

Celebrating Our Annual Parish Feast

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church

Rockville, MD

Dear St. Elizabeth parish family,

November 2020

In my letter of September 25th, I provided an overview of our parish accomplishments since the March 13th pandemic restrictions began. This newsletter adds photos, a few details, and updates to that letter as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of St. Elizabeth on Sunday, November 8.

I know that I speak for Fr. Stefan in saying that one of the hardest parts of this pandemic for us as parish priests continues to be our separation from so many of you. As I said in my Easter message, as priests we took you, the Church, as our bride. The early days of the pandemic were like a much-needed break from a spouse you truly love but too much togetherness has left you feeling a bit burned out.

But very soon, we started to miss our bride. Though we priests had access to the sacraments that most of you did not have during the lockdown and that some of you

still don't have, our experience of the sacraments is nevertheless greatly diminished by your absence. It's not supposed to be this way!

Even though our ability to socialize is still limited by COVID restrictions, seeing so many of you return for worship since we reopened has been a source of great consolation to all of us priests who serve our parish family. Please know that even when we are separated by circumstances, we love you and pray for you.

With kind personal regards, I remain
Sincerely in Christ,

Msgnr. Bill Parent



Safe and smooth reopening continues

One more month down and still no cases of COVID 19 have originated in our worship or ministries, including our school. Sunday Mass attendance has remained steady over the past month at about 600 people attending our six Sunday Masses each week.

If you haven't been back since we reopened, please know that everyone has been very cooperative in following our safety procedures and that there is plenty of space for you even on Sundays.

We estimate that with social distancing we can currently accommodate about 250 people per Mass including the extra seating we have added in the Commons. Even our most attended Masses since reopening are well below capacity.



Enrollments in St. Elizabeth School and in our Christian Formation Program are both strong: 548 students in the school and 234 in Christian Formation.

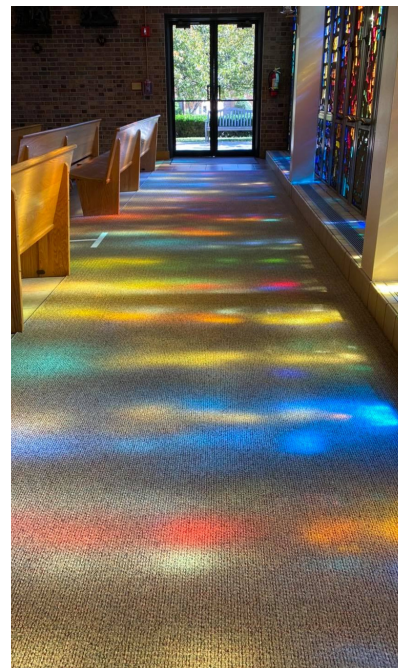


Our parish office remains open for you to drop by Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and by appointment.

- Mass intentions, prayer requests, and flower memorials can now be arranged through our parish website.
- A page has been created on our website with resources for assistance and volunteer opportunities.
- Find these new options at stelizabethchurchmd.org.

If you do decide to return for Mass soon, please note the following

- Please continue to sign up for Eventbrite tickets for Sunday Mass through our parish website or by calling the parish office. We have not been checking tickets on Sunday because ample seating has been available. However, we may have to limit capacity at some Christmas Masses, so please plan to obtain your tickets well in advance.
- Please wear a mask.
- Maintain social distancing including “In the pew, don’t sit on blue!”
- Be prepared for communion at the end of Mass and to leave the church building immediately after receiving communion. The advantage of this communion procedure is not having to socially distance twice – once for communion and a second time to exit the church building.
- A small change that started last Sunday: the new Archdiocese of Washington guidelines for pandemic worship permit priests to greet you indoors before Mass – with masks and social distancing – and to process into church as Mass starts.



Sacramental catch-up



Since reopening, 64 children received first communion at 5 ceremonies and 16 weekday Masses.

Additional sacramental catch-up includes:

- 81 youth confirmed at 5 ceremonies
- 10 adults became fully initiated Catholics
- 15 infants and young children were baptized
- 6 weddings
- 6 funerals
- Socially-distant confessions continue in unusually high numbers



Remembering the Poor and Homebound



Maintained our \$2,400 per month commitment to our Haiti sister parish.

In addition:

- Our on-line giving to the St. Camillus Pantry from March to date totals \$23,265.
- Preparations underway for our Thanksgiving food drive on November 22nd.
- Our food collection for So Others May Eat, our Dorothy Day Place Shelter meal teams and our financial assistance to referrals from Catholic Charities all continue.
- Carmen Boston, our Director of Healing & Service Ministries, maintains communication with our homebound parishioners.

Facility Updates



New “Outdoor Commons” between our parish office and school for outdoor meetings. We are planning to create a new playground area at the far end of the school.

We are already obtaining proposals for improved fencing around play areas and dumpsters.

Larger video monitors and better speakers in the Commons. In addition, we will soon upgrade our sound system in the church.





Our baptismal font is not practical in a post-COVID world. Evaluating a portable short-term replacement font and options for a permanent replacement.

