

WORLD & NATION

Cardinal

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That same month he declared that the archdiocese would not compromise on its teaching on homosexuality, even if it meant church service agencies would have to forgo millions of dollars in contracts with New York City.

At issue was a mayoral order requiring agencies entering city contracts to pledge not to discriminate in employment on the basis of "affectional preference." Archbishop O'Connor said the church opposes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but the language of the pledge moved from the issue of orientation to that of conduct.

Also that June, he said he did not see "how a Catholic in good conscience can vote for a candidate who explicitly supports abortion."

He also said, in a separate statement, that he has "absolutely no tolerance" for politicians who "try to sit on the fence" on abortion by saying they personally oppose it but will not impose their views on others.

He and Cuomo, who gave the keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention that year, had several exchanges on the issue in August after Cuomo accused him of telling Catholics who to vote for.

And in September the archbishop challenged Ferraro, that year's Democratic nominee for vice president, on a published statement two years earlier in which she said the church's position on abortion is not monolithic and Catholics can take a



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II and New York Cardinal John O'Connor speak inside St. Patrick's Cathedral in October 1995, before a prayer service during the pope's visit to New York.

range of personal and political responses to the issue.

With the three New York figures at center stage, the public debate on Catholics in politics during the 1984 election campaign was the biggest since 1960, when John F. Kennedy became the nation's first Catholic president.

At the time he was appointed to New York, Archbishop O'Connor was chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Social Development and World Peace.

Since 1984 he had been president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which has its headquarters in New York.

As chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities in 1989-92, he inaugurated a \$5 million public information campaign to improve American understanding of church teachings on abortion.

After he was made a cardinal in 1985 he was appointed to the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications and what was then the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.

The following year he was made a member of the Pontifical Commission for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers. He also served on the Council of Cardinals and Bishops of the Secretariat of State, the Congregation for Eastern-Rite Churches, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers.

He attended a summit meeting of top Vatican officials and the U.S. archbishops in 1989, where he delivered a paper on "The Bishop as Teacher of the Faith." He also participated in the 1997 Synod of Bishops for America and was a papally appointed co-president of the 1994 World Synod of Bishops on consecrated life.

In 1985 he confirmed 33 young people with physical handicaps or developmental disabilities at St. Patrick's Cathedral, inaugurating what has become a yearly rite at Pentecost. In October 1987, he started an archdiocesan Mass for people with disabilities, an event that draws some 1,000 to 1,500 people to St. Patrick's each year.

Several keep vigil till end

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal [John] O'Connor's sister, clergy and other close friends, including two U.S. cardinals, were with the archbishop during the final hours before his death May 3 at his residence behind St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Joseph Zwilling, communications officer for the Archdiocese of New York, said death came peacefully at 8:05 p.m. for the prelate, who at age 80 was the oldest active U.S. bishop.

Cardinal O'Connor had received the sacrament of the anointing of the sick April 29 and on other occasions, Zwilling said.

The cardinal's sister, Mary Therese O'Connor Ward, some other members of his family, clergy living with him in his residence and other close friends were present during his final hours, Zwilling said.

Two of Cardinal O'Connor's closest friends in the hierarchy — Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston and Cardinal William W. Baum, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary at the Vatican — were with him at the end, Zwilling said. Also present, he said, was Auxiliary Bishop James F. McCarthy, who had served for many years as the cardinal's secretary.

Zwilling said his legacy would be "the defense of the dignity of every human life" and his love for the mentally handicapped.

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