

Archdiocese: Services don't count

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- Archdiocese officials yesterday said Mass attendance is required for all Catholics who are physically able to go and the Communion services offered at St. Jeremiah are insufficient.

Members of the Appeals Committee held Communion services last weekend at the closed parish and will have sessions today at 4:30 p.m. and tomorrow at 10:15 a.m.

A large sign in the back of the church inviting people to the services says they meet a Catholic's weekly requirement, but archdiocese spokesman Terry Donilon said yesterday that is not the case.

"St. Jeremiah is a closed parish...(and) the majority of the former parishioners have transitioned to other parishes, especially to the receiving parish, St. George in Framingham," said Donilon in a statement.

Peter Borre, co-chairman of the Council of Parishes, disputed the archdiocese's stance, saying canon law dictates Communion services are valid until a church has been formally deconsecrated.

After the deconsecration, the church becomes "profane" in the canonical sense, said Borre.

Borre, who has delivered consecrated hosts -- or blessed wafers that represent the Body of Christ to Catholics -- to parishes in the archdiocese during the reconfiguration, has not yet done so for St. Jeremiah.

"Only if I'm asked," he said.

In a statement, Bishop Richard Lennon, the archdiocese's vicar general, said under Church law all Catholics have an obligation to participate at Sunday Mass unless it is impossible for them to attend. Communion services do not fulfill one's obligation to participate at Sunday Mass, Lennon said.

At last week's Communion services, more than 100 St. Jeremiah parishioners and supporters participated, hearing two readings, the gospel and a reflection to replace the traditional homily.

"We don't do anything unless we really check it out," said St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee co-Chairwoman Jackie Lemmerhirt.

Appeals Committee co-Chairwoman Mary Beth Carmody, who spoke to several canon lawyers at the St. Joseph Foundation in San Antonio before St. Jeremiah adopted the Communion service idea, said there is no problem with what St. Jeremiah is doing.

"Under the present circumstances in our parish, after having our church closed and our priest taken away, we understand that this satisfies the Sunday obligation," she said.

"The Communion service has every element of the Mass except the priest there to actually consecrate the host," said Carmody.

In other news, the Historical Commission will consider putting St. Jeremiah Parish on the town's cultural resource index at its next meeting, June 16 at 7:30 p.m. in the Memorial Building.

The town's index includes more than 600 buildings, bridges, monuments and other structures that have architectural, cultural, or historical significance, said Historical Committee Chairman David Marks.

The ties to teacher-astronaut Christa McAuliffe could enhance the case for St. Jeremiah, he said. McAuliffe went to the church, and the church's bells are named in honor of the Challenger disaster victim.

"This building recognizes a part of Framingham's history we have not yet examined as closely as we should," said Marks.

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Photo Gallery



Signs at St. Jeremiah Church in Framingham advertise the ongoing vigil and times for weekend Communion services for people attending the vigil. (Ken McGagh photo)

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