

Harvard's first cardinal — Bernard Law

The centennial of the naming of William Henry O'Connell to the College of Cardinals on Nov. 11, 1911 provides The Pilot a chance to recall and celebrate that historic event. Brief biographies will appear in this series about Boston's cardinals, native sons, or seminary alumni who received the "Red Hat" in the course of their lives.

BY CHARLES N. BRANSON

Bernard Francis Law was born on Nov. 4, 1931 in the Mexican city of Torreón, the only child of Bernard A. and Helen Stubblefield Law. His father was a captain in the U.S. Army, serving in the Army Air Corps as a pilot in World War I. By 1930, he was running an airline in Mexico and it was there that he met Miss Helen Stubblefield, his future wife. She was a Presbyterian who later converted to Catholicism.

As a result of his father's career, young Bernard was exposed to a variety of cultures. He lived in Mexico, Colombia, Panama, and the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as in the mainland United States. In 1949, he graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School in the Virgin Islands. Later that year, he entered Harvard University, graduating in 1953 with a B.A. in Medieval History.

Having discerned a vocation to the priesthood, upon graduating from Harvard he entered St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict, Louisiana, remaining there until the autumn of 1955 when he was sent to the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio to complete his studies for the priesthood for the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson, Mississippi. On May 21, 1961, he was ordained a priest at the Josephinum by the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi.

Bishop Richard Oliver Gerow assigned the newly ordained Father Law to St. Paul Parish in Vicksburg. In 1963, Bishop Gerow appointed him the editor of the Mississippi Register, the diocesan newspaper, which necessitated his move to Jackson. Father Law used the pages of the newspaper to argue forcefully and eloquently for an end to segregation and prejudice. He was deeply committed to the civil rights movement, serving on the Mississippi Leadership Conference. He helped establish and was the chairman of the Mississippi Human Relations Council. His outspoken position on civil rights caused him to receive death threats.

Father Law held other diocesan positions including that of spiritual director of the preparatory seminary. He was also involved in ecumenical activities. In 1965 he accompanied Natchez-Jackson Auxiliary Bishop Jo-

seph Brunini to the final session of the Second Vatican Council.

In 1968, Father Law was named executive director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs, succeeding Msgr. William Wakefield Baum, who had been named Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri. On Dec. 5, 1968, Father Law was named a Chaplain of His Holiness with the title of Very Reverend Monsignor.

Bishop Brunini succeeded Bishop Gerow as Bishop of Natchez-Jackson in 1967. In 1971, he appointed Monsignor Law as his vicar general, a position which he would hold for less than three years.

On Oct. 22, 1973, Pope Paul VI named Msgr. Law as Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, succeeding Bishop Baum, whom he had succeeded as executive director of the bishops' ecumenical and inter-religious affairs committee in 1968. Bishop Brunini conferred episcopal ordination on Msgr. Bernard Francis Law on Dec. 5, 1973, in the Cathedral of St. Agnes in Springfield, Missouri. Bishop Brunini was assisted by Archbishop William Wakefield Baum of Washington and Archbishop Joseph Louis Bernardin of Cincinnati. Bishop Law chose a phrase from one of St. Paul's epistles as his episcopal motto: To live is Christ (Philippians 1:21).

