

ROCKFORD POLS NIX CHURCH DEMOLITION

Yesterday, the Catholic League issued a news release regarding the proposed demolition of St. Mary's Oratory, the second oldest church in Rockford, Illinois. Winnebago County officials were allegedly considering a plan to replace the church with a new county jail. But now public officials have pledged not to destroy the church. Commenting on the latest development is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"We are delighted that the Winnebago County Board has said it will not tear down St. Mary's Oratory. Yesterday, I wrote to every member of the board expressing our concerns. Immediately, I heard from John M. Sweeney, Mary Ann Aiello, Bob Kinnison and John Terranova; all opposed any effort to disturb the church. Later in the day I received a statement from County Board Chairman Kris Cohn, States Attorney Paul A. Logli and Sheriff Richard Meyers that said there were 'no plans to buy and/or destroy' St. Mary's; the board added that Allen Chapel AME would be similarly protected.

"This is a textbook example of democracy in action. The Catholic League is contacted by Scott P. Richert of the Rockford Institute; I issue a news release and e-mail every member of the county board; Chris Bowman of WNTA interviews me; Rockford Bishop Thomas Doran joins the interview; and county officials scratch the plan.

"We are grateful to all the leaders in the Rockford community who contributed to this happy ending."