

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week

Cardinal says he will not resign



Tara Germinsky/CNS
Cardinal Bernard F. Law celebrates Mass Jan. 24 in Boston.

BOSTON(CNS) - A convocation of more than 500 Boston clergy gave Cardinal Bernard F. Law a standing ovation Jan. 23 when he said he will not resign in the wake of struggles over past sexual abuse by archdiocesan clergy.

"My resignation is not part of the solution as I see it," the cardinal said. "With your help and support, however, and with the help and support of those within and outside the church, I want the archdiocese to become a model for how this issue should be handled. I want you to know that with every fiber of my being, I am going to try to see that that happens."

With the recent conviction of former archdiocesan priest John Geoghan, Cardinal Law's opening remarks to the assembly addressed the issue of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. He restated his apology to the victims and families and said both he and the archdiocese had made mistakes.

Geoghan has been accused of abusing 130 children over the past 30 years while he was actively serving as a priest in the archdiocese. He was defrocked in 1998.

The cardinal went on to announce his decision to report retroactively any cases of clergy sexual abuse within the arch-

diocese, while still respecting the confidentiality of the victims.

"In retrospect, I know that I've made mistakes in the assignment of priests," the cardinal told the media Jan. 24. "I have come to see that our policy was flawed.

"The fundamental flaw was the assumption that a psychological evaluation after treatment could be relied upon to reassign a priest," he added. "I have come to recognize that it is simply not appropriate to assign a priest guilty of such an act to a parish or any other assignment. Our revised policy reflects this condition."



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This Week



Lynn Klotz (right) looks on as Dr. Gerald Benjamin, principal of St. Agnes School in Avon, hugs her seven-year-old son, Sam, before school Jan. 25. Sam is a first-grader at St. Agnes.

Selling small-town Catholic education

Billboards. Radio, television and newspaper ads. Open houses, coffee hours and concerts, all open to the public.

It's a promotional blitz worthy of Madison Avenue. Yet the product being sold is Catholic education, and the location is the village of Avon, Livingston County — population: 3,000.

St. Agnes School, comprising grades pre-K through six, is situated on the edge of a traffic circle in the village's center. Even in this quaint setting, modern methods of publicity creep up: At the bottom of the school's sign is its Web address, www.stagnessch.org.

"It's important for people to know what's going on," said Dr. Gerald Benjamin, the school's fifth-year principal.

To further spread the word, the school has erected a billboard along Route 39, between Avon and Geneseo, touting Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 27-Feb. 2, and has placed several ads in local media.

Gloria Long, publicity coordinator of St. Michael's School in Penn Yan, is similarly intent on spreading the word about Catholic

education. She recently dug a large banner out of the school's storage area and made arrangements for it to be displayed near the school during Catholic Schools Week.

"After a three-year absence we'll have the banner across Main Street in our pretty little town of Penn Yan," said Long, who has two children attending St. Michael's.

More often than not, schools like St. Agnes and St. Michael's are the only Catholic elementary schools for miles. Thirty of the diocese's Catholic primary schools are located in Monroe County; 20 more are spread across the other 11 counties in the diocese. This geographic distribution is not unlike that of Catholic high schools in the diocese: Five are in Monroe County, one in Geneva (DeSales High School) and one in Elmira (Notre Dame High School).

Benjamin noted that St. Agnes is the only Catholic school in northern Livingston County, and its students are drawn from nine public-school districts. Among them are Rush-Henrietta, Pittsford,

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STORY BY MIKE LATONA • PHOTOS BY ANDREA DIXON