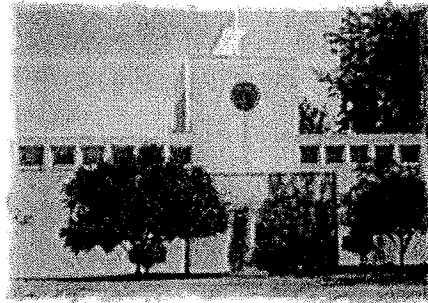


St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Community
32114 Vine Street
Willowick, Ohio 44095



St. Justin Martyr Catholic Church
35781 Stevens Blvd.
Eastlake, Ohio 44095



June 30, 2010

Most Reverend Richard Lennon
Cathedral Square Plaza
1404 East Ninth Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Dear Bishop Lennon,

This letter is in response to your letter dated April 26, 2010. It is our comprehensive report on the progress and plan implementation regarding the cluster plan of the parish communities of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Justin Martyr and comments on our welcoming efforts to those in closing parishes, deepening the relationship of current Catholics to God and bringing the Gospel message to marginalized, inactive or to those who are not Catholic.

Throughout the past nine months, our Vibrant Parish Life team, Parish Councils, and staff have met together every other month in an effort to ensure continued collaboration of our communities and to complete the work of our CPC Team. It has been our intent to lead and move forward in a spirit of collaboration.

In your letter of March, 2009 there were several issues and challenges that were presented and are rewritten here in italics along with a paragraph which follows of our cluster's progress throughout the process as well as where we will be continuing collaborative efforts in the future:

- ✓ *I affirm the continuing collaboration regarding St. Vincent DePaul (SVDP), Vacation Bible School (VBS), Faith Formation programs, CYO, and opportunities for prayer and cooperation among the clergy.*

St. Vincent De Paul:

SVDP – Our St. Vincent De Paul Food Pantries continue to collaborate in order to serve the communities of Eastlake and Willowick by sharing resources, and by participating in

the area wide meetings for all churches with food pantries that are held once every other month. Together our food pantries served over 2,000 people in Willowick and Eastlake in the past year. We anticipate continued collaboration in this area in order to best meet the needs of our communities.

Vacation Bible School:

VBS 2009 was held from August 10th to August 14th. There were 184 children in grades preschool through grade five who attended this year's VBS from both of our Catholic parish communities as well as children from the surrounding neighborhoods of Eastlake and Willowick. We had 120 volunteers who included students in grade six through grade twelve and adults. Presently, we are in the process of our fifth year of a combined VBS program. This year's program will be held August 9th to August 13th and we anticipate approximately 200 children to attend. Because of the success of this program in the area of evangelization of children and adults, we anticipate its continuance into the future.

Faith Formation:

Faith Formation collaboration is continuing through the attendance by both parish Directors of Religious Education at the Lake/Geauga District Catholic Organization of Religious Education Directors and Lake/Geauga District meetings. The parishes are open to sharing resources and best practices for lifelong religious education and faith formation.

In past years, our RCIA teams have participated in a shared retreat.

As has been our practice for the past three years and continuing during the 2009 – 2010 school year, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Justin Martyr parish communities collaborated by planning and implementing an intergenerational program during Lent entitled "*Dying and Rising*", *Understanding Lenten Symbols*. This faith formation experience was held three times from March 6th through March 9th for parishioners from both parishes to attend. Approximately 450 parishioners from the combined parish communities attended this event.

For the 2010-2011 year, discussion is underway regarding a combined parish Ignatian retreat.

We anticipate continued collaboration in the areas of Faith Formation as opportunities arise. Other programs under consideration are Life in the Eucharist, ALPHA, and the Marriage Course.

CYO Athletic Association:

The St. Mary Magdalene-St. Justin Martyr Athletic Association considers itself one program using shared resources and facilities of both parishes. The Athletic Association provided a CYO athletic experience to approximately 192 boys and girls (grades 4 – 12) during the 2009 – 2010 school year. Sports offered through our athletic association

included football, volleyball and basketball. Participants attended both the SMM-SJM day school and the PSR programs of both parishes. Volunteers were from both parishes and approximate number of volunteer hours equaled 3,300. Additionally, we worked with other parishes that did not have enough boys to field a team to allow their boys to participate with ours for football. These other parishes included Immaculate Conception, St. Noel, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Divine Word. (See appendix for more information)

Collaboration among Clergy:

We continue to cooperate in serving the Sacramental and prayer needs of both faith communities by covering masses and funerals during retreats and vacations. All clergy participate in the sacramental life of the St. Mary Magdalene-St. Justin Martyr Day School. Presently our clergy also share in the ministry of pastoral care for patients at area hospitals.

