

WILLIAM E. SIMON, R.I.P.

The Catholic Church lost a great one when she lost William E. Simon. Bill was known mostly for his entrepreneurial acumen and financial savvy, but he was much more than that—he was a fierce defender of his faith. Indeed, it made great sense to have him serve on our board of advisors as he epitomized the style and substance of the Catholic League.

Bill died on June 3 at the age of 72; the cause of death was complications arising from pulmonary fibrosis. Over the past several years, Bill was the source of much advice and just as much praise for the Catholic League. I will never forget his phone calls: he was always charged up, going at a frenetic pace and unyielding in his demands. He was the kind of man you just didn't want to let down, which is precisely why we did everything we could to meet his objectives.

It was because of Bill's high energy that I asked him to be the Master of Ceremonies at our 25th anniversary dinner in April 1998 at the Plaza Hotel in New York. He gave a high-spirited talk that would have made every Catholic League member proud. And now he's gone, and so, too, is the man who was our Keynote Speaker at the dinner, John Cardinal O'Connor; His Eminence died just one month earlier, on May 3.

Fortunately, my last correspondence with Bill Simon was something I'll always remember. On May 24, he wrote to me asking if I would proof the statement that I had made a few years earlier about him for his memoirs. Interviewed by phone, I will restate the closing comment I made about Bill.

"There are two things that strike me about Bill Simon. Number one: There is nothing half-hearted in his comments; he speaks from the soul; he feels things very deeply, very passionately; he is a man of strong conviction. Number two: He takes the initiative. Something will hit him in the gut and he'll want

to discuss it with me, want to know what we're doing about it and how he can be of assistance. His initiative and strong convictions make him stand out. He has certainly been a source of great advice and enthusiasm for me."

On May 26, I wrote to Bill back saying, "I am so honored just offer my thoughts on your tremendous contribution to the United States. You are my hero."