

LEMMERHIRT
4 Chesterfield Street
Framingham, MA 01701

June 8, 2004

Most Reverend Sean P. O'Malley, OFM Cap.
Archdiocese of Boston
2121 Commonwealth Avenue
Brighton, MA 02135

RE: Catholic Appeal Donation and St. Jeremiah's Church Closing

Dear Archbishop O'Malley:

I am a faithful parishioner of St. Jeremiah's in Framingham and will no longer be supporting the Archdiocese of Boston in its appeals. I am urging my fellow parishioners and Catholics to withhold all monies from the Church. I can only pray that others will refuse to support you and you will begin to understand how the hierarchy is destroying the foundation of the Church, its people.

As you know, my parish, St. Jeremiah is scheduled to close. This decision was made through an unjust and biased process. The process was made to appear as if the laity had influence on the decision. However, in our cluster, we were told before the process began by local church hierarchy, that our parish would close. Ever optimistic, we proceeded to participate. Obviously, we were foolhardy to think this would be fair. This process has torn apart our church community.

The reasons you provided to close St. Jeremiah's were a low sacramental index and that we could be served by other parishes in Framingham. Let me explain why both of these reasons are flawed. First, the sacramental index is an inappropriate statistic and does not measure the growth and activity in a parish. Baptisms represent a growing parish, while funerals represent a declining parish community. Equally weighting both provides no indication of the future growth of a parish. As a statistician, I am also trained never to rely on a single data point, as you did with the 2003 statistics. St. Jeremiah's parish has far more baptisms than funerals and our numbers are increasing every year. You've reached an incorrect conclusion with your first measure.

Secondly, you've stated that we can be served by other Framingham parishes. St. Jeremiah's parishioners have participated in a collaborative for many years. We follow no town boundaries. Half of the churches in our collaborative are not located in Framingham. By closing another church in our collaborative, St. Anselm's in Sudbury, the north side of Framingham will be underserved. St. George's parish is the alternative that our parishioners will seek out. Obviously, if you have ever seen St. George's, you would immediately recognize that this church cannot accommodate the parishioners or the activity from two neighboring parishes. In addition, there are nearly 1000 more housing units planned in the north side of Framingham. By limiting your view to the

town of Framingham, you are not recognizing the reality of our church community. Without even a site visit, you've reached a false conclusion.

As a business person, I completely understand the need to downsize and maximize your resources. However, I also expect a rational decision and a fair process. Neither of those occurred. If a fair and rationale process had been the case and our parish was slated for closure, I could certainly accept joining another community. Instead, I feel betrayed and misled. On the heels of the child abuse scandal, I find the actions of the church hierarchy thoughtless.

I am limited on the ways I can get you to listen. Withholding my support is one of them. Urging my fellow Catholics to withhold their support is another. My request of you is that you admit the church closing process was careless and rushed. Listen to your church community. Work with us and not against us. With our parishioners, carefully examine your data and the basis for your decision. It is a very simple request.

I will continue to pray that the Holy Spirit blesses you with the understanding and fortitude to acknowledge the problems you continue to foster in your community.

With Gods Blessing,

Jacqueline Lemmerhirt