

Miklos B. Peller
Procurator for St. Emeric Parish
1785 King James Parkway, Westlake, Ohio 44145

April 28, 2009

The Most Reverend Richard G. Lennon
Catholic Diocese of Cleveland
1027 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-2560

Re: **Letter of Rejection**
Petition of St. Emeric Parish

Dear Bishop Lennon:

Please refer to your letter dated 21 April 2009 to Mr. Miklos B. Peller. In the name of the parishioners of St. Emeric, I would like to thank you for your response to our carefully assembled Petition dated 24 March 2009 for which I was named procurator. Needless to say, your response was most disappointing for us and are still confused as to why St. Emeric must be closed. We were truly hoping that Your Excellency could offer some compromise solution so that St. Emeric could remain a contributing Parish to the Diocese at least until the Opportunity Corridor you had mentioned is built. Also, I found it very confusing that a handful of individual petitioners had gotten form letter responses from you before you answered my petition on behalf of some 250 parishioners. Second, judging from the comments in your letter there is a serious difference in your and our perception of the facts. Although no response to your letter is required by either protocol or common courtesy, I am nevertheless compelled to respectfully call the following to your attention as it is obvious that you are either not fully aware of the facts due to lack of proper information or you are making somewhat misconstrued statements pertaining to the related facts. I will go paragraph to paragraph.

Paragraph 1.

As this is an introductory remark, I have no comment regarding this paragraph.

Paragraph 2.

You write: ***"Having carefully reviewed all the information that you have provided and having again carefully considering this matter, as I have on several occasions with members of the Hungarian Catholic community on our Diocese . . ."***

Your letter does not indicate that you "carefully" read our petition of 24 March 2009 as you make no reference to the assertions contained therein. Your statement above is not supported by facts. Members of the Hungarian-American Catholic community in the Diocese whom I polled have no recollection that you ever reviewed all the information I provided or that you have carefully considered this matter on any occasion with the Hungarian-American Catholic community in your Diocese. You only extended the courtesy of a personal audience once to one of our parishioners, Mr. Michael Horvath, the Cleveland District Commissioner of the Hungarian Scout Association in Exteris.

Paragraph 3.

You write: ***"Please know that the idea of clustering St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, St. Emeric Parish, and St. Margaret of Hungary Parish was the idea of the Pastors, which I acceded to."***

Please know that the clustering process, to our knowledge, was initiated in the spirit collaboration and of sharing resources. The pastors and parishioners of St. Emeric and St. Elizabeth naturally felt a close affinity to continuing the long-existing close collaboration between the two parishes regarding pastoral care. Fr. Rosko of St. Margaret, however, requested to be clustered with St. Joan of Arc of Chagrin Falls as a sensible solution to the great distances between his church and St. Emeric or St. Elizabeth. I have a copy of the Proposal of Cluster Partners Form, signed by Fr. Rosko, expressing the rationale for joining St. Joan of Arc. This proposal was submitted to you before your 2 March 2007 deadline. Your letter of 5 February 2007 clearly indicates that you had decreed: *"Based upon my careful review, I wish to inform you that your parish will cluster with the parishes of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Margaret of Hungary."* Therefore, the facts indicate that the *"idea of clustering"* of three parishes was not that of the three pastors.

Paragraph 4.

You write: ***"In my May 2007 letter it was clearly stated that those who felt that parts of the mandate of the process were difficult were free to contact me through the appropriate persons so that I could hear their difficulties. I never was contacted."***

It is not clear as to whom you refer in your words "their difficulties", whether they are the "appropriate persons" or merely "those who felt . . .". Let me make the assumption that you refer to the cluster committee members. I myself was a CPC Team member on behalf of St. Emeric Parish, so I have first-hand knowledge about the proceedings of the CPC meetings. Our CPC Team committee determined that your mandate was not applicable when relating your criteria to St. Emeric and St. Elizabeth parishes. The CPC Team raised questions on many occasions for you to answer. The team members entrusted Rev. Mr. Daniel Galla, our cluster facilitator appointed by your office, with these questions to be answered. On numerous occasions he brought back some responses to our questions. As he was to report only to the Pastoral Planning Office, these responses were given by Mr. Krivanka. Did these responsible persons not contact you? On another occasion, in October 2007, the St. Emeric CPC team wrote a letter directly to you dated 8 October 2007 which listed many of the difficulties the three parishes had with your May 2007 mandate. In that letter, we offered you several alternative possibilities and asked for an audience with you so that we could discuss some of the problems. You never responded to the St. Emeric CPC Team, but instead called in the priests from all three parishes and in a very severe way you verbally reprimanded Fr. Siklodi of St. Emeric in the presence of the other two priests and the two interpreters. You gave absolutely no resolution to any of the points raised in that letter.