Also exploring installation of touchless holy water dispensers.

Existing exterior lighting upgraded to LED's for improved safety. Replaced clunky analog light timers with day/night sensors. In addition, all light poles were repainted and are the same color for the first time since we added the back parking lot. Several new exterior LED lights will soon be added. Large scale tree trimming also improved light distribution.

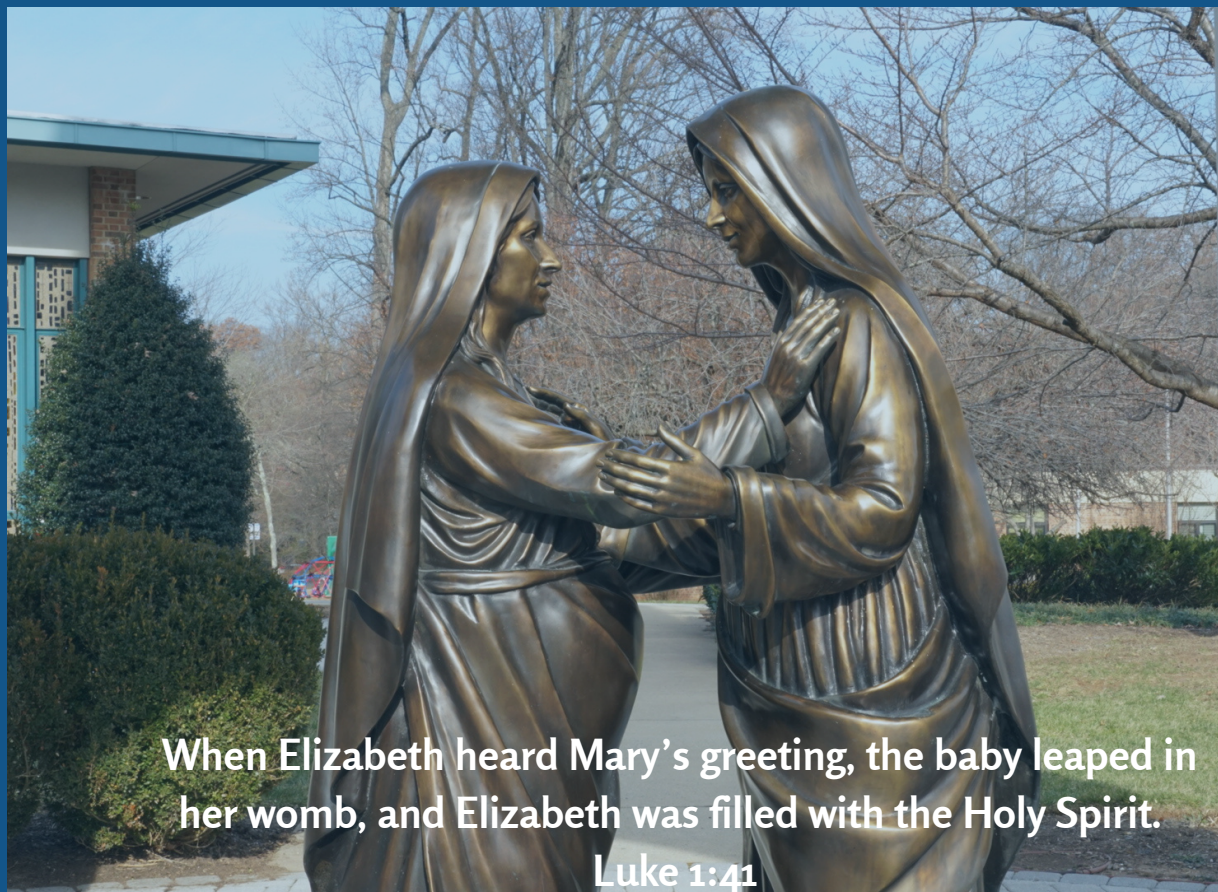


Since we're only using half of our pews these days, we are seeking proposals to refinish the half we're not using. We'll then switch and have the other half refinished. In the process, we will replace the tile flooring and kneelers.

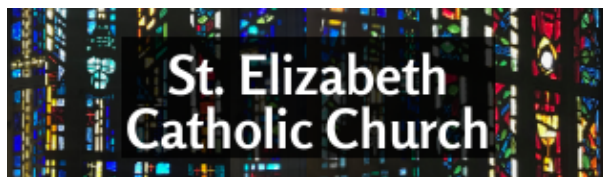


Other recent facilities improvements include:

- New HVAC systems in four school classrooms and all HVAC ductwork deep cleaned and upgraded to HEPA filters with UVC light sanitizers.
- New tile floors in the school main entrance and in 2 classrooms.
- Replaced uninviting reserved signs in back parking lot with color-coded curbs.
- Upgraded internet bandwidth, wireless network, and classroom equipment for on-line learning.
- Reseeded and aerated all grassy areas.
- Reorganizing our sacristies and planning to install more efficient sacristy cabinets.



When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
Luke 1:41



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