

## Archbishop celebrates a silver anniversary

BY WARD MIELE  
Managing Editor

Archbishop John J. Myers, in September, will mark the 25th year of his Episcopal ordination, a silver anniversary that follows two milestones he celebrated in 2011—the 45th year of his priesthood and his 10th year as the shepherd of the Archdiocese of Newark. He is one of many jubilarians being honored in this edition of *The Catholic Advocate*.

On Sept. 3, 1987, he was installed as Coadjutor Bishop of Peoria and acceded to the See of Peoria on Jan. 23, 1990. He was ordained a priest for service to the Diocese of Peoria, IL, on Dec. 17, 1966 at the Altar of the Chair in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

During his years in Newark he has ordained 146 priests, which includes the 16 priests in the ordination Class of 2012 (see *The Catholic Advocate*, May 23 and this issue). Under his leadership, the archdiocese, on several occasions, has led the nation in the number of ordinandi.

In addition to his focus on vocations to the priesthood, Archbishop Myers' time in Newark has been marked by his involvement with and support of Catholic education, the Women and Mens' commissions, the Archbishop's Annual Appeal (AAA), the New Jersey Catholic Conference, evangelization, the Scholarship Fund for Inner City Children (SFIC), protection of traditional marriage, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark and the battle against human trafficking.

The eldest of seven children, Archbishop Myers was born on July 26, 1941 in Ottawa, IL. The Myers family farmed near Earlville, IL, a town of 1,400 people located 20 miles north of Ottawa. The Myers children all worked with their father and shared the family chores. Prayer was part of family life. Young John Myers was an altar server in his parish, Saint Theresa, from an early age.

John Myers attended Earlville schools. While completing studies at Loras College in Dubuque, IA (1959-1963), Bishop John B. Franz offered him the opportunity to prepare for the priesthood in Rome. During a visit home in 1966, Bishop Franz ordained him a sub-deacon in his private chapel in the bishop's residence.

Bishop Francis Reh ordained then-Father Myers a priest for service to the Diocese of Peoria on Dec. 17, 1966 at the Altar of the Chair in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome. He received a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the North American College, Gregorian University, Rome in 1967, and a Doctorate in Canon Law from Catholic University in Washington, DC in 1977.

The first assignment for Father Myers was as assistant pastor at Holy Family Parish, Peoria, in 1967. He then served in the Department of International Affairs of the United States Catholic Conference from 1970 to 1971. His next assignment was as associate pastor of Saint Matthew Parish, Champaign, IL, from 1971 until 1974.

He is the fifth Archbishop of Newark. Pope John Paul II's selection of then-Bishop Myers to shepherd the Archdiocese of Newark was made on July 24, 2001. During a news conference that day at the Archdiocesan Center in Newark, the soon-to-be-archbishop cited as a key issue going forward the need "for all of us to develop a deeper interior life so that our actions are based on our faith in our Church and Jesus Christ." He stressed that his goal would be to "lead the people of the Archdiocese of Newark closer to God."

However, while he was preparing to leave the Diocese of Peoria and had not arrived yet in the Garden State, the horror of 9/11 struck the nation with members of the local Church devastated by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

The tragedy of 9/11 was on Archbishop Myers' mind as his Oct. 9 Installation Mass was about to be celebrated before an overflow crowd of local faithful and a large contingent from Peoria including family members. He said as Mass was about to begin the occasion was tempered by the "great national tragedy" of 9/11. He told those at Mass "we are the family of God. Let us gather around our family table which is the altar of sacrifice and find nourishment unto eternal life."

One of his first formal actions as the new leader of the local Church was to visit Ground Zero on Oct. 3, 2001. Archbishop Myers noted later in his "Sincerely in the Lord" column in *The Catholic Advocate* that "one of my deepest memories is that of my visit to Ground Zero to comfort those who worked on the rescue and recovery in the months after the attack. Most vivid among those moments is the conversation I had with one woman who confided in me that she had not been able to pray. I gave her my rosary and told her not to worry; that I would pray with and for her."

Last year the archbishop presided at a special outdoor Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery in North Arlington, dedicating a monument marking the 10-year remembrance of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that took the lives of many faithful from the local Church when the Twin Towers came down.

In January 2002, Archbishop Myers traveled to Rome and celebrated Mass with Pope John Paul II in his private chapel in the Vatican. Later that year, on June 29, Archbishop Myers received his Pallium from Pope John Paul II in Rome.

The fall of 2005 saw Archbishop Myers appointed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome as Ecclesiastica Delegate for the Pastoral Provision for admitting married former Anglican clergy to the priesthood in the U.S.

Pope Benedict XVI, in 2008, named Archbishop Myers as a member of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, part of the Roman Curia, which is responsible for interpreting the laws of the Church. Pope John Paul II established the council in 1984.

The archbishop holds a doctorate in Canon Law from Catholic University of America. Also in 2008, he was elected as the chairman of the board of governors and president of Rome's Pontifical North American College. Founded by American bishops in 1859 at the request of Pope Pius IX, North American College serves as a residence and house of formation for U.S. seminarians and graduate students. Archbishop Myers (Class of 1967) is an alumnus of North American College.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark honored Archbishop Myers as its "Humanitarian the Year" in May 2010 during a reception at Nanina's in the Park, Belleville. NJ Gov. Chris Christie delivered the keynote address at the event, paying tribute to the archbishop's leadership.



Archbishop John J. Myers



Photos courtesy of L'Osservatore Romano  
Archbishop John J. Myers (left), along with active and retired bishops and members of the curia from the Archdiocese of Newark, last year traveled the Vatican to meet with Pope Benedict XVI (see *The Catholic Advocate*, Dec. 21, 2011).