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Gibbons Cried

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Distinctly Catholic

It is said that when, in 1911, James Cardinal Gibbons learned that Archbishop William Henry O'Connell was named a cardinal, Gibbons cried. O'Connell was referred to at the time, by a woman who worked at the Vatican, Ella Edes, as "Monsignor Pomposity." He was most known for his efforts to have the U.S. Bishops Conference disbanded and his opposition to laws against child labor.

Today, Archbishop Raymond Burke of the Apostolic Signatura, was named a cardinal. In heaven, I am sure that Gibbons is weeping anew.

Burke is the most controversial prelate in recent American history. He told Sen. John Kerry he would be refused communion in St. Louis. He attacked Archbishop Donald Wuerl, also named a cardinal this morning, in an interview with Randall Terry and, then, was forced to apologize for it. He suggested that Cardinal Sean O'Malley was acting at the behest of the "Father of Lies" for allowing a Catholic funeral for Sen. Ted Kennedy and presiding at it.

Burke was kicked upstairs in 2008. The Latin phrase for "kickedup stairs" is "promoveatur ut amoveatur" - let him be promoted so that he can be removed. There were many competent canonists who could take the post of head of the Apostolic Signatura, and all agree that Burke is a competent canonist. Still, there should be a better way to remove prelates than to promote them. I know that this awarding of the cardinal's hat in no way reflects an endorsement of Burke's views, but many of his fans will interpret it that way and I do not think it a good thing to encourage them.

Well, despite Gibbons' tears, the Church survived the cardinalate of William Henry O'Connell and it will survive the cardinalate of Raymond Burke. But, it is a thing to be regretted.

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