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Angered Cushing To Resign

Special to The Tribune

BOSTON—Cardinal Richard J. Cushing rolled his blue but tired eyes, and in the raspy voice that seems like a perpetual incantation announced he would resign as Archbishop of Boston.

A storm had been unleashed by the elderly prelate's defense of the marriage of Jacqueline Kennedy to divorced Greek multimillionaire Aristotle Onassis.

Cardinal Cushing, obviously angered, said yesterday he had received "many letters condemning me for asking charity for Jacqueline Kennedy." He said some were "in the language of the gutter."

The cardinal on Tuesday urged a more tolerant attitude toward the remarriage and said it was nonsense to say the former First Lady was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church because she married a divorced man.

"Now I propose after the publicity I have received in recent days, in my own native city, which publicity has been going all over the world, to offer my resignation to His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, at the end of this year," he said yesterday on radio station WEEI.

A high-level Vatican source said last night Pope Paul VI held Cushing "in high esteem" and probably would turn down any resignation.

"If the cardinal insisted strongly on retiring, I feel the Pope might eventually accept his resignation—but not right away," the source said.

The cardinal, a friend of the Kennedy family for years, said in early 1967 he would retire in August 1970 on his 75th birthday, when he would have completed 50 years as a priest.

It was not the first time Cardinal Cushing has talked of resigning. Twice before in his career he has asked the Vatican to allow him to resign to become a missionary priest in South America. He was refused.

The cardinal, who officiated at the marriage of the late President John F. Kennedy to Jacqueline Bouvier, said he had promised Kennedy he would look out for Jacqueline and their children if anything happened to him.

"I have fulfilled it, even though my contacts with Jacqueline were for the most part in times of sorrow," he said.

"Time advanced. She wanted to get married. She selected her own partner in marriage some months ago. She came to me after others had advised her against her marriage.

"Her mind and heart were set upon Mr. Onassis. I could not, nor would I presume to change her thinking," he said.