

Praise for two Baltimore ‘saints’

I have come not merely to praise Monsignor Jeremiah Kenney, but to canonize him! While it is indeed often prudent to wait until a saint is dead before he or she is officially canonized, the sad part is that they miss their own party! So I’d like to have Jerry enjoy his canonization while still alive!

Monsignor Kenney has worked in the Marriage Tribunal for 37 years! For most of that time he has run the Tribunal, as well as been in charge of various appellate courts. I don’t understand the various titles. I don’t even know the various titles. But Monsignor has had them. And he has done well with them.

Few things are more misunderstood than annulments. They are not “Catholic divorces.” Precisely because Jesus condemned divorce, the church works through a complicated judicial process to prove that a sacramental bond did not exist. Thus both parties are enabled to remarry in the church, and to continue to practice their faith.

Suffice it to say that few ministries are more misunderstood than the Tribunal ministry. But, because of Monsignor’s ministry, literally thousands of people are still in the church, and many thousands of others have been reconciled to the church. It’s fair to say that generations of people will grow up in the Catholic Church because of his ministry.

It’s an eternal challenge to the church always to uphold the ideals of Christ, but always to minister with the compassion of Christ. With Christ, we can be against divorce. But, with Christ, we must also be for divorced people. They are hurting people in need of healing.

In praising Monsignor Kenney, I must also praise Father Bill Collins. Father Collins resigned the same day in March as Jerry did. Father Collins has worked in the shadows all of his life. He is truly a servant of the servants of God!

Throughout the years of Mother Teresa’s life, I always felt that she should be canonized, but also the nun who traveled with her – the one not receiving any notice, not receiving any applause, not accepting the Nobel Prize, not even known by name.

Over the centuries, the church has been largely peopled with anonymous saints. Father Collins is such a saint, worthy surely of canonization.

The preface in the Mass of the Resurrection states: "Life is changed not ended." This is true of Monsignor Kenney. Retiring in one area simply means more time to minister in other areas. He will continue to be the chaplain to most of the organizations in the free world. But now he will have time to write more books, to give more retreats, to minister sacramentally and pastorally as he has done all his life, but now without the burden of all the administration.

Few people are able to blend the roles of judge as well as counselor, as administrator as well as pastor. Monsignor has blended all those roles with honor and distinction.

There's a famous scene in the Old Testament when King David returns triumphantly from his many victories in battle, and the maidens come out to greet him with dancing and song: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David has slain his tens of thousands." (King Saul, incidentally, wasn't amused by being in second place in the singing!)

No doubt, at hopefully some distant time, when Monsignor Kenney and Father Collins enter the heavenly Jerusalem, the angels will sing: "Monsignor Kenney has annulled his thousands, and Father Collins has annulled his tens of thousands!" You see, in heaven, it won't matter who gets the credit. It will only matter that the work was done! And, surely, the Lord will add: "Well done!"