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NJ Catholics close pocketbooks amid Archbishop Myers? half-million-dollar home renovation

Brian Roewe | Mar. 3, 2014 NCR Today

The costs of renovating Newark, N.J. Archbishop John Myers? weekend residence for his upcoming retirement could exceed the $500,000 estimated for construction -- it could also put a dent in archdiocesan donations.

Over the weekend, the Newark *Star-Ledger* reported [1] on the hundred-plus people who wrote to the newspaper after it first reported Feb. 17 [2] on the ongoing renovations that will expand the 4,500-square-foot home to 7,500 square feet, complete with six bedrooms, five bathrooms, a three-car garage, two pools (one outdoor, another small one indoors for exercise), a library, an elevator and a gallery room. Myers is set to retire in 2016.

The latest *Star-Ledger* story highlighted Newark Catholics who have pledged to cut off support of the appeal in protest of the construction project:

> *Parishioners, infuriated by what they call a tone-deaf show of excess at a time when Catholic schools are closing and when the pope has called on bishops to shed the trappings of luxury, say they?re cutting off contributions entirely or sharply curtailing them.*
>
> *Others said they will continue supporting their local parishes but will ignore the annual appeal, which has been heavily promoted in churches over the past month across the archdiocese, home to 1.3 million Catholics in Essex, Hudson, Union and Bergen counties.*

?Somehow the message has to be delivered,? Mary Gannon of Florham Park told the *Star-Ledger*. ?People can let him [Myers] know by demonstrating or by withholding money from the appeal. Complacency is terrible. We have to take a stand.?

News also came this weekend that in addition to the annual appeal, the archdiocese has planned a multi-year, $100 million fundraising campaign [3].

As for the appeal, Newark spokesman Jim Goodness in the *Star-Ledger* article said it contributes about $11 million annually to the archdiocese, and supports its schools, Catholic Charities and other programs to help people in need.

"It?s painful to hear some people talking about stopping their contributions to the annual appeal and to the church in general," Goodness said. "By withdrawing their support, who are they harming? The very people that we as a church are pledged to help."

Read the full article here [1].

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