

# People

News in the [April 20, 2004](#) issue

**Thomas O'Brien**, the resigned Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix, has been sentenced to four years on probation for a hit-and-run accident that killed a pedestrian. O'Brien, 68, was also ordered to perform 1,000 hours of community service, including hospital visits to severely injured and dying patients. His driver's license was suspended for five years. O'Brien, believed to be the first Catholic bishop in U.S. history to be convicted of a felony, had no comment after the March 26 sentencing hearing, the Associated Press reported. The former bishop had led the Phoenix diocese and its 480,000 Catholics for 21 years but resigned in June after his arrest. He was found guilty in February of leaving the scene of an accident after his car hit a pedestrian.

**Tammy Faye Messner**, who used to lead the Praise the Lord (PTL) ministry with ex-husband Jim Bakker, has announced that she has inoperable lung cancer. Messner appeared on CNN's *Larry King Live* March 18 to disclose the details of the diagnosis. She planned to start a regimen of chemotherapy and radiation in April. Messner, 62, is best known for her involvement with Bakker in a Fort Mill, South Carolina, ministry that drew millions of visitors to its theme park and viewers to its television show in the 1980s. It collapsed after a sex and money scandal that led to prison time for Jim Bakker.

**F. Burton Nelson**, 79, one of the world's leading scholars on the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, died March 22 in Chicago after a brief illness. Former vice president of the International Bonhoeffer Society, he was the coauthor, with Geoffrey B. Kelly, of *The Cost of Moral Leadership: The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, published in 2002, and coeditor with Kelly of *A Testament to Freedom; The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. He was also a founding member of the Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches and was honored by the conference in 2000 with its Eternal Flame award for his contributions to Holocaust studies. He began teaching theology and ethics at North Park Theological Seminary in 1960. He was serving as the school's research professor of Christian ethics at the time of his death.