

## WORLD &amp; NATION

## Cardinal O'Connor touched lives worldwide

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal John J. O'Connor, New York's archbishop for 16 years, died May 3, a little more than eight months after undergoing surgery last Aug. 31 for a brain tumor. He was 80 years old.

His funeral was held May 8, at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

A plain-speaking public figure, Cardinal O'Connor often addressed current controversies in his weekly newspaper column, in homilies at St. Patrick's Cathedral and in frequent contacts with news media.

New Yorkers learned of the feisty side of his character within the first few months of his arrival in 1984 when he became embroiled in several controversies that made national headlines.

On Catholics and abortion he disagreed vigorously with two of New York's most prominent Democratic Catholic politicians — Gov. Mario Cuomo and Rep. Geraldine Ferraro.

On homosexuality, he risked millions of dollars in Catholic social service contracts when he fought Mayor Ed Koch's executive order forbidding city contracts with any agency unless it promised not to discriminate in employment "on the basis of sexual orientation or affectional preference." The cardinal won in court.

Despite their disagreements, he and Koch became friends. In 1989 they discussed concerns of the city in a book they co-authored, *His Eminence and Hizzoner*.

While uncompromising on church teachings, he reached out to the larger non-Catholic community. He developed strong relations with Jewish leaders and was noted for his efforts to bring healing and reconciliation to situations of racial or ethnic conflict.

He launched several programs for people with AIDS, inaugurated annual celebrations with people with disabilities, promoted workers' causes, formed three religious orders, convened an archdiocesan synod and started the canonization causes



Todd Pitt/CNS

**New York Cardinal John J. O'Connor receives applause at St. Patrick's Cathedral Jan. 16, 2000, the morning after his 80th birthday.**

of Pierre Toussaint and New York Cardinal Terence Cooke.

One of his last public acts was to announce this March that the Vatican had approved his request to open the sainthood cause of Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement.

Calling his military pension more than enough to live on, he declined any salary or stipends as archbishop. In 1988 he formed a scholarship fund for African-American students, to which he donated all his Social Security earnings for the rest of his life.

A native of Philadelphia and priest of that archdiocese, he devoted 27 years to the



Reuters/CNS

**The casket of Cardinal John O'Connor is carried down the aisle of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York for the funeral Mass May 8.**

military chaplaincy. He retired as Navy chief of chaplains with the rank of rear admiral in 1979, when he was made an auxiliary bishop of the U.S. Military Vicariate.

But before becoming New York archbishop he was thrust into the national spotlight in the 1980s when he played a key role in the drafting committee that wrote the U.S. bishops' landmark 1983 pastoral letter on nuclear deterrence.

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

He taught high school for seven years after ordination and engaged in advanced studies. He earned master's degrees in advanced ethics at Villanova University in Villanova, Pa., and 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 during the Korean conflict in 1952 and served on vessels in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Mediterranean, ashore in various U.S. posts, and overseas in Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

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" as chaplain to the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam. His 1968 book, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*, was based on his experiences there.

In 1972 he became the first Catholic chief chaplain of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., and three years later he became the second Catholic in history to be appointed Navy chief of chaplains.

He retired from the Navy in 1979 when he was named auxiliary bishop of the Military Vicariate, the nonmilitary ecclesiastical structure, which at that time oversaw Catholic chaplains in the armed forces. Pope John Paul II personally ordained him

a bishop at the Vatican May 27, 1979.

In October 1980 he delivered a major paper on war and peace in Catholic teaching at an international meeting of military vicars, just one month before the U.S. bishops decided to develop a statement addressing the morality of nuclear defense.

He was then named to the writing committee for the bishops' statement, headed by Cardinal (then Cincinnati Archbishop) Joseph L. Bernardin. The 1983 pastoral letter that resulted, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," was a carefully nuanced critique of U.S. defense policy. It drew wide international attention and provoked similar efforts by other religious bodies in the United States and Catholic bishops' conferences in several other countries.

During the special meeting in Chicago at which the bishops approved the pastoral letter, Bishop O'Connor, then 63, learned by telephone that Pope John Paul had chosen him to be bishop of Scranton, Pa.

His appointment was announced May 10, 1983, and he was installed in the Scranton Diocese June 29. He immediately set out to visit every parish in the diocese, began preparations for Scranton's first diocesan synod in more than a century and made several other changes.

But less than a year later, on Jan. 31, 1984, he was named archbishop of New York. He was installed there March 19. On May 25, 1985, he became a member of the College of Cardinals.

Within his first few months in New York it became clear that he was not afraid of taking stands that would provoke controversy.

In June he and Cardinal Bernardin testified jointly before Congress, opposing the deployment of U.S. Pershing and cruise missiles in Western Europe, questioning the MX missile system and challenging Reagan administration proposals for massive new expenditures on nuclear weaponry and space-based defense systems.

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## Applause sends a message

NEW YORK (CNS) — The pro-life witness of Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York continued to resound at his funeral May 8 at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

A dramatic demonstration arose spontaneously when the homilist, Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston, said Cardinal O'Connor's "great legacy" was "his constant reminder that the church must always be unambiguously pro-life."

Some in the cathedral began applauding, others joined them and, as the applause grew in volume, it seemed evident much of the congregation wanted to send a message to public officials and candidates for office in the front pews.

They included President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, as well as the main candidates for the presidency, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Former President Bush sat in a pew with Cardinal O'Connor's family, New York Gov. George E. Pataki, New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, and the

state's two U.S. senators, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Charles E. Schumer.

Giuliani has been planning to run against Mrs. Clinton to succeed Moynihan, but the funeral of Cardinal O'Connor, who died of cancer, may have brought more personal reflections for the mayor. His father died of prostate cancer and now he has it, too.

As the two-minute ovation continued, people began standing in a wave that began at the back and quickly filled the entire church, including the hundreds of priests in the congregation and the dozens of cardinals, archbishops and bishops around the altar.

Eventually the Clintons and Gores also rose to their feet, but did not applaud.

Cardinal Law took the standing ovation as a sign of Cardinal O'Connor's continuing impact in the cathedral from which he became a national and international voice. As the applause died down he remarked: "I see he hasn't left the pulpit."

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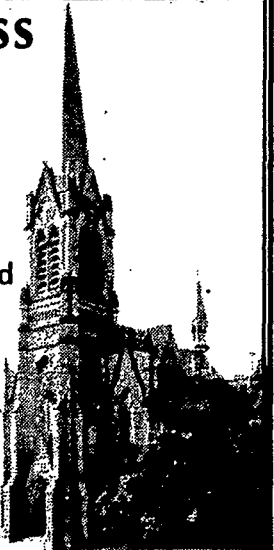
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