



Martin Lueders/CNS

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, left, Cardinal Bernard F. Law, right, and other bishops celebrate the funeral Mass of Cardinal John O'Connor.

Thousands pay tribute to cardinal

NEW YORK (CNS) — Thousands filled St. Patrick's Cathedral for one service after another as New Yorkers said their final goodbyes to Cardinal John J. O'Connor.

The 80-year-old cardinal, who died May 3 after an eight-month battle with cancer, was archbishop of New York for 16 years.

He was entombed beneath the main altar of St. Patrick's May 8 after a series of weekend Masses and other services there, culminating in a Monday afternoon funeral Mass carried live on national television.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state, was chief celebrant and Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston preached the homily.

Cardinal Law recalled that Cardinal O'Connor was known as an "unremit-

ting" champion of human life and dignity, of workers and of peace.

But most of all, he said, he was a priest who kept the Eucharist at the heart of his life and ministry, "a man of profound and uncomplicated faith in a good and gracious God who has revealed himself in Christ Jesus."

Two minutes of sustained applause greeted his description of Cardinal O'Connor as "unambiguously pro-life."

In an earlier statement Cardinal Law summarized the late cardinal's church career with the comment, "There was a transparent consistency to his teaching, making it impossible to pigeonhole him as a 'conservative' or 'liberal.' No one in

the history of the church in the United States has been more powerful in advocating the inviolable dignity of every human person."

Among the hundreds of church leaders and civil dignitaries at the funeral were President Clinton and his wife Hillary, former President Bush, and presidential contenders Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Scores of Catholic cardinals, bishops and representatives of other religious faiths took up places of honor.

Accolades poured in after the cardinal's death.

In an unusually personal comment, Pope John Paul II said, "Through the years he has been of great support to me in the service of the universal church."



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Sandra, 2, is one of approximately 30 girls who live at Eugénesis, an orphanage for abused and abandoned children in Guadalajara, Mexico. Sandra is one of the quiet ones; here, on April 25, she was playing under a metal structure on the fenced-in roof of the orphanage while other children played nearby.

Parish fosters 'new beginning'

In 1997, when work transferred our family to Guadalajara, Mexico, we worried about a lot of things. Church was not one of them; we knew, after all, that Mexico is a Catholic country with no lack of churches.

Little did we realize that our limited knowledge of Spanish would be so isolating. Or that in this city of 5 million people, there would be only one small church that provided Mass in English.

St. Mary's is actually more chapel than church, with no permanent pastor and only a small congregation — mostly retirees, students, visiting businesspersons and tourists. There are few families with children. While we appreciated the opportunity to worship in our native language, St. Mary's never really felt like "our church." We missed the feeling of community and the opportunities for service we had grown accustomed to at St. Ambrose, our home parish in Rochester.

Then in October 1998 something wonderful began to happen.

Earlier, I had written a letter home to our friend, Mary Kay Oberst, director of faith formation at St. Ambrose, asking for some family worship materials. I shared with her some of our feelings of isolation and helplessness. All around us was poverty and we could do so little to help.

More than 70 percent of our Mexican neighbors live in poverty. More than 40 percent live in "extreme poverty," meaning they cannot be sure of even one meal each day. Many of the poor are children who, from a very early age, are forced to work or beg in the streets. Some live in the streets as well.

Guadalajara is a modern metropolitan city with clean streets, gorgeous parks, several well-known universities and many familiar American businesses. Nonetheless, a recent

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STORY BY DONNA M. MARBACH • PHOTOS BY ANDREA DIXON