

St. Anselm Parish
A Caring, Committed, Catholic Community

To: The Parishioners of St. Anselm Parish
From: Jack Ryan
Date: September 24, 2004

I am disappointed to report that Wednesday I received by Federal Express a letter from Archbishop Seán denying our appeal. A copy of the letter from Archbishop Sean is being posted with this explanation. You will note that the letter is dated September 17, 2004. It was not given to Federal Express for delivery until September 21, 2004. I have no explanation for that delay. However, the delay causes us no particular prejudice since the 15 days we have to appeal to Rome, which will be discussed in more detail below, begins to run from the date of our receipt of the letter and not from the date of the letter itself.

With respect to the substance of the letter denying our appeal, we are both surprised and confused by the factual assumptions particular to St. Anselm contained in the letter. It appears that Archbishop Seán did not have complete and accurate information regarding St. Anselm parish and that his decision denying the appeal may have been based, in part, on this incomplete and/or inaccurate information.

More specifically, the letter makes reference to Archbishop Seán creating a system for the reconfiguration process using existing parish clusters. As you are aware, for the purpose of reconfiguration St. Anselm parish was clustered with Our Lady of Fatima parish. However, never before had St. Anselm ever been in a cluster with only Our Lady of Fatima. In fact, quite to the contrary, at our very first meeting with the parishes from the Marlboro Vicariate, Bishop Edyvean noted that there was no cluster listed for St. Anselm. At various other times we were told we were in a cluster with Marlboro parishes, a cluster with Framingham parishes and a cluster with St. Ann's of Wayland and Our Lady of Fatima. At no time were we ever told we were in a cluster with only Our Lady of Fatima.

Most telling, however, was the Visitation process we underwent in 1998 and 1999. During the course of that process, Bishop Allué, the regional bishop who visited St. Anselm, told us we were clustered with the MetroWest parishes, which included parishes from Framingham and Natick. More importantly, in March 1999 we received a letter from Cardinal Law in which he discussed the Visitation of St. Anselm. In that letter, Cardinal Law asked that we pursue several goals, including: "Continued support and development to the MetroWest Cluster." In short, the only official written documentation we have from the Archdiocese which identifies the cluster to which St.

Anselm parish belongs is the March 1999 letter from Cardinal Law which states that we are in the MetroWest cluster.

The letter from Archbishop Seán goes on to state that St. Anselm parish has been discussed as a parish that may close for twenty years and that a possible merger was discussed in the late 1990's. Once again, we are most surprised and confused by this statement. No one associated with the administration of the parish during that period of time has any knowledge of any word from the Archdiocese that St. Anselm parish was on an Archdiocesan list for closure or merger. Certainly, as always in life, there were rumors started by various people who usually had no particular knowledge themselves. However, at no time prior to the current reconfiguration process was anyone associated with the administration of St. Anselm's parish ever informed by anyone from the Archdiocese that St. Anselm parish would close or merge with another parish. If the Archdiocese had such thoughts in mind, they didn't tell us.

In fact, quite to the contrary, the March 1999 letter from Cardinal Law praises the reconstruction work we had done inside the church at that time, referring to that reconstruction work as "a worthy project that will bring benefit to all your parishioners." In that same letter, Cardinal Law refers to "growing 'rumors' of pessimism," clearly suggesting that any negative comments we had heard regarding St. Anselm parish were just "rumors." Furthermore, Cardinal Law references the fact that we have realistically addressed future possibilities should St. Anselm become "a parish without a resident pastor." Certainly this last statement, especially in the context of the statements set forth above, sends the clear message that as of 1999 the Archdiocese intended that St. Anselm continue as a parish, with or without a resident priest, with or without a full time priest. This is even more evident from the fact that our reconfiguration model based on a part-time pastor and greater laity involvement was accepted by the Archdiocese in 1999 and continued to this year without any question from the Archdiocese.

In addition, we are mystified by the statement in Archbishop Seán's letter that there is a need to close parishes for the overall viability of the Archdiocese. The letter from Archbishop Seán does not address how closing St. Anselm parish improves the viability of the Archdiocese. Quite to the contrary, it would seem that closing a parish such as St. Anselm would diminish the viability of the Archdiocese. St. Anselm receives no money from the Archdiocese. Our buildings are in excellent condition. An examination of the demographics indicates that the parishioner base of St. Anselm is growing, especially with an increase in the number of younger families. Furthermore, we have already established our ability to function as a parish without a full-time priest as acknowledged by Cardinal Law and the Archdiocese by their acceptance of our own reconfiguration model. More than that, we have helped further the Apostolic mission of the Archdiocese by taking in and providing for the Deaf Community Center when it lost its home in Framingham. Not only are we a vibrant, faith-filled parish which can not only survive but thrive on its own, but we are a parish able to do all that and provide for the needs of others in the Archdiocese. It appears that Archbishop Seán did not have all of this information available to him at the time he made his decision regarding St. Anselm.

In light of this situation, it continues to be our hope for an open dialogue with the Archdiocese in order to discuss all of the issues we have raised above. In addition, it is our intention to appeal our suppression directly to Rome as provided for under canon law. In addition to that, and independent of the procedures set forth under canon law, we will be writing directly to Archbishop Seán in a further attempt to open communications between the Archbishop and St. Anselm parish. It is our hope that through such discussions both sides will come to a better and more accurate understanding of the circumstances surrounding our jewel of a parish.