



## Church locks kids, folks out of school: Graduation is canceled

By O'Ryan Johnson

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The Archdiocese of Boston closed the doors of Our Lady of Presentation School two days early, changed the locks and stationed security guards at the front and rear entrances to avert a rumored sit-in by parents yesterday, church officials and parents said.

"We heard from a variety of sources inside and outside the school that there was a lot of activity, people were thinking about bringing in sleeping bags," archdiocese spokesman Terry Donilon said. "I think once the archbishop heard that, it was a pretty clear decision. He was not going to allow the children to be put in the middle of this issue."

Kevin Carragee, president of the Presentation School Foundation, said his group had planned a rally for tomorrow along with a graduation for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds, but no sit-in.

"We had no plans for an occupation of the school building," Carragee said. "I don't know what would prompt them to say that."

Earlier this year Carragee's group offered to buy the Brighton school - which taught about 100 students this year - from the archdiocese for \$2 million and convert it into a private school for children with evening adult education classes. The church rejected their plan. The archdiocese instead intends to base the Metropolitan Tribunal there to hear marriage annulment cases as well as hearings for priests accused of sexual abuse.

The early closure nixes graduation for Presentation students. The archdiocese said student awards and report cards as well as personal items left behind will be forwarded to students or their families in "as timely a fashion as possible."

"That's truly the part of this that makes you the saddest," Donilon said. "They had to make a tough decision and for that they are very, very sorry."

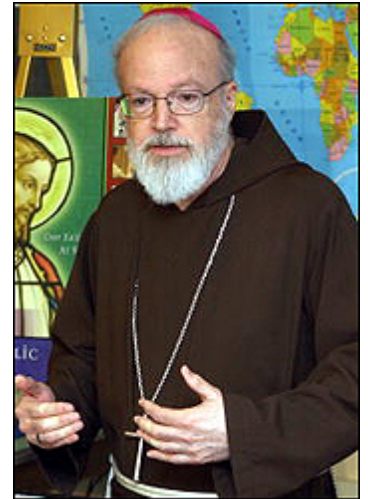
Carragee said students and parents plan to march on the closed school this morning and hold a graduation ceremony in nearby Oak Square.

The school was supposed to close at the end of the last school year under the church's reconfiguration plan. Archbishop Sean O'Malley granted the school a one-year extension that was to end tomorrow.

"We simply could not permit the school year to continue based on the information we had received about the planned actions of a small group intent on stopping the archdiocese from moving forward with its present plans for (the school)," Bishop Richard Lennon said in a statement.

Donilon said plans to move the tribunal into the school were at least temporarily shelved while O'Malley "revisits the future use of the building." He said reopening the building as a school is not one of those options.

"We find this action of the archdiocese to be one of profound arrogance and insensitivity," Carragee said. "They didn't protect children in the past, and they aren't protecting children in the school today."



Archbishop Sean O'Malley. (File)

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