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What Makes an Organization

Catholic?

It only takes up a few small lines in *The Official Catholic Directory*, under "Institutions Located in the Diocese of Rochester." Yet for the director of Catherine McAuley Housing, the group's new listing in the official directory of Catholic dioceses, archdioceses, organizations and institutions means much more than meets the eye.

"This officially establishes us as a non-profit corporation, recognized by the Catholic Church and by other entities," Sister Janet Korn, RSM, said.

Catherine McAuley Housing — begun in 1992 by the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester to assist single mothers and their families — has received official recognition by both the diocese and *The Official Catholic Directory* for the first time this year.

On the other hand, several organizations purporting to be aligned with the Catholic Church, or who use the word "Catholic" in their names, have not been accorded similar recognition. For instance, Catholics for a Free Choice, despite having Catholic membership and using the word "Catholic" in its title, is not officially recognized by the Catholic Church. The group supports legalized abortion.

In the case of Call to Action, a national reform organization whose members include Catholic priests and nuns, the group has clashed frequently with church officials. In recent weeks, Call to Action chapters have been denied access in the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., and the archdiocese of Hartford, Conn. And in March, Bishop Fabian W. Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Neb., threatened to excommunicate any Call to Action members in his diocese.

On May 20, Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop John M. D'Arcy sent a letter to his diocesan priests saying that Call to Action was banned from all church properties. Bishop D'Arcy cited Call to Action's opposition to church teachings concerning women priests, married priests and artificial contraception.

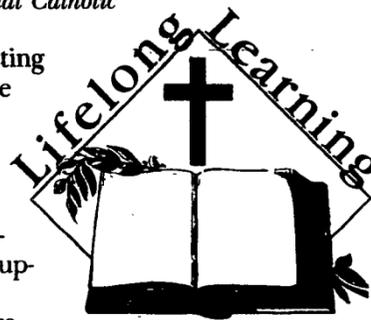
And in New York, the state Catholic Conference issued a memo March 8 saying that Network, a group calling itself a "national Catholic social justice lobby," is not a Catholic organization.

What makes an organization Catholic? Codes 298 through 329 in the Code of Canon Law offer a detailed list of requirements, and the United States Catholic Conference prints a set of guidelines based on these canons.

"A group would always need to have statutes and clear operating principles that talk about governance of the organization, and the philosophy of the group and its members," said Father Kevin McKenna, chancellor for the Diocese of Rochester.

Father McKenna refers to these groups as "associations of the Christian faithful." According to Canons 298 through 300 of the Code of Canon Law, the groups are free to formulate but must also obtain approval from "proper ecclesiastical authority."

For an organization existing within a diocese, the bishop would serve as the proper authority. For a group covering a wider area, recognition is normally granted by either a national council of bishops or the Holy See. The organiza-



Monthly focus on catechetics

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