- ✓ *I also affirm the continuing collaboration regarding the Catholic school and recognize the challenges that have been faced. At the very least, a clear visible model of inter-parish collaboration will be essential to sustaining the long term presence of Catholic schools in western Lake County. Future planning for these schools will need to explore wider collaboration among parishes in adjacent clusters and consider different models, including the regionalization of schools.*

Catholic Day School:

Our Catholic Day School is continuing with classes from kindergarten through grade eight with enrollment at 206 students for the 2010-2011 school year at the St. Justin Martyr location and 42 students in the preschool program which this summer will be moved to the St. Justin Martyr location. Presently the school is undergoing study for accreditation which is a two year process.

Regular SMM-SJM School Board and Finance Council meetings continue for the school's future.

We attended two informational district meetings regarding the regionalization of schools. The first meeting was with the Secretary for Education and district pastors at St. John Vianney in June of 2009 and the second was a meeting with you on September 4, 2009. There were no concrete developments from these meetings.

Wider collaboration has begun with meetings on August 10, 2009 and September 1, 2009 of our western Lake County parish schools including Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Wickliffe, and Immaculate Conception in Willoughby. At these meetings, there was some sharing of information and discussion of progress on the formation of a joint school. The meeting we had scheduled for April 21, 2010 was cancelled because of funerals. Mater Dei Academy has been established for the 2010-2011 school year. It appears that many challenges still exist and we may need additional support from you and personnel at the diocesan offices to accomplish this effort.

- ✓ *I encourage the proposed areas of future collaboration regarding youth ministry, young adult ministry and evangelization. However, there are serious declines in Mass attendance that need to be addressed. I realize that these are very challenging issues that call for further action. The celebration of the Mass according to the Church's teaching must be the priority in inviting people to the community of faith.*

Youth Ministry:

The Youth Ministers of our parishes have met and are presently in the process of cooperating with one another by promoting events for each program in both parish communities and will continue to investigate ways to share youth ministry both within our cluster and with the surrounding parishes in Lake County.

The Lake County Life Teen group has extended an open invitation to our parishes to attend youth ministry in a spirit of collaboration with them.

St. Mary Magdalene and St. Justin Martyr communicate district wide youth ministry events continuously through our parish publications and web sites especially those for the Lake County Life Teen Youth group and the recent bereavement support group started at St. Justin Martyr.

The Lake/Geauga district is eliciting continued support among youth ministers and parishes for large gatherings and events that a single parish would not have the resources to provide on its own.

Young Adult Ministry:

For our young adult ministry, presently we have supported the Lake/Geauga District VOICE group and the SESA groups for young adults, by publicizing the meeting and event times through parish media.

During our joint Parish Council meetings this year, we studied the needs of young adults. We began using Facebook as a new way of communication with young adults this year. We invited Margaret Vogel from the CYO/Youth and Young Adult Office to present current statistics regarding young adults and to present ideas on what to do next in this area. Presently, we have started a young adult core group with representatives from each parish to explore the possibilities of continued collaboration in this area.

Evangelization:

Our parish communities are both actively involved in the Lake/Geauga District wide Evangelization efforts that began with an Evangelization Workshop in the Fall of 2008. We continue our involvement in the Evangelization effort presently being worked on through our District Meetings and subcommittee meetings which is designed to "support one another in our understanding of and implementation of evangelization through Sacramental Follow-Up Mystagogy". Both parishes are anticipating participation in the

next district conference in March, 2011 *The Evangelizing Parish* presented by the Forum on the Catechumenate.

Mass Attendance:

Our parish communities continue to encourage participation and invite inactive members to Mass. Looking to the future, as individual parishes and as a cluster we are anticipating the need for catechesis and outreach regarding the revised Roman Missal and its implementation. We anticipate that this time may provide an opportunity for the deepening spirituality of our Sunday Worship as a result of the study of the symbolism and meaning of our liturgical prayers.

Stewardship:

Both parishes have stewardship committees that are working on ways to further develop discipleship. The stewardship committee chairpersons have begun meeting and are presently in the process of discovering ways to collaborate to increase Mass attendance in both parish communities.

In February, 2010 we participated in a joint parish stewardship retreat, *Handle With Care*, facilitated by Mary Pat Frey.

During the year 2009 – 2010 St. Mary Magdalene sponsored estate seminars for parishioners and invited parishioners from St. Justin Martyr to attend.

