

Kelly dismisses panel that advises church on abortion

By MARK E. McCORMICK
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Catholic Archbishop Thomas Kelly dismissed the entire board of one of the church's local agencies last month after some members demanded that the agency oppose abortion more vigorously, one of the dismissed board members said.

The 12 members of the board advised the Louisville archdiocese's Respect Life Office, which addresses such issues as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment.

Sister Carl Marie Hulsewede, an Ursuline nun who was on the board, said some of its members demanded that the office focus primarily on opposing abortion, and she thinks that is why the entire board was removed.

She said those members might not have understood that they were serving in an advisory capacity and were not in a position to demand a change in policy.

"Some on the board saw abortion as the main issue — if we solve the abortion problem, everything else would be perfect," Hulsewede said. "But that was not my opinion. . . . We're simply an advisory board."

The archdiocese said in a statement yesterday that Kelly had dissolved the volunteer board because of "confusion regarding the role and responsibilities of this board." The statement said that a new board would be appointed and that the Respect Life Office would retain its broader mission.

Kelly could not be reached for comment. Brian Reynolds, chief administrative officer for the archdiocese, acknowledged that the extent of the office's anti-abortion activities was an issue on the board, but he said that was not the reason the

board was dissolved.

Reynolds said that the archdiocese, which covers 24 Central Kentucky counties, has more than two dozen advisory boards made up of hundreds of volunteers and that such actions are relatively routine.

Told of the archdiocese's statement, ousted board member William Norton said: "But you would think that clarification could be done in consultation with each other rather than unilaterally. But that's certainly the prerogative of the archdiocese."

He said he was surprised by the Jan. 13 dismissal.

But Hulsewede said she thought the dissolving of the board was a good idea and was overdue. "Some of us have served for a long time," she said.

Board Chairwoman Jackie Stafford refused to comment in depth about the reasons for the dismissals.

"I really don't want to say anything at this point," she said. "I don't think it would be in the best interests of anyone involved."

Rose Schaeffer, a Catholic anti-abortion activist who has followed the Respect Life board's activities, said in an interview yesterday that some board members wanted the agency to take a more vigorous stand against abortion. She said some board members didn't seem to see eye to eye with Sandy McCauley, director of the Respect Life Office.

"I've been watching what has been going on, and I'm not very happy," Schaeffer said. "There is a lack of leadership in the local Catholic Church in terms of coming out with what the Catholic Church teaches (about abortion). There's a lot of things that they aren't taking



Kelly