



Massachusetts Catholic Conference
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Archdiocese of Boston, Diocese of Fall River,
Diocese of Worcester, Diocese of Springfield

Policy Regarding Signature Drive Campaigns on Church Property

History

Over the past several years numerous groups and individuals advocating for the passage or repeal of particular laws or changes to the Massachusetts Constitution have requested permission of the Bishops or local pastors to collect signatures to help accomplish their effort. Typically, the request is to collect signatures on church property prior to or at the conclusion of Holy Mass or other church functions. In many cases the proposal being advocated for by the authors of the petitions are ones in which the Bishops agree and at times encourage civic engagement by Catholics in the public square.

Until now, the decisions to allow groups or individuals to gather signatures on church property was left primarily to individual pastors. Some pastors allowed the activity to take place while others did not feel it was an appropriate setting. Many pastors expressed a hope that we, the Bishops, would give them guidance on this issue.

The overwhelming feedback from parishioners over the past several years is that they do not like to be approached prior to or at the conclusion of Mass or other church activities for their signatures on a petition drive.

We agree. Signature drives may always take place on public property, including sidewalks adjacent to church property. However, church functions are a place to experience the fullness of community and parish life. In particular, Holy Mass is a place to encounter God through the reception of the Eucharist. The celebration of Holy Mass is a place for prayer, reflection, reconciliation and hope.

We also believe in the democratic process in this great Commonwealth. It gives citizens the power to organize, advocate and ultimately change the laws governing our state. We agree that certain laws should be enacted while others should be repealed. In many cases the voice of the Church must be heard.

Policy

Accordingly, we issue the following policy:

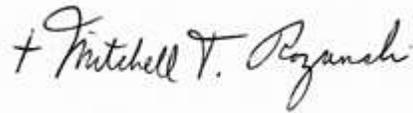
We hereby direct that what has commonly been referred to as “signature drives” to enact or repeal a law or amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts not take place on church property.

Nothing in this policy should be construed to discourage priests, pastors or other church officials from speaking out passionately and appropriately on issues consistent with church teaching.

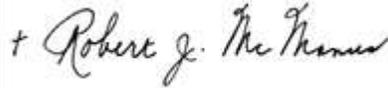
Very truly yours,



His Eminence Seán P. O'Malley, OFM Cap.
Archbishop of Boston



Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski
Bishop of Springfield



Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester



Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, SDV
Bishop of Fall River