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The **Boston Herald****June** 12, 2005 Sunday  
ALL EDITIONS**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 007**LENGTH:** 581 words**HEADLINE:** THOU SHALT NOT ... Sacrifice business principles in the name of `compassion'**BYLINE:** By Cosmo Macero Jr.**BODY:**

Why such surprise that the Archdiocese of Boston is displaying all the compassion of a household appliance?

Because by now, there should be little doubt or misunderstanding about the church's role as a major corporation.

When big institutions are working their way out of difficult times, sometimes the remedies hurt as much as the original affliction.

And so it is with the Roman Catholic Church and its most troubled subsidiary, the Boston archdiocese - under fire this week for its handling of the doomed Our Lady of the **Presentation School** in Brighton.

The beloved school is one more example of a community treasure that, in the costly fallout from the clergy sex abuse scandal, is treated as an asset whose value must be maximized.

This is because Big Prayer, like Big Business, may indeed answer to a higher authority. But its earthly obligations are not subject to divine intervention.

In the United States alone, the church has spent more than \$1 billion on settlements tied to clergy sex abuse. More than \$375 million of that was racked up during just the past three years.

The numbers are certain to climb much higher, meaning the financial stress on the Holy See's ministry to America may continue for years to come.

And so the Archdiocese of Boston needs to be creative - even more, unfortunately, than it needs to be compassionate about the legacy of the **Presentation School**.

The church is already considering selling a number of its schools in Greater Boston to community groups led by

those schools' boards. Not so, however, in the case of the **Presentation School**.

How does an institution, a corporate citizen or even a man of God such as Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley choose between making good on a massive debt to sex-abuse victims and doing harm to a group of families in Brighton's Oak Square?

With all due respect to my bleeding-heart Herald colleague Mr. Gelzinis, the answer is, with as little emotion as possible.

It's the only way.

The clergy sex scandal inflicted deep spiritual and emotional wounds on its victims, on parishioners and, certainly in Boston, on the archdiocese itself.

Big Prayer is recovering from a generations-long scandal that has changed how it will operate forever.

Recovering from the financial damage, however, is a process that should be measured only by how shrewdly the archdiocese shuffles, shifts and sells off its considerable assets.

It's also a process that, to have any real chance at success, must be devoid of emotion and, perhaps, even compassion, as tough decisions are made.

In the case of Our Lady of the Presentation - marked for closure because of low enrollment - the school building will be reused as diocesan offices, possibly to investigate future clergy abuse cases.

Yes, the families of the **Presentation School** have suffered some insult and indignity.

They were unceremoniously locked out before graduation day, when parents and kids alike should have been rejoicing.

And in a community where a handful of pedophile priests lurked over the years, the diocese now may host tribunals aimed at weeding out clergy sex criminals.

Nonetheless, the Archdiocese of Boston must do all it can to satisfy its financial obligations to victims.

That includes maximizing the value of old school buildings.

Count on it: There will be other **Presentation School** dilemmas. There will be another Oak Square-like fiasco.

Because there just isn't enough compassion to go around.

Not with the kind of debt - financial and spiritual - that Big Prayer has amassed.

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