

“That All May Be One”

OPEN LETTER

26 June 2013

Most Reverend Archbishop Michael O. Jackels, S.T.D.

ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE, IOWA

Dear Archbishop Jackels:

1. A WAY FORWARD. The global work of Ecumenical Evangelization faces increased challenges in local churches and in global communities. What should the response of churches be? A new vision of justified faith and reason, as one family of one Creator God, challenges all to respond in the common purpose of meeting the challenges to common life. Religious divisions have never been deeper and more challenging; the world never more bent on destruction; and yet we pray, perhaps we are now, at this moment closer than ever to finding workable answers. Instant global communication of people-to-people creates universal consciousness and opportunity as never before. This new circumstance needs to be capitalized in promoting works of Peace and Justice, the “New Evangelization”. At the present time, churches are losing membership even though people search for communal joining. Vocational choosing of traditional priesthood and religious life are on a decline at a time when the need is greater than ever. These problems call for grassroots solutions. People and churches everywhere need to awaken locally to the task of peace-making if peace is ever to become global.

2. A PROPOSAL. Vacant churches in local communities are resources waiting to be used by communities as places where solutions to common problems can be sought, problems confronting faith, nature and people, stretching life’s fabric to the tearing point. Local repair is needed for local hurt; global repair is needed for global hurt. The continued existence of the Church of Saint Mary of the Visitation, here in New Hampton, Iowa, is at issue in the moment; its future is in question as are closed churches in other places; which opens to the broader consideration that society needs churches to flourish rather than diminish. So, how can/ should present resources (closed churches) be put to constructive and creative uses? Our prayer should be “let violence end and let peace begin, with me, with us, here, in this place, at this time”, wherever on Earth we are. Specifically, my prayer and request are that in concert with the ecumenical vision of Church Universal, and in concert with Francis I, Bishop of Rome, that here in New Hampton, Iowa, in the Dubuque Archdiocese, an ecumenical response is embraced as to the obligation of making peace with one another in our divided churches, here and globally, and to advance the promise of Peace and Love in the ever-new teaching of Jesus, The Christ. For this to happen, church leadership should enable people locally and globally to join in the reflective experience of Eucharistic Ecumenism.

Your blessing is asked in support of Saint Mary Church of the Visitation becoming an **INTER-FAITH CENTER for EUCHARISTIC ECUMENISM**, here in Chickasaw County, where people of good faith can work and pray together to find remedies to cultural violence, and so that “all may be one” in and with the “New” Evangelical mission of Christianity open to all.

Respectfully,

Sylvester L. Steffen