



Church closing could become PR nightmare

By Marie Szaniszló
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A six-month truce between the Archdiocese of Boston and parishes it has slated to close ended yesterday when members of a Framingham church became the latest parish to hold a round-the-clock sit-in.

Members of St. Jeremiah parish began their vigil at noon, two days before the church's last scheduled Mass. And for an archdiocese anxious to end the sit-ins but reluctant to have parishioners forcibly removed, this one has all the makings of a public relations nightmare.

The local police chief, Steven Carl, has already said his department will not intervene, provided the sit-in remains peaceful. One of the protesters is the elderly mother of Christa McAuliffe, the schoolteacher who died in the 1986 Challenger explosion. And the church is being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because its bells were dedicated to McAuliffe's memory and paid for with donations from around the country.

"This is not the way the Catholic Church I was brought up in is supposed to behave," said Mary Beth Carmody, who co-chairs the parish's appeals committee. "What they're doing is a sin."

St. Jeremiah is one of more than 80 parishes included in closing plans [Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley](#) announced last May because of a fiscal crisis brought on by the clergy sexual abuse scandal that began under his predecessor.

McAuliffe's mother, Grace Corrigan, and other parishioners say O'Malley has yet to explain why he chose St. Jeremiah, a thriving parish that has no debt and needs no repairs. "It is just a building, but many things happened in that building that are part of our lives," said Corrigan.

In a statement, the archdiocese said, "We continue to recognize the difficulty and profound sadness associated with the closing of any parish, however, we hope the people of St. Jeremiah will find the strength and resolve to effect a peaceful, orderly and prayerful transition."

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