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Can Child Protection Go Too Far?

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Sister Mary Ann Walsh has an interesting post up at the USCCB's media blog. Someone asked her if the Church's child protection efforts were going overboard, requiring even church ushers to be finger-printed.

Sister Mary Ann's post brought to mind an incident that happened here in Washington. A priest was removed from his pastorate after credible charges emerged that he had sexually abused children. A new pastor was appointed and he was greeted with great hostility by many of the flock who refused to believe the charges and wanted their old pastor back. None of us wants to believe the worst about people we have grown to love. But, that normally commenable human instinct must give way before the evidence of sex abuse.

As important as it is to enact policies designed to protect children, the goal of those policies is to change the culture that permitted the abuse in the first place. The whole Church – the hierarchy, the clergy and the laity – must recognize that there is no such thing as going too far to protect children.

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