

Our Lady of the Lake Parish

19951 Lake Shore Boulevard
Euclid, Ohio 44119

Ss. Robert & William Parish

367 E 260th Street
Euclid, Ohio 44132

St. John of the Cross Parish

140 Richmond Road
Euclid, Ohio 44143

29 June 2010

Most Reverend Richard G Lennon
Bishop of Cleveland
1404 E Ninth Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Dear Bishop Lennon,

We are writing to you about the six Euclid parishes that over the last year were consolidated into three new parishes. Overall, the consolidation has gone smoothly. All of the closing Masses and opening Masses were very meaningful and well attended. People are registering in the new parishes and parish life seems to be returning to “normal.” There seems to be a good sense of Catholic identity in the city and people. For the most part, both Catholics and non-Catholics saw the consolidation in Euclid as a positive and not a negative. Of course there is sorrow and grief and all three new parishes are allowing for continued healing from this sadness. However, this mourning does not appear to be an obstacle to our endeavors to establish ourselves and move forward.

In your letter dated 12 March 2009, you stated that you agreed with the CPC Team’s recommendations and we appreciate this. The rationale of demographics, finances and clergy staffing seem to be consistent with our experience thus far. Reality seems to be consistent with projections with respect to number of households, staff sizes, and finances. This has allowed for the establishment of three strong, vibrant and seemingly stable parishes as you requested.

Specifically, the experience of each of the new parishes is as follows:

Our Lady of the Lake (merger of former Holy Cross & St. Christine) – by Joe Fortuna

Overall, I believe that the first few months of the merge have been a mixed experience for parishioners. Although the parishioners from St. Christine have had to make more adjustments than the folks from Holy Cross, those who have come report feeling welcomed and included. Although they have had to make fewer adjustments, it is my impression that a substantial number of Holy Cross parishioners have found the merge to be more difficult than they anticipated. We have been attentive to respecting the gifts and ministries of each of the former parishes. However, because in recent years there hasn’t been a lot of activity at St. Christine, much of what is currently happening is necessarily built on a structure that was previously in place at Holy Cross. I anticipate that structure will gradually take on a form distinctive to Our Lady of the Lake as time goes on. We are in the process of forming our pastoral council according to a newly approved set of by-laws. A finance committee has been formed and has charted out a series of steps to monitor our finances and project budgets for the next year and a longer five year budget. Staff responsibilities have largely been defined, with one of the staff positions being primarily charged with issues of evangelization and social justice. A parish picnic is planned for July 17th on the grounds of Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School. We have not made many changes to the church building itself,

since we are still in the process of designing a new logo for the parish. Once this is done, I anticipate that the worship space will also begin to reflect more fully a new parish reality.

Other than those indicated elsewhere in this letter, the following areas of concern have surfaced: (1) Several members of the former Holy Cross parish have reported that they feel they were lied to when it came to naming the parish. I believe that this is a result of their confusing the naming of the parish with the name of the church building. I don't believe that my attempts to clarify have been compelling to them. (2) As far as we can tell, about seventy percent of the former St. Christine's have agreed to be registered at Our Lady of the Lake. I believe that some former members of Holy Cross are "testing the waters" at other local parishes. As a result, our numbers are not what we might have expected, but I am optimistic that over time this will improve.

On a very positive note, parishioners have recently started saying things like, "I think we're ready to move forward," or "I think things are going to come together." Although the challenges remain, the attitude and spirit of those who are here seem good.

Ss. Robert & William (merger of former St. William & St. Robert) – by John Betters

The merger of St. Robert and St. William went very well! The people really have seemed to embrace the new parish and the majority of former parishioners re-registered in the new parish. As of the writing of this letter, we have just over 1,600 registered households. We did find the census of the former St. William was quite outdated and the stated 2,100 families by the former administration was severely exaggerated. In reality it was probably closer to 1,100 families. As you know, our Mass attendance has grown to the point where we had to expand our parking lot. The Pastoral Care of the parishioners is going very well. We have many new ministries starting, such as a Wellness Ministry, Clergy visits to our over one hundred homebound, Ladies Guild, and Moms Rosary Group. Our existing ministries that carried over from the former parishes are growing as well such as the Legion of Mary, Adult Education and Sacramental Preparation. Our collections are strong; therefore we can project a balanced budget with a slight surplus for both our parish and school in the coming fiscal year. Overall, there is a great sense of parish with a strong and welcoming atmosphere. There do not seem to be any out of the ordinary challenges we are facing.

