

# Baltimore archbishop remembers his mentor



Hansky Santos Photo/The Hoya

“The priest I am today is largely due to his example.”

That’s how Baltimore Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien remembered the late New York Cardinal John J. O’Connor during a panel discussion at the 12th annual Cardinal O’Connor Conference on Life Jan. 23.

Archbishop O’Brien paid tribute to his mentor’s courage in speaking out for truth and the cardinal’s pastoral sensitivity in serving priests and laity alike.

“To accompany him to the bedside of a priest in the hospital who was dying was a retreat for me,” said Archbishop O’Brien, a former New York clergyman who served as Cardinal O’Connor’s first priest-secretary.

“He’d speak to the priest about this bed ... now (becoming) your altar,” Archbishop O’Brien remembered. “There’s nothing more wasted than wasted suffering. Christ saved the world not by his miracles, he would say, not by his words but when he was helpless on his cross. That’s when salvation came to us.”

Archbishop O’Brien recalled that Cardinal O’Connor’s first prayer upon waking each day was, “Lord never let me get in the way of someone trying to do good.”

The archbishop said he would love to see Cardinal O’Connor’s homilies published — especially the ones he preached at ordination liturgies. They captured what the priesthood was all about, Archbishop O’Brien said, and they always ended with the same advice for new priests: “Be kind to the people. Be kind to the people. Be kind to the people.”

“He meant that,” Archbishop O’Brien said, “and he was that in his life.”

?Held at Georgetown University one day before the March for Life, the O’Connor

Conference on Life also featured Helen Alvaré, professor at George Mason University School of Law; Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, superior general of the Sisters of Life; and Bridgeport Bishop William Lori.

The panel discussion was recently posted online. Check it out [here](#).

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