



OUR PARISH LIFE – TOGETHER WE SERVE

An invitation to continue our journey together – as a parish – in prayer, fasting, almsgiving and service. With the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit, St. Philip parishioners will seek the renewal and connection of our parish community and will together live out our mission of constant conversion, invitation and prayerful anticipation.

Dear St. Philip Parishioners,

Greetings from your Parish Pastoral Council. During the season of Lent, we began a new journey together as a parish to participate in prayer, fasting, almsgiving and service. While particular emphasis is placed on the three pillars of spiritual practice during Lent, we recognize that as Christians we are called to continually practice them in our daily lives throughout the entire year. Furthermore, we recognize that we are called to be a parish community that together can support each other in these practices and collectively live the Gospel. As the Council reflected on our Parish Lent and our activities together, we discerned that our journey together was only just beginning. We hope that all of you have also felt a budding sense of unity and spirit of community, and we have heard positive feedback from many parishioners that this has been the case.

In order to continue this journey together, your Pastoral Council will be prayerfully exploring ways in which St. Philip Parish can build on and extend our momentum from the Lenten season. We have received the foundation for this transformation through important spiritual insights and challenges from Fr. John and Fr. Raj, through their homilies, weekly reflections and Lenten lectures. In his 5th Sunday of Lent homily, Fr. John suggested that St. Philip can be a place of transformation, where we can journey together and not just as individuals. He described our Lenten journey as a potential turning point, where we can be called by God to newness and growth in faith, and he encouraged us to “Go,” as mentioned over 1,500 times in scripture. Father Raj, in his Lenten lectures, explained the teaching of the Church around the Universal Call to Holiness, whereby all baptized Christians are called to the fullness of Christian life and to strive for perfection regardless of their status or vocation in life. Despite different ministries, we all have one mission of striving for holiness in the Church and in the world. Fr. Raj also discussed the practical spiritual teachings of St. Francis de Sales and how it is possible for all of us to lead a devoted and holy life regardless of our profession.

We recognize that each and every parishioner has distinct God-given gifts and talents, and each of us has a distinct and vital role to play in our parish. Together, we will be seeking ways to transform our parish, by developing connections, working together for the good of the Church and fulfilling our mission of evangelization. It is easy to rely solely on our priests and deacons for leadership and advancement of our ministries, but the role of the laity has always been important in the eyes of the Church. The Catechism teaches that *“Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.”* CCC900.

Throughout the year, the Pastoral Council will be considering ways that we can help facilitate individual discernment about every parishioner's role in St. Philip Parish life. Enhancing communications and awareness about opportunities in which to be involved will be one focus, with making more personal connections and building unity being others. We will work to make sure all feel welcome and that all have a place in whatever ministry or volunteer opportunity they feel called to. As we look forward to implementing ideas related to our parish journey, we want to emphasize that this is not being done simply because there are needs to be filled. Rather, we are seeking the transformation of hearts and minds that will instill in all of us a shared sense of the mission that we are called to as part of the universal church and as part of St. Philip Parish. We hope this in turn will lead to a desire for greater involvement in the activities of the parish and for our transformation into a stewardship parish.

We would like to INVITE each and every parishioner over time to prayerfully consider being open to starting with one hour per month to become involved in a way that perhaps you have never previously considered. While there are far too many to list here, some examples of opportunities to consider might be ushering, singing in the choir, volunteering in service opportunities like our Sunday Suppers and with St. Vincent de Paul, dedicating an hour for Adoration, attending a daily Mass, attending a Wednesday night faith formation or joining any one of the prayer groups. Often times that first hour is the hardest to commit to and may require just being open to listening to a call and stepping out of a comfort zone, but once you've experienced the blessings of participating and growing in faith, then you may just feel yourself being called to continue. Please look forward to future communications that will help identify and explain all the activities of the Parish.

It would be very easy for us as council members to just ask everyone to be involved more, but please know that your Pastoral Council intends to lead by example. Each council member will also be personally seeking to become more involved in parish life. However, we intend for this to be a whole parish mission, and we sincerely need YOUR suggestions for parish activities and how best to move our parish forward TOGETHER. Accompanying this letter, you will find an introduction to the members of the Pastoral Council. Please know that you are welcome and invited to reach out to any one of us, at any time, with your suggestions and feedback related to the parish. Please pray about this, and share your ideas with council members in person, by emailing us at "parishcouncil@stphilipbc.org" or by returning the enclosed form. While this will certainly be a developing journey over time, led by the Holy Spirit, we would appreciate any initial suggestions and comments sometime before Sunday, June 30.

In conclusion, we hope that you will receive this message in the spirit it was intended. We are all called to the fullness of Christian life, and we are all called to be part of the apostolic mission. Together as St. Philip Parish, we can go, be transformational, and accomplish great things while living out the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We prayerfully, respectfully, and humbly INVITE you to join us in this journey - TOGETHER.

Your St. Philip Parish Pastoral Council