



AP/Wide World Photos  
**APPEALING FOR HELP — The Rev. Eddie Gibson leads some of the thousands of protesters outside the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, in a march, June 14, appealing to the United States for help in ending the African nation's tribal war.**

## Pols who back legal abortion risk excommunication, cardinal says

NEW YORK (CNS) — In a 12-page spread in his archdiocesan newspaper, Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York has warned that Catholic politicians who back legal abortion risk excommunication — possibly the church's "only option" for avoiding scandal.

"Where Catholics are perceived not only as treating church teaching on abortion with contempt but helping to multiply abortions by advocating legislation supporting abortion, or by making public funds available for abortion," the cardinal stated June 14, "bishops may decide that, for the common good, such Catholics must be warned that they are at risk of excommunication. If such actions persist, bishops may consider excommunication the only option."

He also said that when candidates backing abortion run against each other, Catholics could "in good conscience" not vote.

The cardinal's warning drew arguments for freedom of choice from two New York politicians who have refused to oppose legalized abortion despite their beliefs as Catholics.

"The church leadership, led by the cardinal, the College of Cardinals, and the pope — we defer to them, respect them and let them speak for certain authority," remarked Governor Mario Cuomo. "But I'm a layman and I speak for myself. It's about people having the choice in our democracy and the freedom to have the choice. I have not changed my opinion about that, nor will I."

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., whose abortion views led to his being barred from speaking at a Catholic high school commencement, called the cardinal's remarks "intemperate."

"Intimidating and threatening people is not the sensitive and churchly thing to do," he told United Press International. "We have to recognize that God made all of us and we must make up our own minds on issues without the interference of bishops and cardinals."

"Threats like this are inconsistent with spiritual leadership," he said. "I think this type of language is intemperate, mean-spirited and in contempt of Christian and Catholic belief."

The cardinal's statement also drew the attention of *The New York Times*. In a lead editorial June 17, the *Times* said outsiders should not judge "the moral discipline" the cardinal "imposes" on Catholics in his archdiocese, including officeholders.

But, the paper said, outsiders may "respond with profound regret" to the cardinal's statement because it "risks imposing two painful prices on the public. One is driving able public servants from office.

The other is further dividing society on this tormenting question" of abortion.

The editorial said the cardinal was imposing "a religious test of his own" for politicians and that he should "stop leaning on Catholic public officials now working to heal, not divide, the rest of society." Also on June 17, Cardinal O'Connor told reporters after his Sunday Mass that he has "no intention of excommunicating anyone."

Urging reporters to read his full statement, he said his intention in issuing it was to prevent, rather than advocate, excommunication and that the church doesn't "want to see people excommunicated. We're talking about... trying in every way possible to bring it about that individuals won't excommunicate themselves."

"I have never threatened to excommunicate anybody," he said. "I have never suggested that any other bishop should excommunicate anybody. I have no intention of excommunicating anybody. And I don't say in any way whatsoever that I'm threatening politicians."

Cardinal O'Connor's observations were published in a 12-page pull-out "special edition" inside *Catholic New York*. He emphasized that he was not writing in his capacity as chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, but merely as archbishop of New York.

Entitled "Abortion: Questions and Answers," the cardinal's statement covered various points of the abortion issue, discussed in a question-and-answer format.

"Sometimes," Cardinal O'Connor wrote, "if ordinary Catholics see a prominent individual ignore the church's teaching and go unpunished by the church, they are confused and scandalized."

The cardinal wrote that "as much as I want to be understanding of the complexities of political life, and its responsibilities and pressures, and not jump to harsh conclusions, I simply cannot find anything in authentic Catholic teaching that can support a 'personally opposed, but' position."

"Nor can I find it consistent with Catholic teaching or the natural moral law to support abortion in any way, by legislation, a call for funding, or silence born of a refusal to seek a reversal of legislation supporting abortion," he added.

The cardinal made reference to the position taken by some Catholic politicians, in which the politicians have stated, "I am personally opposed to abortion but cannot impose my morality on others," or "I cannot permit my personal beliefs to deprive a woman of her right to choose."

Cardinal O'Connor countered this position, however, by saying, "It does not seem harsh to suggest that if we are to call

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## Pro-nuncio to U.S. known as a 'man of broad vision'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, the Vatican's representative in India since 1981, has been named the new apostolic pro-nuncio to the United States.

He succeeds Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Vatican's representative in the United States for nearly 10 years. Archbishop Laghi earlier this year was appointed head of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education.

The appointment of Archbishop Cacciavillan, who thus holds the rank of Vatican ambassador to the United States, was announced at the Vatican June 13.

Archbishop Cacciavillan, 63, also was named the Vatican's permanent observer to the Organization of American States based in Washington. Archbishop Laghi also held that position.

A priest for 41 years, Archbishop Cacciavillan entered the Vatican's diplomatic corps in 1959. He worked as part of the diplomatic corps in the Philippines and in Spain before returning to Rome to serve in the Vatican Secretariat of State in 1967-76.

Pope Paul VI in 1976 named Archbishop Cacciavillan to be apostolic pro-nuncio to Kenya. He was transferred to India by Pope John Paul II on May 9, 1981.

While remaining apostolic pro-nuncio to India, Archbishop Cacciavillan also was appointed apostolic pro-nuncio to Nepal in 1985.

Archbishop Cacciavillan was born Aug. 14, 1926 in Novale Di Valdagno in the province of Vicenza, Italy. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Vicenza on June 26, 1949.

According to the Vatican, Archbishop Cacciavillan, in addition to his native Italian, knows English, French, Spanish and German.

Archbishop Laghi was named apostolic delegate in the United States on Dec. 10, 1980, and was elevated to apostolic pro-nuncio in April 1984 after the United States and the Vatican had established formal diplomatic relations three months earlier.

Prior to 1984, the Vatican's representative in Washington carried the title of apostolic delegate. His role was largely that of representative to the church in the United States, and he did not hold the rank of ambassador.

At the Vatican, Archbishop Cacciavillan was described as a skilled mediator and as a "man who will listen."

In a statement released in Washington, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, called the new pro-nuncio "a man of broad vision."

"We look forward to Archbishop Cacciavillan's sharing that vision with us," said Archbishop Pilarczyk. "We offer to him the warm welcome of Catholics in this nation, and we pledge to him our loyalty and support as we go about our common mission, in the family of the church."

Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington welcomed the new pro-nuncio to the Archdiocese of Washington.

"Truly Archbishop Cacciavillan brings to Washington a unique view of international life and broad knowledge of the church throughout the world," Cardinal Hickey said.

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