Lennon also emphasized that while specifics vary, the parishes that are reopening will face many of the challenges that led to their being closed.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Bishop Richard Lennon announced Tuesday that he will reopen 12 area parishes that were closed in 2009 and 2010. The news came as a great joy for the Catholic community. "It's time for peace and unity in the Diocese of Cleveland," Lennon said during a news conference at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, that he will not pursue a process provided under Canon (church) law that would have allowed him to appeal recent decrees by the Congregation for the Clergy that reversed the closing of the parishes.

"I will not appeal the decrees to the Apostolic Signatura," Bishop Lennon said. "Doing so would prolong the process a number of years and would create more uncertainty and continue to

divide our Catholic family."

“I am elated to hear this news,” said longtime member Gloria Foster. The Bishop added, "During these Easter days, I often think of Jesus' first words as he appeared to the Apostles after rising from the dead: ‘Peace be with you.’ I now say, it's time for peace and unity in the Diocese of Cleveland. More than ever, this is a time for all Catholics to come together with God's help and strive to strengthen our diocesan church's serving the pastoral and spiritual needs of all the faithful."

The move comes after an analysis of Vatican decrees which determined that the Bishop failed to follow church law in the closings. This is great news for St. Adalbert, the only Black church on the list.

“We pray this opportunity may be used to begin the healing process of the Catholic Church in the Cleveland Diocese. This can and should be a wonderful exercise in reconciliation for everyone,” said Phillis Fuller Clipps.

Bishop Lennon had the option to reopen the churches or further appeal. He says the decision to reopen the churches was made to prevent prolonging the process further. A further appeal could have taken years, he says.

While major decisions on staffing and other matters have yet to be made, Lennon said he will prepare to carry out the directives from the Congregation for the Clergy regarding these parishes:

• **Akron:**St. Mary and St. John the Baptist Parishes

• **Bedford:**St. Mary Parish

• **Cleveland:**St. Adalbert, St. Barbara, St. Casimir, St. Emeric, St. Patrick, St. Peter and St.

Wendelin Parishes

• **Lakewood:** St. James Parish

• **Lorain:** St. Mary Parish

The reconfiguration plan, which had closings and mergers that resulted in a net reduction of 50 parishes in the Diocese of Cleveland. As allowed by church law, parishioners of some parishes chose to appeal Lennon's decisions to the Congregation for the Clergy.

On March 14, the Diocese officially received decrees from the Congregation reversing several of the decisions.

"Our present situation is a very complex matter with no easy or perfect solution," said Lennon. "With the help of a number of advisors – including the members of the Presbyteral Council, the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and a number of clergy, laity, and experts in church law I have engaged in a prayerful and thoughtful process over the past few weeks to understand the decrees and to decide on an appropriate course of action."

Lennon said that while there are many unique issues to be addressed in each situation, staffing will be a significant challenge for the Diocese. "With fewer active priests available to serve the entire eight-county Diocese, we will be forced to spread our clerical resources thinner," he noted.

The Bishop said he will assign and work closely with clergy leaders to coordinate planning for the restoration of parish operations, the return of sacred objects that were removed for safekeeping and any cleanup or minor maintenance that may be required. "We will work with the priests and parishioners as they re-establish their parishes," he said.

Lennon also emphasized that while specifics vary, the parishes that are reopening will face

many of the challenges that led to their being closed.

"As is true for all parishes, it will be essential for each of these parishes to demonstrate on an ongoing basis that they have the active membership and the financial wherewithal to sustain themselves," he said.