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The **Boston Herald****April 14, 2006** Friday
ALL EDITIONS**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 008**LENGTH:** 628 words**HEADLINE:** Church showing bad faith in school deal**BYLINE:** By PETER GELZINIS**BODY:**

For an archdiocese in need of good news, to say nothing of good faith, it was the biggest PR blunder of these last tortured years.

Last June, two days before Our Lady of the Presentation School in Brighton was to close forever, archdiocesan operatives changed the locks in the dead of night. Bewildered children and their embittered parents were left to celebrate ``graduation day" on a traffic island in the middle of Oak Square.

The maneuver left the honchos at Lake Street looking so bad that as a result something quite good happened. Cardinal Sean O'Malley, then the archdiocesan archbishop, agreed to begin negotiations with a group of parents whose detailed proposal to purchase the OLP school property had previously been blown off by the architect of the grammar school lockout, Bishop Richard Lennon.

Talks seemed to be moving along between the archdiocese and the Presentation School Foundation when suddenly, a month ago, the archdiocese's chancellor, David Smith, said he didn't feel like talking anymore.

Why? The simple answer is the Brighton parish refused to go gently into that good night. First, their church had been shuttered. A year later, the school was closed in the middle of the night. So parishioners - supportive of, but not connected to the Presentation School Foundation - filed suit last August against the archdiocese over control of the parish's assets.

Prominent among those assets is the Presentation School building. When he shut down negotiations with the Presentation School Foundation a few weeks back, David Smith vaguely insinuated that the parishioners' lawsuit tied his hands with respect to selling the school property.

Enter John M. Galvin, the lawyer representing the parishioners. Almost two weeks ago, Galvin sent a letter to Kevin Carragee, director of the Presentation School Foundation.

``My clients have instructed me to (tell) you that they would withdraw any claim to the Presentation School if your group reaches an agreement with the archdiocese," Galvin wrote.

As of yesterday, Kevin Carragee hasn't heard a word from the archdiocese. ``We hope this provides a basis for moving forward and continuing the negotiations," he said. ``At the same time, I'd like to say that the foundation appreciates the action the litigants have taken. We believe they have only the best interests of this community in their hearts."

In a logical world, the archdiocese of Boston would resume negotiations with Kevin Carragee, hasten the process of selling the school building to the Foundation and buy themselves a ton of goodwill. Especially since the foundation has already agreed it would not start a school to compete with St. Columbkille's.

But there is no logic in how the church operates. Only leverage. The archdiocese is using the school building as leverage to make the lawsuit go away. While never saying so, they want Carragee and the Foundation to persuade parents and parishioners of Our Lady to scrap their legal challenge.

“We've received no pressure from the Foundation to do anything like that,” said Richard Terrass, one of the plaintiffs in the parish lawsuit. The suit also charges the church with intentional infliction of emotional distress on all those children, like Terrass's 5-year-old daughter, who had their kindergarten experience yanked away.

“I guess that's where we get into monetary damages,” Terrass was saying, “and while I can't speak for everyone, I know I would certainly be open to some negotiation on that point. Oh, something like tuition reimbursements, for instance, to keep our children in Catholic education. I'd call that something like a creative solution, most definitely.”

Is the archdiocese capable of being creative? Well, Bishop Lennon's gone to Cleveland. That looks like a start.

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