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## MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO CARDINAL JOHN J. WRIGHT († 1979)

*Reflections by Fr. Juniper B. Carol,  
O.F.M., at the annual convention of  
The Mariological Society of America,  
New York, N.Y., January 3, 1980*

This is the first opportunity we have, as a group, to honor the memory of our beloved Episcopal Chairman, the late Cardinal Wright, who was called to his eternal reward on Friday August 10, of this past year.

Subsequent to his untimely demise, numerous articles and editorials have appeared, both at home and abroad, eulogizing the brilliant and polyhedral career of this remarkable man. Some focused their attention on his diversified achievements as a priest, as a bishop, and later as a cardinal—both in the literary field and in the realm of the pastoral apostolate. Others noted his warm personality, his unaffected approachability, and, of course, his phenomenal resourcefulness as an entertainer, his rare ability when it came to witticism and sparkling repartee. One feature stressed by most commentators was the Cardinal's intrepid championing of doctrinal orthodoxy, his unconditional submission to the Magisterium of the Church, his unswerving loyalty and attachment to the Vicar of Christ on earth.

While all the encomiums already mentioned are, of course, richly deserved, nevertheless, the delineation remains incomplete without reference to the Cardinal's tender devotion to the Mother of God, and his tireless efforts to promote a scholarly appreciation of her prominent role in the scheme of salvation. As members of the Mariological Society of America, we reflect with heartfelt gratitude on this particular facet of his life which,

to my knowledge, has so far been passed over in silence by the media.

The Cardinal's close association with our Society dates back to its very beginning in 1949. Shortly after our first convention in Washington, D.C., he asked us if he could join our group, and we answered him that, of course, we would be highly honored with his membership. He then invited us to hold our second convention in Worcester, Mass., the see to which he had just been appointed first Bishop. His words of welcome to our delegates on that occasion, and the tremendous enthusiasm he evidenced toward furthering the specific aims of our Society, gave us an initial but very tangible clue to what was to become a wholehearted and uninterrupted collaboration that lasted until his dying days.

It was he, for example, who on his own initiative made available two distinct monetary awards calculated to promote interest in sound Mariology through our Society. The first would be bestowed on a priest of our Society who had made a notable contribution to the field of Marian theology, mainly through his writings. The second would be presented to the three best essays on Mariology submitted by seminarians, as part of a national contest organized under the supervision of the Board of Directors.

In recognition of his zeal and of his magnanimous gestures in our behalf, the Board of Directors, meeting on January 4, 1951, unanimously selected then-Bishop Wright as Episcopal Chairman of our Society—a charge he fulfilled with distinction up to the day he left us.

At the convention held in Pittsburgh in 1961, coinciding with Bishop Wright's celebration of his Silver Jubilee as a priest, our Society presented him with a gold chalice of elaborate craftsmanship, made especially for him in Germany and exhibiting various engraved symbolisms which were of particular significance to him. Visibly moved, he assured us that this was, without any doubt, about the most magnificent gift he had ever re-

ceived from anyone, and that he would treasure it with all his heart.

During the first years of our activities, Bishop Wright not only attended our annual conventions (in fact, most of the Board meetings, which in those days were held frequently), but he also addressed our group on several occasions, always awakening in his audience a greater eagerness to fathom the richness of Mary's privileges. In later years, however, owing to various pressing duties, he was prevented from attending our meetings, although he never failed to assure us of his continued interest and of his fervent prayers for the success of all our undertakings.

That The Mariological Society of America will sorely miss this faithful patron and generous benefactor is, of course, something of an understatement. Those of us who were privileged to work closely with him through the years, and who were enriched by his friendship and by his magnetic personality, will always cherish his memory as an ennobling and uplifting inspiration. May our Blessed Lady, whom he served so unsparingly in this life, obtain for him now the full measure of heavenly bliss he so richly earned.

Mention was made earlier of the Cardinal's preoccupation with doctrinal orthodoxy, of his unequivocal adherence to the papal Magisterium. I could expand on the subject at considerable length, but I will refrain from doing so; it would take us too far afield. Nevertheless, allow me to recall only a couple of incidents which portray him at his characteristic best in this connection.

On one occasion, while discussing various articles in *The Wanderer* which deplored the anti-Magisterium attitude of many of our priests, even on matters mariological, he commented with great sorrow: "To me it is obvious that the Devil is on the loose and is having a field day, counting some of our own theologians as his first victims."

On another occasion, while a guest at his residence, he kept

me till the late hours of the night in a spirited discussion of the problem created by "dissenting" theologians—those who, as he put it, hide behind their conscience in order to justify their open rejection of the teaching of the Holy See on matters of faith and morals. His contention was that these misguided gentlemen were doing incalculable damage, especially to our seminarians. At one point he turned to me and said: "You know, Juniper, when I think of the harmful influence our young men are being exposed to in many of our seminaries today, I am frightened at what the Church of the future will look like—*really* frightened." (I will never forget the expression of grief on his face as he uttered those words.)

Perhaps a fitting way to bring these remarks to a close is by quoting the significant tribute which our Holy Father, Pope John Paul, paid the Cardinal on August 15 of last year.

As a priest, . . . as a bishop, . . . as a cardinal, . . . he was always faithful to his motto: "*Resonare Christum corde romano*" (to echo Christ in a Roman heart). That really sums up his whole life. In fact, Cardinal Wright was a secure voice which preached Our Lord with a fidelity and directness that arose from a *sensus Ecclesiae* which was second nature to him.

The Cardinal, you may be sure, would have been delighted to hear those last few words. They *do* "sum up his whole life."

I thank you.