

**ST. JEREMIAH APPEAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS
ARCHBISHOP O'MALLEY ON COSTS TO KEEP ST. GEORGE
CHURCH OPEN; ST. JEREMIAH PARISH NEEDS NO REPAIRS
OR INFLUX OF CASH IS SET TO CLOSE MAY 15TH**

FRAMINGHAM, MA (April 22, 2005) — St. Jeremiah Parishioners and their Appeal Committee sent a letter to Archbishop O'Malley questioning the costs necessary to keep St. George Church open when St. Jeremiah is set to close and needs no repairs or influx of cash. Fr. Frank O'Brien, pastor of St. George, announced in last week's parish bulletin that recent estimates to install a handicap lift to make St. George Church handicap accessible will cost over \$120,000 – not the \$40,000 originally expected. This amount is in addition to the cost for other repairs and improvements set forth in an Archdiocesan Facilities Report that the committee has requested but has not seen. The cost for additional repairs and improvements to St. George is reportedly in the area of \$700,000. Adding that to the cost of the handicap lift and it may cost almost \$1 million to keep St. George's open. There would be no additional cost to keep St. Jeremiah open.

St. Jeremiah Parish, which is presently slated to close on May 15, 2005, is already handicap accessible. The level access from St. Jeremiah's parking lot to the front row of seats reserved for those that need them is only 25 feet. No funds are needed to provide additional access. Residents at Heritage Assisted Living regularly attend the 4:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday evenings at St. Jeremiah. Several St. Jeremiah parishioners with disabilities have stated that they will have to stop attending Mass once St. Jeremiah is closed. This issue is in addition to the issues brought to the attention of the Archbishop Review Committee, including traffic, parking and wetlands issues that will impede attendance at St. George. These problems do not exist at St. Jeremiah's location. In light of the Archdiocesan financial crisis, the decision to close St. Jeremiah does not make good financial sense and the parishioners of St. Jeremiah want to know why the Archbishop refuses to revisit this decision.

On April 21, 2005, based upon the information recently revealed concerning costs, co-chairwomen of the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee, Jackie Lemmerhirt and Mary Beth Carmody, sent a letter to Archbishop O'Malley requesting that he reconsider "a reconfiguration plan gone terribly awry in our North Framingham community." They point out that if the present plan for reconfiguration in North Framingham does not change, it may cost the Archdiocese almost \$1 million to implement the plan. The present plan calls for St. George to remain open and for St. Jeremiah to close on May 15th. The letter also states that the recently announced plan to keep St. Anselm's in Sudbury open as a Chapel is not sufficient to accommodate the needs of the North Framingham Catholic Community. The letter asks the Archbishop to keep St. Jeremiah open.

The letter provides information that was not available on March 2, 2005 when the Appeal Committee met with Peter Meade and Marylou Batt of the Archbishop's External Review Committee on Reconfiguration. The committee presented information that St. George was very difficult to access by anyone with physical disabilities. At that time the cost of the St. George

plan to install an elevator or lift to make the Church easily accessible was predicted to be approximately \$40,000. Parishioners at St. George were asked to contribute an additional \$30,000, "just in case." However, Fr. O'Brien stated in last week's parish bulletin that the cost of constructing the lift will actually cost more than \$120,000 and that estimate does not include the cost of any electrical work. Fr. O'Brien also informed his parishioners that he was – for the first time in 10 years – applying to the Archdiocese for a loan to cover the additional costs for this project because the parish did not have sufficient funds on hand.

The Archdiocese completed a facilities report on St. George Parish last Fall. The St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee has repeatedly requested an opportunity to review a copy of the report - which still has not been granted. The Committee again requests that the Archdiocese – which has indicated its intention to be "transparent" with its financial dealings – to provide a copy of that report to the Committee members as soon as possible.

As a result of these issues, the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee questions whether the decision to leave St. George open makes sense. The parishioners ask the Archbishop why he is keeping open a parish that may need an influx of \$1 million to serve its people, when a parish down the street -- and in a much safer location -- can serve just as well and needs no funding from the Archdiocese? This plan does not address the needs of reconfiguration. The Committee once again asks the Archbishop to take another look at North Framingham.

The St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee is part of the Council of Parishes. Background on St. Jeremiah Parish and its appeal presentation can be found online at www.stjeremiah.org.

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