



## **March 31, 2005 - Archbishop O'Malley Accepts 10 Reconfiguration Recommendations By Meade-Eisner Committee; Reconfiguration Review Committee to continue its work as the reconfiguration process is completed**

**(Brighton, MA) March 31, 2005**...Archbishop Sean O'Malley today announced his acceptance of a series of recommendations made by the Meade-Eisner Reconfiguration Review Committee resulting from their review of the reconfiguration process underway in the Archdiocese of Boston. These recommendations focus on the committee's analysis of the process used by the Archdiocese to make its original determinations of which parishes should close, contrasted to the committee's own qualitative and quantitative analysis of parish data. In one case, the Archbishop will open the process required by church law to re-establish or establish a parish at the site of a previously closed parish.

The Committee's analysis included an evaluation of the vitality of parishes in the Archdiocese. Several relevant parish factors were reviewed, Catholic population and offertory trends, certain Sacramental counts, Mass attendance, geographic location as well as new information brought forth. To complement the quantitative analysis, committee members gathered qualitative data by conducting 16 visits to parishes, meetings with 25 pastors of closed parishes and sending more than 300 written responses to communications it received including a number of extensive reports.

"My commitment to the people of the Archdiocese when I established this committee, was to give serious attention to their work and their commitment to use their various skills to help me understand what had gone well up to that time, what had not gone well and what might be done better going forward. Today, almost six months later, the extent and earnestness of their work is beyond what I had hoped for," stated Archbishop O'Malley.

He continued, "Committee members have helped me understand the concerns, the anger and the frustrations that have emerged from this reconfiguration process. They have impressed upon me the value the people of this Archdiocese place on having the opportunity to be heard. Their perspectives, analyses and candor have influenced a number of my decisions – including those I am announcing today. And while I recognize that these decisions will not please all who are affected, I am deeply grateful for the efforts of the committee members and all others who have worked so hard to help me reach this set of decisions." With the benefit of the committee's analysis, that in some cases produced new information for consideration, the Archbishop has accepted specific recommendations in the case of ten parishes as follows:

### **Recognizing the current situation of the Archdiocese and based on its own extensive review, the committee believes that under these circumstances, the following five churches should remain closed:**

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, East Boston  
Infant Jesus/St. Lawrence, Brookline  
St. Therese, Everett  
St. James, Wellesley  
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, Scituate

### **The committee recommends that the following parish, where the original closing date was rescinded and a new closing date not yet been established, be closed.**

Sacred Heart, Watertown

### **The committee recommends modifying as noted the closing of the following three parishes:**

**Sacred Heart Lexington** - Create one parish in Lexington by appointing the current pastor of Sacred Heart to be pastor of all of Lexington. Under his direction, parishioners will prepare a proposal to the Archdiocese within one year regarding which facilities will best serve the needs of Catholics in Lexington.



**St. Anselm Sudbury** - Affiliate this parish with St. George parish in Framingham and allow the church to remain open as a chapel. New pastoral leadership will be appointed to work with these communities to further consider the facilities and programs needed to serve area Catholics.

**St. Florence Wakefield** - Keep this parish open. Though it has been announced as a closing parish, there exist many compelling reasons to keep it open including a large, engaged, and growing Catholic population.

**The committee recommends that one parish that was closed again be established as a parish:**

**St. Albert Weymouth** - The committee recommends that a parish again be established at St. Albert's church in Weymouth and that a new pastor be appointed to lead that parish forward.

"It has been an honor to work with this Archbishop – and my other committee members who have given so much of themselves to this assignment. Archbishop Sean has impressed us with his ability to listen and respond. He is an incredibly thoughtful leader in an extremely difficult time in this Archdiocese," said Peter Meade.

"Despite the many challenges that exist in our committee's work, it has been extraordinarily uplifting to visit the people of so many parishes and see first-hand the impressive number of faith-filled communities in this Archdiocese. It has made us all very hopeful," stated Sister Janet Eisner.

The committee has been asked by the Archbishop to continue its work as the reconfiguration process is completed. Their continuing review is expected to include, but not be limited to, the following places:

Saint Pius X, Milton  
St. Susanna, Dedham  
Star of the Sea, Squantum  
St. Mary of the Angels, Roxbury  
St. Thomas the Apostle, Peabody

#### **About the Reconfiguration Review Committee:**

Recognizing that the consolidation of parishes was painful to the people directly affected, the Archbishop believed he could benefit from an external review of the reconfiguration begun in January 2004. He sought an objective assessment of the past that would help the Archdiocese improve the reconfiguration process.

Having previously received the results of the very significant work done by the Archdiocese's Central Committee for Reconfiguration, in October 2004, Archbishop Sean O'Malley formed an eight-person, external review committee to evaluate the reconfiguration process underway in the Archdiocese of Boston and to make recommendations that would aid the Archdiocese in a fair and compassionate completion of the process.

Since its formation in October of 2004, the eight-person Meade-Eisner Committee has been credited with advising Archbishop Sean O'Malley in a number of revisions and refinements to the Archdiocesan reconfiguration plan including the decisions to change the reconfiguration plans for St. Mary of the Angels in Roxbury, Sacred Heart in Watertown, Blessed Kateri Tekawitha in Plymouth and to reevaluate the reconfiguration decisions associated with St. Bernard's, Corpus Christi, Mary Immaculate of Lourdes and St. Philip Neri in Newton and the parishes of Charlestown.

The Committee is chaired by Sr. Janet Eisner, SND, President of Emmanuel College, and Peter Meade, Executive Vice President of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Chairman of the Board of Catholic Charities in Boston. In addition to the chairs, the committee is comprised of community and business leaders both lay and clergy:

Mary Lou Batt, Vice President for Administration and University Centers & Institutes of Lesley University  
Jack Connors, Jr., Chairman of Hill, Holliday



Neal Finnegan, Director of the Board, Citizens Capital, Inc.  
Donna Latson Gittens, CEO causemedia Inc.  
Jeanne Lafond, Pastoral Associate of St. Patrick's in Brockton  
Monsignor Dennis Sheehan, Pastor of St. Paul's in Cambridge

*Due to declining numbers of clergy, changing Catholic demographics and financial pressure, the Archdiocese of Boston began the process of parish reconfiguration in January of 2004. Through this process, the Archdiocese is seeking to serve the needs of area Catholics by building parish communities with resources to match needs.*

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