



28 May 2007

The Reverend Charles J Stollenwerk  
St. Richard  
26855 Lorain Rd.  
North Olmsted, OH 44070-3260

Dear Father Stollenwerk,

This past Sunday we celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, one of our most significant feasts and the birth of the Church. Amidst a time of great challenge and uncertainty, the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the first disciples, a unifying Spirit that crossed all boundaries of language, race and culture. Today we also are called by that same Spirit to be Church as fully as possible, to embrace our unity, and transcend whatever might divide us for the greater good of Christ's Mission in our time and place. Knowing the Holy Spirit is always with us, we are called to cooperate with God in the pursuit of holiness for all people and the spread of the Gospel. We are called to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit with confidence in God's love and providence.

In my 5 February 2007 letter to you and all the pastors, administrators and parish life coordinators regarding the work of *Vibrant Parish Life – Phase II*, I indicated I would be sending a letter in May to finalize all clusters and to identify significant issues and challenges that need to be addressed in each cluster.

I want to first emphasize that the foundation for the work of all clusters is the Church's essential mission of evangelization and re-evangelization. All that we do must lead to bringing the Gospel message into every human situation and helping all people to come to an encounter with the living Christ. We are called to connect the Gospel message with the culture of our time and engage the lives of people who are practicing Catholics, no longer active Catholics, those who are unchurched, and to all people of good will. At the source and summit of this mission is our celebration of the Eucharist. As I have carefully studied trends in clusters across our diocese, the reality that has been driven home to me is the steady and substantial decline in Mass attendance. I want to raise this matter up as a significant point of discussion for all clusters to address: engaging all of our faithful in regularly attending and participating in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy.

A final list of all clusters is now available on the diocesan website. A few changes have been made in response to my meetings with pastors who requested reconsideration. Your parish will continue to be clustered with the parishes of St. Brendan and St. Clarence.

This cluster, as with each cluster in the diocese, is intended to provide a framework to enhance the vibrancy of parishes and strengthen the presence and pastoral care of the Church in an equitable manner throughout the diocese. As we face growing challenges with regard to changing demographics, finances and fewer priests, we need to take the necessary steps now that will enable us to provide strong and lasting Catholic presence in every area of our diocese. We need to be good and faithful stewards of the resources which God has given to us. If we spend down limited funds and struggle to maintain more facilities than are needed for the population served, over time we will weaken our Catholic presence and ministries to the people we are called to serve for many years to come.

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