



Diocese
of
Cleveland

Cathedral Square

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

The Reverend Donald E Snyder
St. Ladislav
2345 Bassett Rd.
Westlake, OH 44145-2999

Dear Father Snyder,

In this Lenten season we are called to a time of prayer, fasting, repentance, and sacrifice so that we might strengthen our faith and better fulfill our Baptismal commitment as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is a fitting time to reflect upon our prayer and sacrifices as a diocesan Church so that we also might strengthen our mission and pastoral care, and lay a foundation that will serve the mission of Christ for many years to come.

I want to express my gratitude for the work that you and your Cluster Planning and Coordination (CPC) Team have done over the past many months in preparing your proposed cluster plan in consultation with your parish leaders and parishioners. Following my review of all the plans, it is clear that parish leaders across our diocese have taken the planning seriously, and have given much careful study and discernment in seeking to better serve the mission and ministry of the Church. I also want to recognize the valuable counsel given to me by the *Vibrant Parish Life – Phase II* Committee, by my cabinet staff in their review of all the plans, and by the Presbyteral Council in their deliberations regarding clusters where there was a call for consolidation.

Please understand the fundamental importance of evangelization and the celebration of the Eucharist as the foundation of who we are and what we do. The implementation of every cluster plan must lead to bringing the Gospel message into people's lives by helping people to find more life and hope in their relationship with God and in the Church. We must focus on truly making the celebration of Mass, in accord with the mind of the Church, the summit of what we do as Church so that it may be the source of our faithfulness to Jesus' mission.

Since we began this process, our region and our world have encountered economic changes and difficulties that were not anticipated. These conditions have adversely impacted every aspect of the Church – the lives and enterprises of our people, the financial support of parishes and schools, our Catholic Charities services, and the value and sale of closed properties. History has also shown that in difficult times people turn more to their faith – the potential evangelizing moments will need to be responded to with much care. We will need to move forward in ways that give witness to understanding and compassion for what these economic realities mean in people's lives, while recognizing the need for careful stewardship in how we equitably use the limited resources we have. The economic realities only intensify some of the challenges with regard to changing demographics, finances and fewer priests, and compel us to take the necessary steps now that will enable us to provide a strong and lasting Catholic presence in every area of our diocese. **Guided by the Holy Spirit we must embrace our unity as Church and transcend whatever might divide us for the greater good of Christ's mission.**

(Over)

In May of 2007, I asked you, along with your parish CPC Team and parishioners, to address several issues and challenges relative to your cluster. Having considered your proposed cluster plan and the consultation I received in the diocesan review process, I now wish to present my specific comments and decisions regarding the plan and pastoral directions St. Bernadette and St. Ladislav Parishes have presented.

- I appreciate the work you have done developing this plan. I believe you have given an honest and thoughtful response to the issues which your parishes addressed in the plan.
- I affirm the proposed collaboration regarding the sacrament of reconciliation, adult education, the formation of ministers, and identifying further possibilities for collaborative activities.
- I also affirm the proposed collaboration to ensure the long-term presence of a strong, stable Catholic school. At the very least, a clear visible model of inter-parish collaboration will be essential to sustaining Catholic schools throughout our diocese.
- With regard to evangelization, the plan indicates initial steps for the utilization of resources and the formation of a committee. I would like to see more details for further actions regarding evangelization which can be included in the update reports noted below.
- I appreciate the past efforts your parishes have made with regard to a commitment to *Church in the City* partnerships. Possibilities to further develop such partnerships can be better explored when the consolidation plans in Cleveland have been finalized.
- I did not find elements in the plan that directly address enhancing participation in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy. The celebration of the Mass according to the Church's teaching must be the priority in inviting people to the community of faith. Please include further planning on these matters in your update reports.

If you have any questions or concerns about going forward with the implementation of these decisions, please contact Deacon James Armstrong, my Special Assistant for Reconfiguration at extension 2130.

I expect a letter with a brief update on the progress of the plan implementation no later than 30 October 2009 jointly signed by the pastors of each parish in the cluster, and a more comprehensive report no later than 30 June 2010, again signed by the pastors of each parish. It is my intention that future parish visitations in the spirit of Canon 396.1 by the auxiliary bishops and myself will include a continued review of progress being made in implementing the approved cluster plans.

I look forward to your cooperation as we work to fulfill the Church's mission throughout our diocese. May God's blessings be with you and your parish community in this Lenten season.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

+Richard Lennon

Bishop of Cleveland

12 March 2009