

Cardinal seeks religious to 'defend life'

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York said in his weekly column Nov. 2 that he wanted to establish "a brand new religious community of women" specifically devoted to "the cause of life as threatened by abortion and euthanasia."

Any women interested in joining such an order should write him, he said. "I'll wait to hear from you."

He said he would like the sisters to be members of the legal and medical professions and employ their expertise in defending "the unborn, the aged, the retarded, the helpless against unjust laws."

Writing in *Catholic New York*, the archdiocesan newspaper, Cardinal O'Connor said he had been thinking and praying about the proposal "intensively" for more than five years.

"I believe the time has come to act," he said. "If it is truly the work of the Holy Spirit, it will come to be. If not, it won't and it shouldn't."

Cardinal O'Connor said the community he envisioned would take a fourth vow to defend human life against abortion and

"mercy killing," along with the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Calling them Sisters of Life, he said their first task would be to "spend a significant amount of time each day in prayer."

"No religious community, to my knowledge, is specifically tasked with praying for life as one of its charisms," he said. "I am absolutely convinced that only prayer can be effective in a huge number of cases. Only prayer can change the hearts of public officials devoted to abortion and/or euthanasia."

"Only prayer can move those passionately committed to 'women's rights,' or to the 'right of privacy,' exclusive of all other rights ... Only prayer will stave off the terrifying advance of euthanasia, suicide on demand, the craze for the right to 'pull the plug,'" he wrote.

Cardinal O'Connor also said that only prayer could change "a society that has more and more" chosen "a consistent ethic of death."

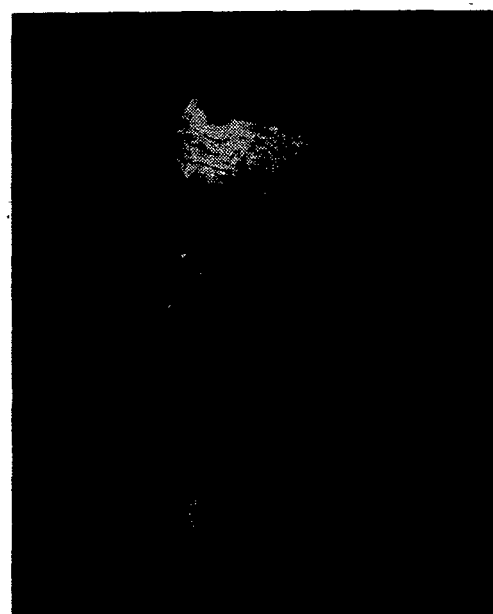
After prayer, the cardinal said, the second task of the Sisters of Life would be to work to change the system through their

activities as legal and medical professionals.

Cardinal O'Connor said many professionals are currently performing such services on a part-time basis. "But most of them have families themselves, or many other obligations," he said.

"My community of sisters will have no such other commitments. Their total commitment will be to the cause of life as threatened by abortion and euthanasia."

"As legal and medical professionals they could do full time what others are doing largely on a part-time basis at the moment — and would, please God, continue doing, for they will be desperately needed for a long time to come."



Cardinal John J. O'Connor

Bishops

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two-thirds of the USCC programs submitted to it.

• A plan to subsidize their own Catholic Telecommunications Network of America through their Catholic Communication Campaign fund to the tune of an estimated \$4.2 million in years 1991 through 1995.

The bishops were also to consider guidelines for priests' retreats, issue a brief resolution calling for continued work to implement their 1986 pastoral letter on economic justice, decide whether to write a pastoral letter on stewardship, and approve plans for their June, 1990, special retreat-style assembly.

The bishops also face decisions, subject to approval by Rome, on four liturgy-related items in addition to the one on priest-less Sunday celebrations. These were:

- Permission to use the Spanish pronoun "ustedes," commonly used in Latin America and the United States for "you," in place of the forms "vosotros" and "os" which are commonly used in Spain, in Spanish liturgical texts in the United States.

- Permission to change the optional memorial of Blessed Junipero Serra from Aug. 28 to July 1.

- Approval of the English translation of 46 special Marian Masses published by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship during the 1987-88 Marian year.

- A request to the Holy See to view favorably any applications from individual bishops "in certain vast missionary territories" of the United States for permission under Canon 1112 of church law to "delegate laypersons" to assist at marriages in the name of the church when no priest or deacon is available.

Fighting

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Presentation Sister Richelle Friedman of Network, a Washington-based national Catholic social justice lobby association, said Ortega's decision not to continue the cease-fire was justified because of increased contra attacks.

Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, head of the Juigalpa Prelature and former president of the Nicaraguan bishops' conference, told CNS that Ortega's decision was a ploy to cancel upcoming presidential elections and garner international opposition to U.S. involvement in Nicaragua.

Bishop Vega spoke from Miami, where he lives in self-exile.

He said the Sandinista regime fears the Feb. 25 elections because the Nicaraguan people oppose the government.

"The thing the Sandinistas fear most is that the Nicaraguan people will defeat them," Bishop Vega said. "Such a defeat would signify a defeat over communism."

For the record

The Oct. 26 seminar on Post Abortion Stress Syndrome (*Catholic Courier*, Nov. 2) was co-sponsored by the diocesan Office of Continuing Education, Division of Social Ministry and the Catholic Family Center.

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