

Cardinal Keeler and the Psychic Reader



Cardinal William H. Keeler, master of the one-liner, meets with George P. Matysek Jr. (CR Staff/Owen Sweeney III)

During a March 2 testimonial at a special celebration of Cardinal William H. Keeler's upcoming 80th birthday, Richard Berndt told a story that demonstrated why friends know the retired archbishop as a master of the one-liner.

Speaking at the Center Club in Baltimore, ??Berndt recalled how he and the cardinal were walking back to the Catholic Center after a meeting with The Baltimore Sun in the late 1990s. Berndt, who was an attorney for the archdiocese, was discussing some difficult personnel matters with the cardinal as the two strolled by the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Cardinal Keeler looked up and pointed to a sign on a small office building at the southeast corner of Mulberry and Cathedral streets.

"Psychic Reader Advisor - The Mystical Tarot," the sign proclaimed.

The cardinal told Berndt that the psychic advisor herself had come up to him on the street a few days earlier and introduced herself as a neighbor and a professional competitor. She told the leader of the Premier See that both of them were "in the same business."

Standing in front of the grand basilica, the cardinal looked at the psychic and deadpanned: "I think you have a lot less overhead."

"I went away happier for hearing him tell that little story," Berndt remembered with a laugh, "and thinking that Cardinal Keeler had room in his heart for every person - even lawyers and psychic readers."

Earlier this week, I had the honor of spending some time with Cardinal Keeler at his

residence at Mercy Ridge Retirement Community in Timonium. I caught a glimpse of his humor near the end of an interview when I asked the cardinal if he missed the administrative work at the Catholic Center. Without skipping a beat, he replied with a confident “No!”

Then, he laughed — and laughed hard.

For more on how the cardinal feels about becoming an octogenarian and what he’s been up to in retirement, check out this story in *The Catholic Review*. Next week, we will have more on his birthday celebration. The cardinal’s actual birthday is March 4.

Happy birthday, Your Eminence!