

Pope Puts Bishop O'Connor at N.Y. City Helm

Washington (NC) -- Pope John Paul II tapped a 27-year Navy chaplain with the rank of rear admiral when he named Bishop John J. O'Connor of Scranton, Pa., as archbishop of New York.

He also named him apostolic administrator of the U.S. Military Vicariate, but the vicariate announced that a separate military vicar is to be named later, ending the historic link of the two jobs.

Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic delegate in the United States, announced Archbishop O'Connor's appointment in Washington Jan. 31.

At a press conference in Scranton Archbishop O'Connor said his installation in New York would be on March 19.

The new archbishop, successor to Cardinal Terence Cooke who died last October, became widely known in the United States in the past two years as a key member of the committee of U.S. bishops that wrote the 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace. An auxiliary bishop of the U.S. Military Vicariate at the time, he

gained a wide reputation as the committee's lone "hawk" -- a label he and others on the committee rejected.

The announcement in New York that the leadership of the Military Vicariate, with more than 2 million Catholics, is to be separated from the archbishop of New York came as a surprise.

Since 1919 the bishop responsible for U.S. Catholic military chaplains has been the archbishop of New York. When the Vatican formally established the Military Vicariate as a permanent entity in 1957, it decreed that it would be based in New York and would have the archbishop of New York as its head "now and in the future."

Archbishop O'Connor, a Philadelphia native who turned 64 on Jan. 15, has been head of the Scranton Diocese for less than a year. He was a Navy chaplain from 1952 to 1979, rising to rear admiral and chief of chaplains in 1975. In 1979 he was named an auxiliary bishop to the Military Vicariate.

As archbishop of New York, Archbishop O'Connor heads one of the most important and influential dioceses in the country. With nearly two million Catholics, it ranks fourth in size among American archdioceses, after Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston.

But New York's importance goes beyond its large population when one considers it as the home site of the United Nations and the national or international headquarters of hundreds of major businesses and government, private or religious agencies.

The National Council of Churches is there, as are the headquarters of major American Jewish organizations, Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Near East Welfare



Bishop O'Connor.

Association, and dozens of other Catholic agencies are located there. There are 11 Catholic seminaries and 14 Catholic colleges as well as numerous other private or public colleges and universities within the archdiocese's borders.

John Joseph O'Connor was born in Philadelphia on Jan. 15, 1920. He attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in suburban Overbrook and was ordained a priest of the Philadelphia Archdiocese on Dec. 15, 1945.

He was a high school teacher for seven years after ordination and earned a master's degree in clinical psychology at the Catholic University of America in Washington. He later earned a doctorate in political science at Georgetown University in Washington.

He became a Navy chaplain in 1952 and served in Korea. In 1958 he received the Legion of Merit award for his work in preparing and developing the Navy Moral Leadership Program. He received the award again in 1965 for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service" as chaplain to the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam.

In 1972, he was named the first Catholic chief chaplain of the U.S. Naval Academy

in Annapolis, Md., and in 1975 he became the second Catholic in history to be named chief of all Navy chaplains. He held the rank of rear admiral.

Pope John Paul II named him an auxiliary bishop to Cardinal Cooke in the Military Vicariate in April 1979, and he was ordained a bishop by the pope in Vatican ceremonies on May 27, 1979.

He retired from the military chaplaincy when he was made an auxiliary bishop. Chaplains are military officers employed by the Department of Defense, but the Military Vicariate itself is a church entity.

On May 10, 1983, he was named bishop of Scranton. He learned of the pending appointment from Archbishop Laghi at a special meeting of the U.S. bishops in Chicago a week earlier, in the middle of their debate over the war and peace pastoral which he had had a major role in drafting.

Describing the scene later, he said he was just about to address a key amendment in the debate when Archbishop Laghi told him, "The holy father loves you very much, and therefore you are appointed as bishop of Scranton."

Throughout the drafting process and open debate on the controversial pastoral

letter, Archbishop O'Connor argued against making specific moral judgments on strategic and tactical nuclear policies and programs, a position that earned him the popular label as the drafting committee's "hawk."

But he rejected the label. "The just-war theory," he said, "was not evolved to legitimize war for so-called Christian princes, but to make war difficult."

He described his position on the pastoral in terms of what the teaching role of the hierarchy is. "I do not personally believe that it is the position of bishops to delineate strategy and tactics for the Defense Department and the president of the United States," he said.

In a recent interview with the National Catholic Reporter, an independent Catholic weekly, he said the church has "the right and the responsibility to denounce any weapons system if we are convinced that it is going to increase the immorality of war or the horrors of war...the robbing of the poor and the perversion of resources."

In the same interview he also said that he is "happy with the prudential judgment which strongly questions

the...MX missile" and added that in light of the debate raging over the B1 bomber and the Pershing II missile he "would have to question the prudence of the enormous expenditures required" for them.

In January of 1981 he published a book, "In Defense of Life," analyzing the just-war theory and Catholic teachings on war and peace.

He is also author of "A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam," based on his experiences there. He developed an ethics course used to teach midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy and a videocassette series of religious instructions which is used by U.S. Catholic military chaplains around the world.

Last November the U.S. bishops elected the new New York archbishop as chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Social Development and World Peace Committee. That committee, along with its staff in Washington, is the chief agency of the U.S. bishops for articulating church social teachings on a wide range of U.S. domestic and foreign policies.

He is also a member of the bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities.

Bp. O'Connor Was Ordained With Bp. Clark

When Bishop John J. O'Connor was named archbishop of New York City, it had more than the obvious significance for Rochester's Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The two men were ordained bishops together by Pope John Paul II on May 27, 1979, at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. At the time, Bishop O'Connor was 59 and Bishop Clark 41.

In the same group of bishop ordinands was Bishop W. Thomas Larkin of St. Petersburg, Fla., a native of Mt. Morris and a graduate of St. Bernard's Seminary.



Schools Week Noted

First grade students, from left, Janine Bianchi, Karrie Gaylord and Lance Miner, of St. John the Evangelist School, Spencerport, show off their "me people," intended to resemble them and express their feelings. The life-size art projects were part of St. John's celebration of Catholic Schools Week.

Military Vicariate To Be Independent

For the first time in its history, the U.S. Catholic Military Vicariate will soon be led by someone other than the archbishop of New York.

The vicariate Jan. 31 announced the separation of the two responsibilities, and a spokesman for the Vatican nunciature in Washington later confirmed the split.

The Military Vicariate made the announcement after Pope John Paul II named Bishop John J. O'Connor of Scranton, Pa., as the new archbishop of New York and as apostolic administrator, or temporary head, of the vicariate.

"The appointment of Archbishop O'Connor as apostolic administrator means that the holy father is giving a new status to the Military Vicariate by making it totally independent of any territorial diocese in the United States," said Archbishop Joseph T. Ryan, auxiliary bishop and current administrator of the Military Vicariate, in a prepared statement.

"It is anticipated," he added, "that within the near future Pope John Paul II will appoint a military vicar whose sole responsibility will be the pastoral care of the members of the vicariate."

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