

Sacred objects returned to church

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

FRAMINGHAM -- David Murphy yesterday returned the altar he had removed from St. Jeremiah's Church on Monday after archdiocese officials told him it had to stay under canon law and an agreement with Attorney General Tom Reilly's office.

Murphy, who built the altar, refused to speak to a News reporter, when he and two others brought the altar back at about 11:45 a.m.

The altar, tabernacle and its altar and backdrop are slated to be given to St. Brigid's Church in Johnston, R.I., the home parish of the Rev. Bob Rochon, who stood guard over media members during St. Jeremiah's final Mass Sunday.

Rochon, pastor at St. Brigid's, is a longtime friend of the Rev. Ronald Calhoun, St. Jeremiah's pastor, who will head to St. George's Church in Framingham as part of the archdiocese reconfiguration.

"I understand why (Calhoun) wants to protect these things, but he's still supposed to follow the process," said St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee Co-chairwoman Jackie Lemmerhirt.

In related news, archdiocese officials are expected to release a revised decree of suppression for St. Jeremiah's after Appeals Committee members spotted two mistakes in the original, she said.

The original decree -- which declared Friday as St. Jeremiah's final day -- was dated April 25, 2004, not 2005. It also referred to Framingham as still having two other parishes to serve its residents, while it actually has four -- St. George's, St. Bridget's, St. Stephen's and St. Tarcisius.

In other news, St. Jeremiah's vigil attendees will host a Communion service with help from a group from a Boston-area church, said Lemmerhirt, who has been working with representatives at the church. No date has been set yet.

If a partnership cannot be worked out with the unnamed church, St. Jeremiah's Appeals Committee members could instead work with St. Anselm's in Sudbury or another church in vigil, Lemmerhirt said.

When it is scheduled, the service will allow those who remain in vigil in the closed parish to receive Communion from a group of lay parishioners, who will then teach the St. Jeremiah's parishioners how to distribute the Eucharist.

The fifth day of the vigil, which started Friday when the Appeals Committee got word about the locks being changed before the final Mass, was decidedly quieter, a relief to Lemmerhirt and the handful of others who came by.

"This is how I like it," Lemmerhirt said.

More than 70 people have signed the guest book at the back of the church. Others have chosen not to put their names in the book or have forgotten to do so, Lemmerhirt said.

Activity has picked up in the afternoons since the vigil began, she said, with youngsters doing homework and others coming by just for support. The early days have seen plenty of homemade goodies brought by as well.

Monday night's menu included quiche, said Lemmerhirt, while breakfast was highlighted by banana bread yesterday and lunch included a pot full of ziti and meatballs.

Lemmerhirt has heard raves from other churches who had vigils about the early success at St. Jeremiah's in getting supporters to man the church around-the-clock.

"All you need is a presence," she said.

While some time is spent in prayer and quiet reflection, much of the vigil features conversations among a handful of people. Most of those who gathered yesterday were tight-lipped about their reasons for attending.

"We're here because it's necessary," John Olszewski said.

Photo Gallery



These statues were returned to St. Jeremiah's. (Allan Jung photo)

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(*Craig MacCormack can be reached at 508-626-4429 or cmaccorm@cnc.com.*)

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