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Cardinals Martini and Burke: Can you tell which one is dead?

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Bulletins from the Human Side

Two distinguished cardinals made news at August's end. The first, Carlo Maria Martini, a distinguished scripture scholar and champion of Vatican II who served as archbishop of Milan, died on the last day of August.

While illness ruled him out as a candidate for the papacy in 2005, it really might have been his reputation as a forward-looking prelate that threatened the backward-looking electors who chose the comforting (to them, anyway) Benedict XVI.

In an interview reported by Reuters, shortly before he died, Martini described the church as "200 years out of date," noting, "Our culture has aged, our churches are big and empty; our rituals and our cassocks are pompous."

Martini lived out his motto, *Pro Veritate Adversa Diligere*, "For Love of the Truth, Seek Out Adverse Situations," taking them on within the church in his final public words: "The Church must admit its mistakes and begin a radical change, starting from the Pope and the bishops. The pedophilia scandals oblige us to take a journey of transformation."

The other is Cardinal Raymond Burke, the canon lawyer who had served as archbishop of St. Louis and now heads what is known as the Apostolic Signatura, the principal Vatican court.

Good health has kept him active, echoing every word spoken by Pope Benedict XVI, as he did on the last day of August in a talk to the Kenya Canon Law Society. He provided a canonical basis for Benedict's

forthcoming Year of Evangelization. The latter might be best understood as a vehicle of the reform of the reform, whose chief premise is that prelates like Martini mischievously misread Vatican II's documents and erred when they implemented its embrace of the world and its woes and such teachings as collegiality. The latter means the authority of bishops is not delegated from the pope but is theirs by their ordination and that the church is therefore to be run by the pope and the bishops rather than by the pope and the Curia.

Burke also lives out his motto, *Secundum Cor Tuum* or "According to Your Heart," that he surely applies to the Lord, but that in the ambition filled ambience of Vatican culture, might be freely translated, "Whatever You Say."

Unlike the future-focused Martini, Burke likes the idea of living in a 200-year-old church. As bishop of LaCrosse, Wis., he built a devotional shrine along the Mississippi, and as archbishop of St. Louis, he opened a shrine to the Sacred Heart in honor of tradition in the St. Louis cathedral. Not only has he been the patron of the Canons Regular of the New Jerusalem, an order of Augustinian canons dedicated to the traditional form of the liturgy, but, in 2007, he employed the Tridentine ordination rite in the cathedral for the first time in 40 years as he ordained priests of the traditionalist Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest.

He has picked up honorary degrees from institutions that might be listed as the usual suspects in any ultra-right roundup: Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, and Virginia's Christendom College, which is "committed to the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Roman Catholic Church."

If Burke and the pope were NASCAR drivers, the cardinal would, in his eagerness to follow Benedict, have rear-ended him on that last turn in August in which he claimed that, after Vatican II, "the failure of knowledge and application of canon law ... contributed significantly to the scandal of the sexual abuse of minors."

This is a breathtaking statement by a prelate who does not seem to realize it is the latticework of canon law that, filled with qualifications, exceptions and privileges for bishops and any number of legal curtains, contributed to the church's slow response to the scandal that, thanks to canonists like Burke, continues to this day as an unresolved problem in the church.

Indeed, in 2010, Burke proposed revisions to the Vatican policy of reporting sexual predators to the Holy See that would, according to CNS, provide "for high levels of secrecy in the process."

Two cardinals made the news on the last days of August. To appropriate a scriptural question, "Which one of them, do you think, went home justified?" Or, to put it another way, "Can you tell which one died and which one remains vibrantly alive?"

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