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Eugene J. Butler

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THE CATHOLIC LAWYER is grateful for the opportunity to publish this tribute to one of its earliest and most valued friends.

EUGENE J. BUTLER

JAMES N. VAUGHAN*

EUGENE J. BUTLER, for many years Director of the Legal Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, died in Washington, D. C. on May 18, 1956.

Shortly before Mr. Butler's death, Pope Pius XII sent him his apostolic blessing. In transmitting the blessing, Monsignor Angelo Dell' Aqua said that the Holy Father was mindful of Mr. Butler's "devoted and faithful service to the Church." The unusual service Mr. Butler rendered the Church was recognized by Pope Pius XII when he made Mr. Butler a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great in October, 1954. At that time he was described as having discharged "prudently, effectively and with great credit to the Church" an assignment which was "perhaps one of the most important entrusted to any Catholic layman in the United States."

In a sermon preached in Washington, Bishop Emmet M. Walsh said of Mr. Butler:

I am sure that the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the United States would have me pay tribute to his memory in their name. They have known through the years the invaluable service that he has rendered them in the discharge of their responsibilities for the welfare of the Church. They have always appreciated his splendid Catholic manhood, his clear and sound Catholic mind illumined by faith, his high professional competence, his wise counsel, his zeal for the welfare of the Church and his profound spirit of dedication to her service. They honored him with their complete confidence.

House Majority Leader John W. McCormack of Massachusetts and other Congressmen praised the work of Mr. Butler, in speeches on the House floor. Representative McCormack said of him that he was "not only an able and fair gentleman, but . . . honorable and trustworthy."

Representative Joseph L. Carrigg said:

Probably no layman within our memory has accomplished more on behalf of his Church and his country than has Mr. Butler, for he was devoted in his service to both.

. . .

I knew Gene Butler all my life. We were born at about the same time within a few streets of one another in Scranton, Pennsylvania. We

*Member of the New York Bar.



EUGENE J. BUTLER

were together in St. John's Parochial School. We went to the same classes at St. Thomas College (now the University of Scranton). We transferred together to Holy Cross College. There we were roommates. After college we spent a year together in Washington and the next few years in New York attending Fordham Law School. We lived together in New York in those days.

Shortly after Gene left law school he returned to Washington and began his long service in the Legal Department originally under the supervision of William F. Montavon. Gene became the Director of the department upon Mr. Montavon's retirement in 1951.

Gene was called upon to perform the

difficult and delicate task of studying Washington activity, whether in Congress or administratively, as it affected the Church. More than that, he was chargeable with keeping abreast of legislation and litigation everywhere in the United States which affected in any way the life of the Catholic Church in this country.

To say he was dedicated to his work is to say everything. I doubt any man living in Washington was better known than Gene Butler. He was welcomed everywhere. His character embodied truth, objectivity, candor and faith. In all the years I knew him I do not recall that he was ever angry. By birth, training, instinct and grace he was a gentleman. It will not be easy to fill the place of Eugene J. Butler.