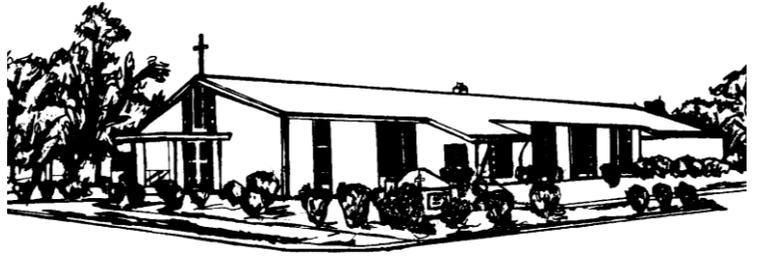


St. Philip the Apostle

5416 Henderson Way
Camp Springs, MD 20746



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April 19, 2021

Dear parishioners,

Jesus was made known to them in the “breaking of the bread.”

The term “breaking of the bread” was a term used by the ancient Church for the celebration of the Eucharist. Gathering in communion around the altar is where we draw strength and life as a parish and community. In the document *Dies Domini*, Pope St. John Paul II speaks to the importance of (when possible) gathering the entire body of the parish together in a Eucharistic assembly, united in communion around the altar of the Lord. He speaks about avoiding small groups, in favor of one, united assembly.

How can we deepen our bonds as a parish around the Eucharist?

I recently had a conversation with a long-time member of our parish. He attends Mass at 9:00am. He asked about two members of St. Philip’s, concerned for their health because he hadn’t seen them for a long time. I informed him that the two people he was asking about were alive and well – but they went to Mass at 11:30am. He was relieved to hear the good news!

That conversation kept coming up in my prayer and discernment. Even before Covid, the number of congregants on a given Sunday at 11:30am left the church largely empty. After consulting with the Finance Council, the Parish Council, and some parishioners, it was clear that there was an openness to uniting our two Sunday Masses into one, while continuing to offer the 5:00pm Saturday Vigil.

After weighing various options, **the Parish Council concluded that by offering Mass at 5:00pm Saturday and 10:00am Sunday (combining the 9:00am and 11:30am) we could enhance the unity and experience of worship in our parish. We would like to initiate the change on the Feast of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church – May 23, 2021.** Beginning this summer, following the 10:00am Mass, Deacon Kelley and I would like to initiate new forms of fellowship, Sunday School (for people of all ages), and prayer.

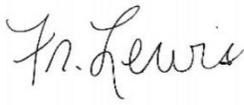
Of course, we will continue to social distance, require mask-wearing, and have thorough professional cleaning before and after Mass. With the two Masses combined, we would still have

more than enough room to be in compliance with the social distancing requirements, even as more parishioners begin returning to in-person worship.

In accordance with Canon Law, the intention for the Sunday Mass will always be *For the Parish*. Mass intentions already requested for Sundays beyond May 23, 2021 will be transferred to a Friday private Mass that I will offer. These intentions will continue to be listed in the bulletin. Kristen will also be happy to work to reschedule a Mass intention, upon request.

I appreciate your prayers, discernment, and thoughts. Please pray for St. Philip's as we enter a new phase in our parish's life. The most sublime and wonderful act we can do here on earth is gather around the altar, as God's people, and celebrate the "breaking of the bread." When we gather, united as God's people, the Spirit pours forth upon us.

In Jesus and Mary,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Lewis". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Fr. Lewis