



THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

St. Jeremiah plea rejected, but O'Malley allows Mass Baptism planned as vigil continues

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By Franco Ordonez, Globe Staff | August 6, 2005

Boston Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley has rejected a plea by St. Jeremiah Parish in Framingham to reopen but will allow the church to hold Sunday Mass until the parishioners hear back on their appeal to the Vatican.

One family will also be allowed to have their twin boys baptized at the church.

Those keeping vigil at St. Jeremiah, who had filed an appeal with the archdiocese against the closure, characterized the news as bittersweet. It is not a complete victory, they say, but it shows the archdiocese may be willing to keep the church open.

"People were disappointed that the archbishop didn't fully open our parish and that he hasn't revoked his order of suppression," said Mary Beth Carmody, a vigil leader. "But they recognize that we've been given a special blessing to have Sunday Mass, which is extraordinary in this reconfiguration process."

More than 200 people have joined the vigil since it began May 6, Carmody said. At least 40, she said, attended the daily reciting of the rosary Tuesday night, after which vigil leaders read the letter from the archbishop detailing his decision.

Terrence Donilon, an archdiocese spokesman, said the archbishop "clearly understands that the reconfiguration process has been difficult." But O'Malley still feels that nearby St. George Church should take on the parishioners, Donilon said.

"It is my conclusion that the information you provided, while comprehensive and well presented, nonetheless leaves open the viability of St. Jeremiah, best intentions notwithstanding," O'Malley wrote to those keeping vigil.

Debbie Dempsey, a parishioner for the past two years who is keeping vigil, said she was shocked that the archbishop was going to allow her and her husband, Brian, to baptize their twin boys, Anthony and Daniel, who were born June 15.

"We really wanted to christen the boys at St. Jeremiah's and have them continue their spiritual journey there," said Dempsey. "I thought it was great of him not to have us search for another parish to do that."

It is unclear how long it will take for the Vatican to issue a decision, but some parishes that made a similar request last year have not received a response.

The archdiocese has closed more than 60 parishes since July 2004. A few, including St. Albert the Great in Weymouth, have successfully lobbied to remain open.

The archdiocese continues to contend with fallout. Earlier this week, parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in East Boston filed a lawsuit against the archdiocese in Suffolk Superior Court in hopes of preventing the sale of their church, which was closed last fall.

They contend that the parish was closed illegally because its priest left with church funds and the archdiocese removed relics that belonged to the congregation.

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Franco Ordonez can be reached at fordonez@globe.com. ■

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