

Church again forsakes its flock

I wonder if the archbishop has considered the positive, healing effect that selling the building would bring to the Oak Square community, not to mention Our Lady of the Presentation parishioners.

AS YOU WERE SAYING . . . Catherine Donahue Hanley

It's prime real estate. The building needs updating, but the location can't be beat. There is a Green Line stop right outside the front door of the building — a building that can easily be converted into offices. At least that's how the Archdiocese of Boston is looking at "the property."

The property is at the intersection of Tremont and Washington streets in Brighton and has been home to Our Lady of the Presentation Grammar School for more than 80 years.

The school was founded in 1923 by the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Sister Mary E. Duke is principal and is hoping against hope the school will be there next year.

The parish church, just up the street, fell victim to the archdiocese reorganization and closed in August to the dismay of all parishioners. The school, however, was granted an additional year to remain open but is scheduled to close at the end of this school year.

Not long after this announcement, parents, local businesses and organizations and members of the community banded together to create The Oak Square Partnership for Youth and Families.

The group discovered, "The expected closing of OLP provide(d) an opportunity for community and civic leaders to explore expanded use of the facility for youth and family services." The result was a detailed and well thought-out plan



VIGIL IN VAIN: Nancy DeRosa and daughter protest the school's likely closing earlier this week.

whereby the Oak Square community could rally to save the school and enhance the community at the same time.

The Oak Square area, once considered an area at risk, has been on the upswing with many city-generated improvements and the welcome addition of a YMCA.

Under plans for an Oak Square Youth and Families Campus, the school building would be used "as a multiservice educational cooperative," housing a private, independent elementary school, full-time preschool/kindergarten classes, YMCA classrooms for after-school and summer camp programs and additional classrooms and a large function room that could be used for, among other things, adult education programs.

The proposal is supported by a long list of local associations and elected officials.

The 150-page proposal, including a financial plan offering the archdiocese its asking price for the property, was hand-delivered for consideration only to be denied in a five-sentence letter from Bishop Richard Lennon.

It read in part, "In light of all that the Archbishop has heard, and after deliberation about these issues, Archbishop Sean [O'Malley] has decided that the Archdiocese will retain Our Lady of the Presentation School building for Archdiocesan needs, rather than to dispose of it."

A follow-up statement said that "the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese, currently located at One Lake Street in Brighton, will next year move to Our Lady of the Presentation School, which is scheduled to close in June of 2005."

Interestingly enough, the Tribunal is responsible for the "administration of justice."

The Presentation School Foundation responded by saying, "We hope and pray that the Archdiocese will turn away from its present reckless course of wielding its power for its own gains and ignoring the needs of others."

In the ongoing battle, I wonder if the archbishop has considered the positive, healing effect that selling the building would bring to the Oak Square community, not to mention Our Lady of the Presentation parishioners, who, like so many others, were devastated by scandalous behavior of former parish priests.

As a Catholic, my faith in God has not wavered. It's not God I'm disappointed in; it's man.

How disappointed God must be as well. Today, it appears the abuse will continue in a different form, once again at the expense of His children.

Catherine Hanley of Framingham was a member of Our Lady of Presentation Class of 1970. As You Were Saying is a Herald feature. We invite readers to contribute pieces of no more than 600 words. Mail to the Boston Herald, P.O. Box 2096, Boston, MA 02106-2096, fax to 617-542-1315 or e-mail to oped@bostonherald.com. Submissions are subject to editing and become Herald property.