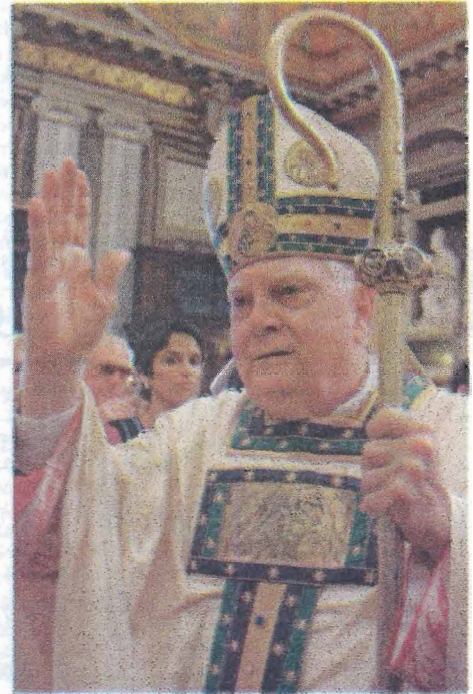
During more than a decade of service as Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Bishop Law continued his ecumenical endeavors. He formed the Missouri Christian Leadership Conference and was named a member of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity. From 1976 to 1981 he was a consultant to the Secretariat's Commission for Relations with the Jews.

Bishop Law was responsible for a diocese which was geographically large but with a Catholic population of just over 40,000 according to the *Annuario Pontificio* for 1974. In 1975, Bishop Law became aware of a large Vietnamese refugee camp in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas and of the difficulties being faced by the more than 150 members of a Vietnamese religious congregation of men, the Congregation of Mary Co-Redemptrix. In order to resettle them as a group, the U.S. government required that they have a single sponsor for all of them. Bishop Law was able to obtain a former seminary in Carthage, Missouri for a nominal rental and invited the members of the congregation to move there.

In 1980, the Holy See, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, established a procedure known as the Pastoral Provision for former Episcopal priests entering the Catholic Church to apply for ordination as Catholic priests. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops proposed Bishop Law for appointment as Ecclesiastical Delegate and he was duly appointed to that position in 1981.

Pope John Paul II promoted Bishop Law to the Metropolitan See of Boston on Jan. 11, 1984 and he was installed in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on March 23, 1984. On June 29, 1984, Archbishop Law received the pallium from the hands of Pope John Paul II during a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

Archbishop Bernard Francis Law was created a cardinal and received the red biretta and the presbyteral title of Santa Susanna on May 25, 1985. In the following years he was appointed a member of several Vatican congregations and pontifical councils. He was a papal envoy to regional and national Eucharistic Congresses for the Caribbean in 1997 and for Peru in



CNS file photo/Paul Haring

Cardinal Bernard F. Law

2000. He was a member of the Second Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 and the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America in 1997. Cardinal Law oversaw the first draft of the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

As Archbishop of Boston, he ordained twelve bishops. The first was Bishop Maurus Muldoon, OFM, a missionary bishop in Honduras and the remaining eleven were his auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Boston. Six of them were subsequently named bishops of other dioceses. He was a principal co-ordinating bishop of two bishops, one before and one after his appointment to Boston.

Among the priests whom he ordained, two have been ordained bishops: Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, Auxiliary Bishop and Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and Bishop Philippe Jourdan, a French priest of the Personal Prelature of Opus Dei, who on Sept. 10, 2005 was ordained Titular Bishop of Pertusa and Apostolic Administrator of Estonia. Between 1989 and 2000, Cardinal Law visited Cuba four times, meeting with Fidel Castro on three occasions.

On Jan. 6, 2002, the Boston Globe published the first in a yearlong series of articles publicizing instances of abuse of minors by clergy, generating a public outcry as documents released by judges and lawyers for survivors of abuse showed instances in which the Archdiocese of Boston allowed priests accused of those heinous acts to continue in active ministry.

On Dec. 13, 2002, Pope John Paul II accepted Cardinal Law's resignation as Archbishop of Boston. Cardinal Law offered his resignation for the good of the Archdiocese and he apologized to all who have suffered "from my shortcomings and mistakes."

Cardinal Law served as chaplain to the Sisters of Mercy of Alma in Clinton, Maryland in 2003. On May 27, 2004, he was named Archpriest of the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (St. Mary Major) in Rome. He participated in the conclave of April 18-19, 2005 which elected Pope Benedict XVI.

Today, Nov. 4, 2011, is Cardinal Law's 80th birthday — Happy Birthday, Your Eminence.

