disclosed in September that his health had deteriorated to the point where it was no longer possible.

Instead, he remained in Boston helping Humberto Medeiros, who succeeded him as archbishop.

An example of his uninhibited humor was shown by a story the six-foot cardinal once told. He was called as a priest to administer to an elderly man who had suffered a heart attack. He asked the man, "Do you believe in God The Father, God The Son and God The Holy Ghost?"

The man opened one eye, the cardinal said, looked at the nurses and said, "I'm dying, and he's asking me riddles."

He also told of meeting the late Pope John XXIII, who expressed concern for the cardinal's health. When Cardinal Cushing said he had ulcers, the Pope told him to take bicarbonate of soda.

"Your holiness," the cardinal replied, "Thank God you are not infallible when it comes to medicine. That is the worst thing you can take for ulcers."

Cardinal Cushing's impetuous remarks sometimes landed him in hot water.

On one occasion, he condemned the ultra-rightwing John Birch Society and then endorsed it the following week. He admitted later he had got into "a peck of trouble."

He should have said "whomever." For the record, it seems that nobody these days knows how to use who/whom properly. Even famous people like President Obama and his wife frequently goof this up.