

## Archbishop Myers: Critics of child protection record 'simply evil'

Brian Roewe | Aug. 20, 2013 NCR Today

Pulling few punches, Newark Archbishop John Myers responded over the weekend to what he classified as "deceitful and misleading" news reports of a deposition he made related to a clergy sex abuse lawsuit in his previous Peoria, Ill., diocese.

In a letter sent to Newark archdiocesan priests, encouraging them to share its content with "parishioners, and all who are interested in the truth," Myers accused his critics -- many of whom have called for his resignation -- of raising false and misleading statements of his handling of abuse allegations in both Peoria and Newark.

"For those who are truly with us -- the Church -- in the protection of children, they have my respect, gratitude, and embrace," he said. "For any who set out to claim that I or the Church have had no effective part in the love and protection of children, is simply evil, wrong, immoral, and seemingly focused on their own self-aggrandizement."

"God only knows their personal reasons and agenda. We are still called to love them. And God will surely address them in due time," Myers wrote in the letter, a version of which was [made public online](#) [1] through the personal blog of Fr. Jim Chern, chaplain of the Newman Catholic Center at Montclair State University in Montclair, N.J.

Myers questioned the motivations of a wide net of people -- journalists, politicians, victims and their attorneys, and "disgruntled, former, or marginalized and retired clergy" -- who have criticized his record.

"One might ask why the representatives of the media do not explore the records of those who are raising false and misleading statements, perhaps for their own benefit, and the records and personal lifestyles of either disgruntled former, or marginalized and retired clergy of either the Archdiocese of Newark or the Diocese of Peoria," Myers wrote.

The archbishop continued: "One might also ask what are the true motivations of all who have become a part of these 'traveling bandwagons' -- including our local media representatives and politicians? What is their own historical and present relationship or animus against our Roman Catholic Faith and its Teachings, the Teachings of which I have always been a staunch and outspoken supporter, despite their 'unpopularity' in the secular and 'politically correct' society that has developed around us?"

On Aug. 13, Myers' 2010 deposition [became public](#) [2] as part of a settlement between the Peoria diocese and Andrew Ward, who had alleged that Msgr. Thomas Maloney molested him in the mid-1990s. The diocese settled the suit for \$1.35 million.

The deposition and corresponding case documents revealed the Peoria diocese had received several reports of suspicious or improper behavior by Maloney, but Myers said he either never saw such reports or they were lost in a "loose" filing system because of the location of administrative offices in different buildings. One such case, which Myers said he saw for the first time during the deposition, involved a 1995 incident report from the sister

of a woman who alleged Maloney abused her in 1973 while pastor of Epiphany Parish in Normal, Ill.

"At no time was I ever aware that some people thought [Maloney] to be a threat to children or young people," Myers wrote in his letter to Newark priests.

In the deposition, though, Myers was shown a September 2000 letter from a family writing him with concerns about "what we and many others believe to be the unacceptable and inappropriate behavior of Father Maloney." The letter pointed to Maloney making inappropriate jokes, and being seen at night with a young girl in his care, along with taking grade-school girls out to lunch.

Myers responded to that letter later that month, writing, "I do know that Father loves people, especially young people, and that he cares for them generously. We have never had allegations of impropriety."

In his recent letter, Myers said the Peoria diocese investigated an earlier allegation, but it lacked sufficient evidence. When Illinois law enforcement officials investigated Maloney in 2007, he said the diocese gave all records concerning the earlier case. Ward's lawyer has contested that claim.

"If the opposite had been the case, I would have acted to protect children and young people as I did on any other occasions in Illinois and here in New Jersey. Priests would have been taken out of Ministry as I have done in both locations. Children should never be at risk in so far as we can know," he said.

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[1] <http://chernjam.blogspot.com/2013/08/letter-from-archbishop-myers.html?m=1>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/sex-abuse-lawsuit-illinois-focuses-actions-newark-archbishop>