You continue: ***"Thus, I can only have presumed that the cluster comprising the above named parishes was hard at work addressing the mandate that they had received from their Bishop. You can only imagine the surprise that I had when I received their recommended plan that ignored what I had set forth."***

First of all, the CPC Team rightfully expected that you, as a good pastor and "manager" of your Diocese would fully oversee the CPC progress to assure yourself that the progress is proceeding in accordance with your plans. Second, the nearly unanimous consensus during all the cluster meetings was an unwavering conviction that the three parishes satisfied all criteria you continuously listed, therefore the members saw no justification for any of the three parishes to be suppressed. Rev. Mr. Daniel Galla, your assigned facilitator, had witnessed all discussions during all of the meetings. Page 21 of the Cluster Planning and Coordination Handbook,

prepared under your stewardship, states that the facilitator is to report to the Pastoral Planning Office on the work underway. Had he done that? What did he report to the Pastoral Planning Office? Did the Pastoral Planning Office ever report to you on the proceedings?

District delegate Rev. Gary Chmura, also appointed by you, witnessed all discussions during the five meetings he attended. Page 20 of the Cluster Planning and Coordination Handbook requires the district delegate to "report to Bishop Lennon on the work and progress underway every 3 months". What did Rev. Chmura report to Bishop Lennon?

Both Rev. Mr. Galla and Rev. Chmura repeatedly asserted that they made periodic reports, as required, on the progress and the direction of the cluster proceedings. Therefore the cluster committee had no reason to doubt the word of your two appointees that they in fact kept you informed. In March 2008, the St. Emeric CPC Team, through Rev. Mr. Daniel Galla, requested an audience with you for a discussion of the difficulties. The Rev. Mr. Galla reported at the following meeting that you had said "**NO**" and that you even added "**it was not necessary**". We have minutes of the CPC meeting which recorded the delivery of the above answer and the acknowledgment by the CPC Team that no dialogue with you is possible. Therefore, having received your answer we could only have presumed that you were hard at work on the information you had received from the Rev. Mr. Galla and Rev. Chmura. I can only imagine your surprise if I presume the premise that your appointees did not report to you as they were supposed to or that their report was never delivered to you. We at the time had no reason to suspect that your appointees were in fact not reporting as required by the Cluster Planning and Coordination Handbook.

Dear Bishop Lennon, you only have your own people, Mr. Krivanka, Rev. Mr. Daniel Galla and Rev. Gary Chmura to blame if you honestly feel that you were not informed. Their assignment was to keep you informed. If they did inform you, did you not listen to them for sixteen months?

Paragraph 5.

You write: *"Moreover, in a conversation with the Pastors and two lay leaders we discussed very openly the figures they had provided the Diocese with regarding liturgical and sacramental activity at the three parishes."*

We are not aware that any such "conversation" had taken place. This meeting we believe you are referencing is discussed above under Paragraph 4. As pointed out above, this meeting was anything but an "open" discussion.

You continue: *"Thus, in light of the prudent use of ecclesiastical goods and the legitimate religious, liturgical, and sacramental needs of the Hungarian community . . ."*

Our parishioners are at a loss over the reasons for your use of the words "**prudent**" and "**legitimate**". We would like to think that you as Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland did not intend to imply that we, St. Emeric parishioners were less than **prudent** using ecclesiastical goods and had other than **legitimate** religious, liturgical, and sacramental needs. Could you please clarify your intent for us? We see these words as adding a new and unexpected complexity to the matter on hand.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Miklos B. Peller
Procurator, St. Emeric Parish