

Welcome! A letter from our Pastor

Dear friends in Christ,

Now, back to our regularly scheduled programming ... almost. While Epiphany, which we celebrated last weekend, is the traditional end of the 12 days of Christmas, the liturgical season of Christmas draws to a close this weekend with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In a sense, today is 1st Sunday of Ordinary Time, and next weekend we will return to the green vestments and church décor for roughly six weeks until Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18.

Before then, however, it's an opportune time for us to recall our own baptism. Most likely you were baptized as an infant. I recently came across a picture from my baptism at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church here in Houston, which took place 17 days after I was born – I was a cute baby, but something has gone awry in the following 60 years! Others come to the faith later in life and are baptized as teens or adults. Regardless of the timeline, baptism cleanses us of original sin and inaugurates into a way of life.

I'm told that there was no great voice from on high heard during my baptism in 1965, and I don't suppose there was one on your baptism day either. But there was when Jesus was baptized by John as we read in our gospel today from St. Matthew this weekend. Nonetheless, I assure you, God loves you and is likewise well pleased with you. Our baptismal mission therefore is to live as a new creation. We are all baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and with that comes a mandate to live our lives worthy of our calling. Every day we should strive to live that in a more authentic and purposeful way. What a great mission God has entrusted to us!

As you have undoubtedly seen on your drive to church, the road construction on Holcombe Blvd. has reached our doorstep. We have had several conversations with the Construction Manager from MC2 (Metro), and they are keeping us updated on the plans for the work, and likewise, we have been able to share with them our need for continued access to our campus. They are making their way west from Kirby to Mercer Street at the moment, and tell us they expect to reach Mercer in 3-4 weeks. After that, they will turn around and work east from Mercer back toward Buffalo Speedway, likely beginning early next month weather permitting.

During this, traffic on Holcombe will be reduced to one lane. All entrances to our campus will remain open while the work is happening, but there will be a bottleneck as

traffic slows. We are told that should there be any brief closures, they will indeed be "brief" and not occur on weekends or holidays. During the week, we are most concerned on how this will impact access during drop-off and pick-up for our school children, and for any funerals that might be scheduled during that time. In addition, traffic on Ash Wednesday, when we always have huge crowds, will undoubtedly be a challenge. We're going to stay in constant communication with the manager of the project, but there's always the issue of what we agree on in a meeting making its way down to the guys doing the actual work in the street. We plan to have extra police and security on hand to help direct the traffic flow, but I ask for your patience and understanding. This, too, will pass, and with God's grace and cooperation on all parties, we'll soon have smoother roads leading to Christ, both physically and spiritually!

As I mentioned in last week's message, we are happy to welcome Sister Lisa Valentini, MSC, to St. Vincent de Paul as part of our participation in the 2025 Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston's Missionary Cooperative Appeal. Due to scheduling issues, we had to roll it over in this new year, but we are happy to have her join us. Sr. Lisa is a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, from Reading, Pennsylvania. She will share about the work of her Sisters in different countries, as well as speak about her own life-changing Mission experiences in Peru, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and India. The second collection this weekend will give each of us a unique and blessed opportunity to be a part of the work of the MSC Sisters for the year ahead. Please be generous in supporting their work, as you always are. Sr. Lisa has already assured us of a remembrance in her prayer, and in the prayers of all of her Sisters. May we respond by making a commitment to remember the MSC Sisters and their Missions in prayer throughout this year, too

Finally, as the year begins, let me again offer a reminder to be cautious responding to any suspicious emails that appear to come from myself or Fr. Hai or any of the clergy at SVdP. It may list our name as the sender, but these are phishing attempts from scammers and should be marked as junk and deleted. I heard from a handful of you who received such fake emails over the holidays. Our clergy will never ask you "for a favor" or the need "for gift cards" in an email. Often, if you look carefully at the name associated with the account, the return email address will not be from our official SVdP domain. A good rule of thumb is if it seems suspicious, it is. Our IT team is working to address these issues, but they crop up from time to time and it's always best to proceed with caution. Always feel free to call the office if you have doubts about the authenticity of such messages. They are fake, I promise you. Peace, Fr. Sean