

Dear Family of the Archdiocese of New York,

May I intrude on what I hope is a relaxing summer with a not-so-pleasant subject?

Last week, the Associated Press published a scurrilous article, heavy on innuendo, about Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools, charitable organizations, and other institutions that rightly received assistance from the federal government to pay their employees during the Covid-19 crisis. Many news outlets picked up the story, which implied that there was something amiss in Catholic institutions receiving paycheck protection money. Many of you have called or emailed me, wanting to know if the story was true. My answer, quite simply, is absolutely not! It was misleading at best, outright false at worst. Here's why.

First, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was designed to help employers continue to pay its employees when the economy went into lockdown in response to the coronavirus. The purpose was to keep employees employed during these difficult times. Religious institutions were invited and permitted to participate, as they employ large numbers of people across the country. Here in the Archdiocese of New York, if you combine the number of fulltime employees in our parishes, schools, agencies, and central administration, there would be 6000 fulltime and 4000 part-time employees. Without assistance from the PPP, many of our employers would have had no choice but to lay-off their employees, reducing the church's ability to assist people in need, and forcing our people to seek unemployment. That means your parish's secretary, or the teachers in your child's Catholic school, for instance, could easily have lost their jobs. So, the money did not go to "the archdiocese" but to our workers. The USCCB released a statement Friday which touched on many of these themes. [You can read their statement here.](#)

A second problem is that the article tries to make some sort of connection between the sexual abuse crisis that has haunted the Church, and the Paycheck Protection Plan assistance. Make no mistake, the money that the Archdiocese of New York received was used solely for the purposes outlined in the law, that is to continue to pay employees their salaries and benefits. Not one penny of that money was used in any way to settle lawsuits or pay victim-survivors of abuse. We have none of this money left. It has all be distributed to our workers, and the government is carefully auditing it.

Third, the AP article focuses solely on the Catholic Church, making it seem as if Catholics are unique in participating in the Paycheck Protection Plan. In fact, religious organizations representing all faiths participated in the program, as it was intended. Nationally, the Small Business Administration approved over 88,000 loans for religious organizations, supporting

more than 1 million jobs. Why then focus solely on the Catholic Church, unless the reporters had some animus towards the Church (which we suspect they do)?

Let me be clear: I am a fervent supporter of a free press, and have made it a priority of my tenure as Archbishop of New York to be open and available to the men and women of the media who seek to interview me. The overwhelming number of reporters with whom I have interacted have been dedicated to their craft, seeking to get the story right, and by and large the coverage of the Church has been fair – critical and honest when reporting on my mistakes, willing to report on positive developments as well.

This AP story, however, did neither. It invented a story when none existed, and sought to bash the Church.

Forgive me for “venting” in this way. I usually take the advice of those who counsel me to not pick a fight in the press with someone who buys printers ink by the barrel – or, in today’s parlance, I guess, someone who has unlimited bandwidth. But this story was so inaccurate, and left such a damaging impression I felt it was important to set the record straight with you.

With prayerful best wishes, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York