- ✓ *The overall financial situation at St. Mary Magdalene remains troubling and is directly related to the future stability of both the parish and shared school. Further communication will be needed to indicate steps that are being taken to address the situation in ongoing dialogue with the Finance Office.*

St. Mary Magdalene's Financial Situation:

The Pastoral Team and the Finance Council of St. Mary Magdalene are collaborating with the Diocesan Finance Office and the Diocesan Stewardship Office to work towards the following items that may assist in providing financial stability for the parish including 1) the sale of excess parish property, 2) planned giving and estate planning, 3) an overall commitment to increasing parishioner contributions, and 4) a balanced budget for fiscal 2011. Notably, in order to provide a balanced budget, St. Mary Magdalene has reduced support to the combined day school by one-half from \$120,000 to \$60,000. St. Mary Magdalene tuition aid will still be accessible to St. Mary Magdalene parish families attending the day school in the amount of \$30,000.

St. Justin Martyr is providing the cash flow necessary to pay the St. Mary Magdalene-St. Justin Martyr day school bills on time.

A spirit of collaboration continues outside of our parish mandates including support in advertising, shared resources and best practices for our festivals and fundraisers. We anticipate continued collaboration in this area.


- ✓ *Please comment on efforts by parishes in your cluster to welcome Catholics from parishes that are closing, as well as to deepen the relationship of practicing Catholics to God and the life of the Church and to bring the Gospel message to marginalized or inactive Catholics and to those who are not Catholic.*

Both parishes are using good Stewardship practices to welcome new members and encourage a deeper participation in the life of the Church. Evangelization outreach continues through the RCIA processes.

St. Justin Martyr received notification of three families from St. Paul, Euclid who lived in Eastlake and were interested in joining St. Justin Martyr. St. Mary Magdalene received two families from St. Robert in Euclid. The families were contacted and welcomed through our usual welcoming and interviewing process.

At our last joint meeting of Vibrant Parish Life Team, Parish Councils and Staff, we agreed that our efforts in collaboration over the past years has been successful and are committed to continued collaboration through joint meetings of Parish Councils where Parish Staffs will be in attendance at least twice during the year, or more as needs may arise, into the future. It is the collective hope that we as pastors along with our parish communities will be able to continue to serve the mission of Christ for many years to come in the Willowick and Eastlake area through our collaborative efforts.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Kevin Liebhardt

St. Justin Martyr



Fr. Ted Lucas

St. Mary Magdalene



Fr. Ronald Wearsch

St. Mary Magdalene

**St. Mary Magdalene – St. Justin Martyr Athletic Association
2009-2010 Report**

Summary

The St. Mary Magdalene – St. Justin Martyr Athletic Association provided a CYO athletic experience to approximately 192 boys and girls (grades 4 – 12) during the 2009-2010 school year. Sports offered through our athletic association included football, volleyball and basketball. Participants attended both the SMM-SJM day school and the PSR programs of both parishes. Additionally, we worked with other parishes that did not have enough boys to field a team to allow their boys to participate with ours for football. These other parishes included Immaculate Conception, St. Noel, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Divine Word.

Board

This year's board consisted of seven members. A pastoral designee from both St. Mary Magdalene and St. Justin Martyr parishes provided dual leadership to the board. Coaches also attended general meetings during their respective season. For this year, we had approximately 40 adults who volunteered their time to coach our athletes. All coaches were certified by CYO and successfully completed VIRTUS training.

Facilities

The SMM-SJM Athletic association utilized gym facilities at both St. Justin Martyr and St. Mary Magdalene for practices. Having both gyms available was especially valuable during basketball season where we had to schedule practice times for nine teams. Each parish provided the athletic association with a schedule of open time that we could use for practices. The athletic association also utilized the St. Justin Martyr gym to host a 5th basketball tournament. The tournament was for 5th grade girls and 8th grade boys and had teams from the parishes of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Immaculate Conception, Holy Cross, St. Paschal, and St. John Vianney.

Finances

The athletic association seeks to be self-sustaining by paying for all expenses through collected fees and fundraising. For this year, the association paid approximately \$37,300 to field teams for all sports. This included purchasing new basketball uniforms for our upper grade teams with colors and wording that reflect the combined athletic associations. Fees were set to be at a reasonable rate for families, with money collected from fundraising used to supplement the total cost per athlete. Fundraising activities included holding middle school dances at both parishes, a spaghetti dinner, hosting the basketball tournament and selling candy. For the 2009-2010 school years, the athletic association collected approximately \$40,300 in fees and from fundraising activities.