

Not Cardinal Quality

By Father John S. Kennedy

John Henry Cutler is the latest to have a go at writing a biography of Richard Cardinal Cushing, and what he comes up with, "Cardinal Cushing of Boston" (Hawthorn Books, \$8.95), is not very good.

Cardinal Cushing is an extraordinary man, and an extraordinary churchman. He is a great subject for a first rate writer who has access to what must be a rich treasure of primary sources. But such sources are not now available, and probably they will not be so during the cardinal's lifetime. Cutler, moreover, is a pedestrian performer.

The materials on which he has drawn are mostly newspaper and magazine articles. These afford some chronology of the Cushing career, excerpts from speeches by him, and the observations of people often either meagerly informed or not astute.

The result is that we are presented with something of a legend and a journalistic legend at that. It is at times colorful and pungent, it is not hagiography, but it bears a disquieting resemblance to sports page blathering.

A mere recital of certain publicly recorded facts about the cardinal can be profoundly impressive. The amounts of money which he has raised for innumerable charities, for example, are probably unparalleled, and rare is the liberality with which he has assisted good causes of all kinds, especially the missions.

Again, there are the initiatives he has taken in many fields, for example that of ecumenism. Others could be instanced, all evidencing his humanity and his courage, not to mention his indomitable industry despite cruel ill health.

Such facts Cutler plods through on page after page, in chapter after chapter. But what is lacking is the insight or the artistry to compose a portrait which is clear and incisive. It may be pleaded that the cardinal says that he does not understand himself, and that he has sometimes been self-contradictory. But that does not excuse the writer from the analytical work missing from this book.

Even in the realm of facts, Cutler is frequently wrong. For example, Cardinal Spellman was not the primate of the United States, as here stated. Knights of St. Gregory do not wear vestments, at least so far as I know.

It is impossible for the most ingenious airline stewardess to bake, during a transatlantic flight, "a cake four feet long and three feet high surmounted by a replica of St. Peter's Basilica." When the cardinal was a pastor he had curates, but he certainly did not have "curators," as the book has it. And so on.

Something of the unique Cushing flavor does come through, but the unique genius is not distilled or defined, and the true stature of the cardinal is not determined.

Into which category can we fit Jean Davis Glynn's book "Answer Me, Answer Me", which is subtitled "What's the Church Coming To?" (Bruce, \$4.95). She appears in it under her own name, and what she recites would seem to be something in which she was directly involved. But then there are aspects of the book which might pertain more to the devices of fiction than to those of factual reporting.

Well, no need to fuss over that. Mrs. Glynn is writing about what happens in a parish in the Bronx when a small group of parishioners decides to do something about Church renewal, specifically about liturgy.

The parish is big, and so is its debt. Most of the parishioners are well content with long established ways, and the pastor does not want any rocking of the boat. There is a lay board, but its function is merely to endorse doing everything as it always has been done.

Some friends of the author and her husband, all more or less young, are unhappy about the stodgy situation. They know of change which is taking place, and are moved by the spirit of Vatican II documents. Informally they get together to consider courses of action.

"We belonged to the Church of St. Peter and Paul. We'd been raised in this church, but we were dangerously close to dropping out because nothing up there meant anything any more." At the same time, they had no wish or intention of being an underground group.

The curates were not much help, or at least didn't seem to be. Actually, they proved to be of real help because, encouraging the group to persist and to work through its difficulties, they did not arrogate to themselves the role which these laymen should be fulfilling.

There was much agonizing, as well as discussion which was endless and sometimes hot. The participants came to see that it is wrong to suppose that the Holy Spirit is working only when "something was happily involved. But then there is with which we agreed." They had, and came to delight in, home Masses.

And finally, after an eight-month struggle, they succeeded in getting the pastor to allow a kind of folk liturgy in the parish church. It drew some outraged comment, but was much more popular than the nay-sayers supposed it would be.

Mrs. Glynn's experience has been duplicated all over the country, and, one imagines, in many other parts of the world, too. She tells it with good humor and good sense.

Summer Fun in the Diocese

The internationally famous road events in Watkins Glen, soaring contests on Harris Hill, and one of the foremost religious pageants in the world near Palmyra are on the agenda as summer fun swings into high gear for diocesan families.

July is a month for fireworks displays, county fairs, antique shows, golf championships, sidewalk sales and concerts; and among the events listed in the Diocese are:

- **Corning Glass Center's** summer theater, headlining such shows as Play It Again, Sam, featuring George Gobel along with Boeing, Boeing, featuring Van Johnson.

- **Newark Summer Rose Festival** which ends Saturday, July 11 with the Grand Parade at 6 p.m.

- **Greater Baldwinsville Chamber Water Ski Show**, throughout July.

- **Fairhaven band concerts** every Saturday evening through Labor Day.

- Throughout the summer in Rochester Journey from Infinity will be playing at the Strasenburg Planetarium.

- **Trumansburg County Fair**, July 7-11.

- **All University Symphony Orchestra**, Hoyt Hall, U. of Rochester; July 8-9, Kiwanis Auction, Chidsey Packing House, Penn Yan, 7 p.m.; July 10-11, Esperanza Antique Show and Sale, overlooking Keuka Lake.

- **Watkins Glen** hosts the 22nd Annual Six Hour Endurance Auto Race for World Championship of Mfgs., July 11; Can-Am 200 mile race, July 12; Crowning of the new Miss U.S. Grand Prix on July 11.

- **July 11, Annual Flea Market and Antique Show**, East Bloomfield; July 11, American Legion 7th District Parade and Drum Corps Competition, Hornell; July 14-18, Ontario Co. Fair, Canandaigua.

- **July 15, "Bach's Cantata No. 4"**, Hoyt Hall, U. of Rochester;

- July 17-19, Arts and Crafts Fair in the Glen High School, Watkins Glen; July 20-26, Yates Co. Fair, Penn Yan; July 21-25 NYS Men's Amateur Golf Championship, Locust Hill Country Club, Rochester.

- **July 21-31, Annual U.S. National Standard Class Soaring Championships**, Harris Hill near Elmira; July 22, "Brahms' German Requiem", Hoyt Hall, U. of Rochester; July 23-24, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Rose Hill Mansion, Geneva; July 25, Clifton Springs YMCA Fair; July 24-26, The Pioneer Gas Engine Assn., Inc., Rt. 88 N. of Newark at Fairville.

- **July 25-26, Oaks Corners Booster Days, Oaks Corners; July 25-26, Glenora Festival of Music and Art**, Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 4 and 8 p.m.; July 26-Aug. 1, Seneca Co. Fair, Waterloo; July 27-Aug. 1, America's Witness for Christ Pageant, Hill Cumorah near Palmyra; July 27-Aug. 1, Hemlock Lake County Fair.

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