St. John of the Cross (merger of former St. Felicitas & St. Paul) – Sal Ruggeri

St. John of the Cross continues to grow as a community of faith. Our parish is made up of over 1600 families and Mass attendance not only seems to be consistent, but growing. Our ministries, both those that we maintained from St. Felicitas and St. Paul as well as newly created ministries are thriving and offering our parishioners many opportunities to share the gifts. We have recently added a Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry to our staff. Our collections are remaining very steady with slight increases and we are projecting a balanced budget for 2010 – 2011. Our Finance Council is considering ways to plan for the future to assure the financial stability of the parish while recognizing that we owe over \$600,000 in back assessments to the Diocese as well as the fact that we will be required to provide much needed maintenance to the St. Paul Cemetery at an estimated cost of \$250,000 and provide another \$250,000 for a perpetual care fund. Within the past couple of months, our Pastoral Council, with the assistance of David DeLambo, has begun a Pastoral Planning Process that will begin in September and will include days of retreat, Appreciative Inquiry sessions, town hall meetings, and other opportunities for parishioners to be invested in planning for our future. The plan will have two components: one that will focus on the next 3-5 years and one that will look to the next 10 years, to the year 2020. The "slogan" of our planning efforts is "2020 Vision: Seeing Our Parish with the Eyes of Jesus."

In your 12 March 2009 letter, you specifically stated some “other issues and challenges” for us to address as a cluster. The following is a summary of where we are at with this. Please be aware that our accomplishments in these areas are limited because of the work associated with the consolidation and the fact that two of us did not start our ministry in Euclid until January of this year. We have identified the following:

Evangelization & Engaging the Faithful in regularly participating in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy

In our initial proposal, we discussed Evangelization in terms of Welcoming and Engaging as well as providing Social and Community Services to a diverse and changing population. Our October report spoke mostly of the service component since none of our mergers had actually taken place.

This report will include current efforts as well as plans for the future.

Welcoming/Engaging

As is to be expected, each of the new Euclid parishes has concentrated on being friendly, welcoming places in which to celebrate the liturgy. From the reconfiguration of worship spaces to weekly introductions in the pews and social events after liturgies, we have tried to create an atmosphere and environment that is welcoming to all.

It has been the custom for the Euclid Parishes to share a Lenten Mission for the past four or five years. This year the decision was made that each church would have its own so that each parish could concentrate on developing relationships among their new parishioners.

We have made efforts to account for the parishioners’ that were registered in the original six Euclid parishes to ensure that they have a place to call their spiritual home. As we move forward, the possibility for a parish census is being considered in some of the parishes.

To encourage engagement, some parishes have had Ministry Fairs and others have had training for liturgical ministers. There have also been special welcoming events for newly registered parishioners. We are also making efforts to involve ourselves in community events as they occur such as the National Day of Prayer and East 200th Street Stroll. These types of events take us out into the community and also invite community members to visit our churches.

Social Services and Care of the Sick

A group has been formed to review outreach to our healthcare facilities and to ensure an equitable division of responsibility for them.

The Euclid Parishes continue their work with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, the Euclid Hunger Center, the Baby Corner and the St. Vincent DePaul Society. Additionally, they have been invited to participate in a new Community Mediation Program initiated by BRIDGES. Parishioners have been invited to become trained mediators and work in the neighborhood to encourage communication between neighbors when difficulties arise.

Plans for shared Social Justice Education are in process. As we learn about our new parishes and among the residents within our boundaries, we will continue to review and reassess the services provided and

look into the services that are needed. We intend to work both as individual parishes and as a Cluster Group to address these needs.

The Future

An Evangelization Committee has been formed to monitor this work and develop a plan for continued progress in this area. These plans include Evangelization Formation for our parishioners, review of the Goals and Objectives of “Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States” and “Best Practices for Parishes” Evangelization Workbook. We are committed to being an evangelizing presence in our neighborhoods by spreading the good news and living in such a way that the love of God is evident by our lives.

