

**Statement of Boston's Council of Parishes**  
**Re: Decisions of Vatican's Supreme Court**  
**Monday, May 17, 2010**  
**Boston, MA**

Today in Rome the canon law advocate for nine parishioner appeal groups in the Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB) was notified by an official of the Holy See's Apostolic Signatura (the Vatican's supreme-court equivalent) that all nine appeals, plus a tenth appeal from another Boston parishioner group, were denied by the Signatura's *Collegium* at its session of May 7.

The *Collegium* is the highest level of the Vatican's canon law system for parishioner appeals. A list of the ten RCAB parishioner groups is attached.

The Boston appeals are the result of the "Reconfiguration" program of parish closings announced in early 2004 in the RCAB, in the immediate aftermath of the clergy sex abuse scandal which was settled in late 2003 - with \$85 million paid by the archdiocese for 541 claims. To fund this, in May of 2004 the RCAB identified 83 Boston-area parishes to be closed, almost one-fourth of all RCAB parishes then open. When announced, this was the most massive parish closing program in the history of Catholic America.

Although the archdiocese has claimed vociferously over the years that the parish closings of 2004-2005 had nothing to do with its clergy sex abuse settlement, in 2008 the RCAB's own canon advocate in Rome filed a sworn brief with the Signatura, which includes the following remarkable passage (translated from the Latin):

*"...maximum discretion was given to His Excellency the Archbishop of Boston so that he might save the entire archdiocese **from monetary ruin, provoked by the 'sexual abuse crisis'** [emphasis in original]. It is in this context that all actions of this process of reconfiguration and 'closing of parishes' are to be understood, not excluding the suppression of wealthy parishes, not excluding the suppression of parishes of maximum vitality..."*

This is the revealed truth about the massive parish destruction program: parishes were closed, to liquidated as real estate to fund the sex abuse settlement. The contorted statements inflicted by the RCAB upon its parishioners over the past several years about the reasons for closing parishes (shortage of clergy, changing demographics, insolvent parishes) has turned out to be at variance with the truth – intentionally misleading.

The parishioner groups whose appeals have been denied, the RCAB Catholics who have been in vigil in five RCAB churches occupied round the clock for over five years, and 70 parishioner groups in 16 other dioceses who have followed closely the course of the Boston appeals, will now have to consider what steps to take next.

One thing is clear: American Catholics will not let up in their efforts to bring the American bishops to account, and to compel bishops to stop using parishes as ATMs to pay the piper for clergy sex abuse.

Since the scandal exploded in Boston more than eight years ago, at least \$2.5 billion has been paid out by American bishops. And the process is not over: just last week, Vermont's diocese of Montpelier settled 26 claims for almost \$18 million.

St Augustine wrote, "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est,*" Rome has spoken, case closed. The good saint got this wrong: while one chapter has closed, another chapter is opening.

As allegations of clergy sex abuse work their way through many other countries with large Catholic populations, we will see a pattern very familiar to Boston's Catholics:

First, blame the media, the victims, and perhaps a predecessor pope;  
Next, toss a few bishops over the side;  
Then, acknowledge the inevitable, grudgingly;  
Avoid courts, depositions and document discovery;  
After dragging out litigation, pay out enormous settlements;  
After an interval, close local parishes but deny any link to settlements; and  
Above all, deceive the parishioners about truth regarding the parish closings.

We are seven years away from the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 theses in 1517; what will the Roman Catholic Church look like in 2017?

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**Archdiocese of Boston  
Canon Appeals from Parishioners**

**Ten Pending Cases at *Collegium of  
Apostolic Signatura***

<i>Parish</i>	<i>City or Town</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Infant Jesus/St Lawrence	Brookline	reopened as chapel, 2005
Our Lady of Lourdes	Revere	closed
Sacred Heart	Natick	closed
St Anselm	Sudbury	reopened as rectorate, 2005
St Frances Cabrini	Scituate	in vigil since Oct. 2004
St James the Great	Wellesley	in vigil since Oct. 2004
St. Jeremiah	Framingham	in vigil since May 2005
St. Michael the Archangel	Lynn	closed
Ste. Jeanne d'Arc	Lowell	closed
Star of the Sea	Squantum	reopened as chapel, 2005