

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BAN OVERTURNED

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Nov. 18 decision by Massachusetts' highest court to overturn a ban on same-sex marriages "defies reason" and rejects "an understanding of marriage tested over thousands of years and accepted nearly everywhere as the key to a stable society," the Massachusetts Catholic Conference said after the ruling.

In its 4-3 decision, the court said that "barring an individual from the protections, benefits and obligations of civil marriage solely because that person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution."

The court stayed the opinion for 180 days "to permit the Legislature to take such action as it may deem appropriate in light of this opinion."

OSSUARY INSCRIPTION COULD BE GENUINE

IRVING, Texas (CNS) — An ancient Holy Land burial box with the controversial inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" may be authentic, Jesuit Father Joseph Fitzmyer, a noted Scripture scholar, said Nov. 8.

Father Fitzmyer sided with Andre Lemaire, a Scripture scholar at the Sorbonne University in Paris, in disputing a conclusion by the Israel Antiquities Authority that the inscription on the burial box, called an ossuary, is a fake.

IAA researchers, through chemical and microscopic analyses, said the inscription cut through the patina, a thin coating acquired with age.

THIS WEEK'S READING

Sun., Nov. 23: Daniel 7:13-14; Psalms 93:1-2, 5; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33B-37.

Mon., Nov. 24: Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20; (Ps) Daniel 3:52-56; Luke 12:1-4.

Tue., Nov. 25: Daniel 2:31-45; (Ps) Daniel 3:57-61; Luke 21:5-11.

Wed., Nov. 26: Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28; (Ps) Daniel 3:62-67; Luke 21:12-19.

Thu., Nov. 27: Sirach 50:22-24; Psalms 138:1-5, 1; Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19.

Fri., Nov. 28: Daniel 7:2-14; (Ps) Daniel 3:75-81; Luke 21:29-33.

Sat., Nov. 29: Daniel 7:15-27; (Ps) Daniel 3:82-87; Luke 21:34-36.

Priest under investigation

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Pending resolution of a sexual-abuse allegation, the New York province of Jesuits has suspended Father John Costello, SJ, chairman of the religious studies department at McQuaid Jesuit High School in Rochester.

The allegation dates back almost 24 years, according to McQuaid. The accuser was a minor and a student at Regis High School in New York City when Father Costello was serving as a priest in training at the all-boys high school. Father Costello has "emphatically denied" the allegation, according to Father Philip G. Judge, SJ, McQuaid's principal.

McQuaid announced the suspension in a Nov. 15 press release and press conference the same day. The school said no allegations or complaints against Father Costello have been made by students or alumni during his tenure at McQuaid. McQuaid officials notified parents and trustees of the suspension by letter.

Father Judge said McQuaid's students were informed in three separate assemblies on Nov. 17. Father

Costello is "very well-respected and well-loved," Father Judge said, and the students were shocked by the allegation.

"He's taught a lot of them, and they're very sorry that this has happened," Father Judge said.

The school said the New York provincial, Father Gerald Chojnacki, SJ, had notified the school of the allegation on Nov. 15. On Nov. 13, Father Chojnacki notified Father Costello that he would not be allowed to function as a priest or teacher and that he could not work with children or young adults until the allegation against him is resolved.

Father Costello has worked at McQuaid for various periods over the course of the last 18 years. He is a former director of admissions, and has taught religion and English.

"We are very saddened to learn of this allegation," McQuaid President James E. Whelehan said in a statement. "We agree that the actions taken by the provincial, though unfortunate, are necessary and timely, because Father Costello is a current faculty member, and because

our overarching concern is always the safety of our young men/students. Although this incident did not take place at our school, I want to make it absolutely clear that McQuaid will not tolerate any improper conduct among adults and students."

The "thoughts and prayers" of the school were with "anyone who may have been the victim of abuse," Whelehan said.

"We also will keep Father Costello in mind in view of the fact that this accusation is at the present unproven," he added.

School officials said they would conduct meetings this week for students and parents to "provide ample opportunity for open discussion and questions." Counselors will be available to assist students in dealing with the announcement.

The New York province will continue to investigate the allegation, according to McQuaid. The school added that the province's action was in accord with the provisions of the 2002 U.S. bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

Reconciliation day set for victims

Bishop Clark, others to be at retreat center

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be joined by some members of the Diocese of Rochester's review board on sexual abuse for "A Day of Reconciliation for Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse and Their Families" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, at Notre Dame Retreat Center, 5151 Foster Road, Canandaigua.

The gathering will feature prayer, meditation, music and talks, including a presentation by Dr. Richard Ciccone, director of the Psychiatry and Law Program at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Ciccone is a psychiatrist with expertise in the area of sexual abuse.

The event is free of charge and open to victims of clergy sexual abuse and their families. According to diocesan spokesman Doug Mandelaro, area media have been asked not to cover this event out of respect for the privacy of the victims.

Given the intense nature of the day's theme, mental-health profes-

sionals will be on hand to help anyone address feelings or thoughts that may arise during the day, according to Barbara Pedeville, victims advocate for the diocese.

"If feelings of anger emerge, it gives people an opportunity to channel that anger in appropriate ways," Pedeville said of having mental-health professionals on hand. "If feelings of panic emerge, the therapist will be on hand to work through the severe anxiety."

Pedeville said the day was designed to help victims know they have support.

"It's an opportunity to hear other victims' stories and experiences," she said. "They won't feel as alone in what they're experiencing, hearing what others are experiencing."

Pedeville noted that many other people beyond the victims themselves have been affected by the sex-abuse scandal and may benefit from the day of reconciliation. Victims' parents and siblings of victims sometimes feel anger and/or guilt about what has happened to the victims, she noted. Spouses of

victims, meanwhile, can experience difficulties in their relationships as a consequence of their mates' experiences.

She added that anyone interested in participating in the day may contact her at 585/328-3228, ext. 1215; toll free at 800/388-7177; or by e-mailing to pedeville@dor.org. She noted that participants are welcome to withhold their last names if they wish.

If the day of reconciliation draws a positive response from participants, the diocese may make it an annual event, Pedeville said.

She added that the day is one of many diocesan approaches for listening to, believing and healing victims. Victims are encouraged to contact either her or Father Robert Ring, the diocese's other victims advocate, and may remain anonymous. The victims advocates are also available for one-on-one sessions, she said. Therapy for victims is available from outside therapists.

"We can't ever change what has happened, but hopefully we can change the future," she said.

www.CatholicCourier.com