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

In the original cluster plan that was submitted to you, we said that we would hire one youth minister for the cluster. Upon further reflection and discussion among the three of us and the members of our advisory groups; we decided that each of us should hire our own youth minister. This has happened and each parish will be developing a comprehensive Youth Ministry program to minister to High School Teens and Young Adults. These ministries will be implemented this fall. While we seriously considered hiring just one youth minister for all three parishes, we felt this would not allow them to feel connected enough to their particular parish. While not one uniform model will be embraced, we have agreed that the basic framework will be based upon the U.S. Bishops document, *Renewing the Vision*.

We are writing into the job descriptions of the youth ministers at each of our parishes that they will be expected to collaborate with one another. We are hoping to form a teen and adult council comprised of parishioners from all three parishes to make this happen. We will explore collaboration on retreats, service projects and diocesan or universal Church activities, such as World Youth Day.

Finally, we will monitor this carefully and annually review our effectiveness in reaching out to this age group.

Pastoral Care of the Sick

Within the boundaries of our three parishes there are twelve facilities that require pastoral care on a regular basis: these include two hospitals, a hospice care center, several nursing homes and long term care facilities and the Euclid Jail. While nine of these are within the boundaries of St. John of the Cross, it has been decided that, in an effort to provide uniform care and a more equitable division of ministerial responsibility, we would share this responsibility. A subcommittee made up of three parishioners from each parish studied not only geography with respect to the facilities, but also what would be considered to be a minimum level of pastoral care at each long term care facility that should be adhered to by each parish including reception of the Eucharist at least twice per month (ideally three to four times per month), opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation two times per year, and at least an annual anointing of all Catholic residents. Each parish will also provide for various other opportunities for prayer as they deem appropriate and as numbers of ministers allow. There is currently a rotating schedule of priests for pastoral care at Euclid Hospital and Fr. Sal handles calls from Richmond Heights Hospital. All requests for a patient’s own pastor to visit are certainly honored.

Catholic Schools

At present we have three Catholic Schools. Each school is anticipating a healthy enrollment of over 300 students for this coming year. However, all three of us experienced a decrease in enrollment for this coming school year. We have met several times together with our principals and are ready to proactively explore new models to assure that strong Catholic education be available to our elementary age parishioners. We know short term what we are doing is well, but long term (2 – 3 years from now) this will not work and we must act now. We met with Margaret Lyons, Frank Kuhar and Dave DeLambo on June 22 to initiate a process to discern how to best serve the Catholic education needs of our three parishes. All three parishes have “School Boards” and we will develop a process over the summer to discern a proposal for you to consider within a year or so. In addition to begin working together now we are having a joint faculty retreat on August 23. We will continue to explore more possibilities like this for the future.

Other Areas of Collaboration & Clustering

- We will continue to have joint Communal Reconciliation for Advent & Lent as these have been well established in Euclid for the last five years or so.
- We will continue to have a joint yearly Mission. In Lent of 2011, we will have a Mission in which each will take a night to present therefore allowing the parishioners to meet each of the new Pastors in Euclid.
- We have asked our DRE’s to study the possibility of having one cluster PSR program in order to best conform all three parishes to the anticipated directives from you regarding PSR in our Diocese. We will make a decision on this over the next year and implement any changes in the 2011-2012 school year.
- We will explore the possibility of a cluster Pre-Cana during the coming year.
- We make every effort to promote each other’s parish activities and we will continue to create various means to do this.
- Our daily Mass schedules, while not deliberately done, do complement one another and allow for a variety of Mass times.

Overall, we anticipate strong leadership in the Cluster. All three parishes seem to have assembled strong and active staffs, both Pastoral and Support, as well as an active and willing volunteer base. We the three pastors meet on a regular basis to discuss issues regarding the cluster and our parishes in general. While the three of us have not worked together in the past, we seem to be building a good sense of trust and mutual respect for one another and we are willing to actively work together. There does not seem to be a sense of competition or a territorial attitude. While we can differ in style and approach, it appears that we complement one another well. We all share a common vision of serving the people of God and helping to build up our parish communities and the presence of the Catholic Church in Euclid.

Be assured of our prayers for you as you continue to minister to the people of our Diocese.

Sincerely,

Joseph Fortuna
Pastor of Our Lady of the Lake

John Betters
Pastor of Ss. Robert & William

Salvatore Ruggeri
Pastor of St. John of the Cross