

## NEWS

# 'Climate of fear and intimidation': Demonstrators protest outside Diocese of Worcester



**Jeff A. Chamer**

Telegram & Gazette

Published 1:41 p.m. ET April 27, 2022 | Updated 6:02 p.m. ET April 27, 2022

WORCESTER — A small group of demonstrators carrying a large LGBTQ+ Pride flag and a Black Lives Matter flag, garnered the support of drivers who honked their horns in support as they stood outside of the Diocese of Worcester in protest of Bishop Robert J. McManus.

Joseph A. Twarog, a College of the Holy Cross graduate, led the group of six men who said that they were responding to the history of McManus creating a "climate of fear and intimidation."

"It's not just about the Nativity School," Twarog said. "He has created a climate of fear and intimidation. That's not the message of the gospel."

In April, the bishop was criticized after he asked the Nativity School of Worcester not to fly Black Lives Matter and gay Pride flags at the school.

Later, Holy Cross said the bishop would not attend the upcoming college commencement, after some students circulated a petition.

Twarog also pointed to past issues, such as when McManus threatened to not attend commencement at Anna Maria College in 2012 if the university did not disinvite Victoria Kennedy, widow of the late U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and whose views, he said, did not align with Catholic social teachings.

He said he would prefer that if the bishop were not going to change his views on these issues, that he should instead keep his views quiet and focus on other things such as releasing a list of priests accused of sexually abusing minors.

"He's one of a minority of Diocese in the country that has not listed the sexual abusers, the predators in this Diocese," Twarog said. "You've got a system of the sexual predators. That's what he should be dealing with."

Ray Delisle, spokesperson for the Diocese of Worcester, said in an email that dialogue continues on the issues when asked about the protest.

Twarog was joined by fellow Holy Cross alum Arthur "Bud" Larievy, David Weinstein, Mike Gallagher, Dick Monks and Michael Sireci.

Larievy said that McManus has "had his time" and that he wants him to resign.

"Worcester needs to have a bishop that is within the context of present-day Worcester," Larievy said. "McManus is the past."

Larievy, who comes from a longline of Holy Cross graduates, said he joined the protest because Jesuits believe in social justice.

"That's embedded into the pedagogy," he said. "We all understand the necessity and the moral obligation to practice social justice on a daily basis."

Michael Gallagher, who is also a graduate of Holy Cross and was a classmate of Twarog, said that the Bishop was "way off base" in going after the Nativity School.

"He has no business even telling them what to do or what to think and if they want to support Black Lives Matter or Pride, then they should be allowed to do that," Gallagher said. "His statement is hateful and we're here to protest it. Who can object to Black Lives Matter? Is he saying that they don't matter? What is he saying?"

McManus should not be dividing people and instead focus on exemplifying the spirit of Christianity, he said.

He should also "minister to the souls of Catholics in the Worcester Diocese, and that means all the people. Black, white, gay, straight, everybody."

David Weinstein and Dick Monks, who are friends with Gallagher, are not from Worcester and did not graduate from Holy Cross but came to the protest because they disagreed with McManus's actions.

"When Mike told me about it, it sounded like a serious injustice happening at this school," Weinstein said. "Being asked to twist themselves into a very bad position in terms of inclusion and acceptance of people."

Weinstein said McManus should open his heart and mind to different kinds of people.

Monks, who attended Fairfield University, a Jesuit school in Connecticut, said he would want McManus to step down as well.

"I find it hard to think that he's going to change his mind but I think he's so out of step with where the world is hopefully heading, he should get out of the way," Monks said.

The last of the group to arrive was Sireci who said that he would like to see the bishop be more compassionate with other people's struggles.

"I think the church should promote racial equality and that and then they need to recognize some of the atrocities in the past with racial disparities," Sireci said.

Twarog said that he did not expect the small protest to change McManus' mind but that it may "plant a seed that things will change," comparing the effort to Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist.

"How many did she start with? One," Twarog said. "It's just to plant a seed of recognition that there may be issues here."