

**SAINT BARTHOLOMEW CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
**6902 River Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20817**  
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*Office of the Pastor*

January 22, 2022

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Bart's:

Recently, while going through a few things in my office, I came across a gift from a friend which had an inscription on it. It reads "*Bloom where you are planted.*" I reflected upon this short inscription for a while and indeed that is what I have striven to do for my 9 years as pastor of St. Bart's.

This is an incredible parish with incredible people serving in all capacities – clergy, staff, faculty, parishioners, and friends. Even more incredible has been how we navigated together these challenging times of the pandemic; and, before that, faced the difficulties of a struggling school and aging physical plant. The St. Bart's family is very dear to me.

And so, it is with a little difficulty, that I write to say goodbye to you. Nonetheless it must be done. I have been assigned by Cardinal Wilton Gregory to a new position. A unique position for a parish priest to say the least. I will depart at the end of February 2022 to take a position as Attaché at the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York City. It is a position for which the Nuncio (*Vatican Ambassador*) has personally requested me to assist with his work at the United Nations and to oversee several large projects. In addition, I will serve as the Executive Director of the Path to Peace Foundation. The Foundation was established many years ago to help underwrite the operating costs of the Mission for the Holy See. It will be challenging work, but I very much look forward to this new chapter in my life and serving the universal Church in this capacity.

An experienced pastor was selected to serve as your next pastor. His name is Fr. Mark Smith of Holy Redeemer in College Park, Maryland. He will arrive here around the same time as my departure in late February or early March, 2022. Please welcome him as you welcomed me.

Please know of my great fondness for you all. I assure you that I will not be a stranger and plan to return often to the area. In fact, I have an assurance from the Nuncio that I may do so from time to time. Thank you for sharing your lives and your faith with me while I was "*planted*" here. I tried to do the same. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Reverend Mark D. Knestout