

## ***A MESSAGE FROM FATHER VINCENT***

January 9, 2022

My Dear Friends in Christ:

Once again, Happy New Year! This Sunday will mark the end of the Christmas Season with the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, and we will embark upon Ordinary Time together. There is a beautiful quote that “Every new beginning comes from other beginning’s end,” and it speaks to the circular nature of life. Things begin. Things end. The end of one thing leads to the beginning of another. The poem “The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman speaks so beautifully of this:

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins:

to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart. And on the Feast Day of Our Lord’s Baptism, we should reflection upon the beginning of our spiritual lives when we call to mind our own baptisms – when we became Children of God and when Christ claimed us for Himself. I ask that each of you celebrate your baptisms each year. Look at your baptismal certificates or call the Church where you were baptized and find out your baptism date. Put that date in your calendar and remember that date as the date that you received God’s wonderful blessings of forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation.

Our baptisms are the seed of faith planted in each one of us that needs to be nurtured and needs to grow through prayer, through the sacraments and through a constant dialogue with God the Father.

Like a mighty oak tree, the roots of faith with sustain us through the struggles and difficulties of life. Here is a poem that I have hanging on my wall. As you read it, think of the oak tree as our lives. It grows and grows. And think of the elements – the wind and the snow and the rain as the struggles in our lives. Now think of the oak tree’s roots as our spiritual lives. The bigger and the deeper the roots, the deeper our faith. These roots represent our lives in Christ that start from that tiny seed planted in each one of us at our baptisms. They are unwavering and unaffected when we have a strong faith.

## **The Mighty Oak Tree**

A mighty wind blew night and day. It stole the oak tree's leaves away. Then snapped its boughs and pulled its bark.

Until the oak was tired and stark. But still the oak tree held its ground. While other trees fell all around. The weary wind gave up and spoke. How can you still be standing Oak?

The oak tree said, I know that you. Can break each branch of mine in two. Carry every leaf away. Shake my limbs and make me sway. But I have roots stretched in the earth. Growing stronger since my birth. You'll never touch them, for you see. They are the deepest part of me. Until today, I wasn't sure of just how much I could endure. But now I've found, with thanks to you. I'm stronger than I ever knew.

Just a few things to put on your calendars:

1. On Friday, January 21, 2022 from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Church, we will have an Hour of Adoration and Prayer for the Sanctity of Human Life. This marks the 49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* in the United States. We will pray for the unborn.
2. Please join us for the Synod on Synodality Listening Sessions. The Listening Sessions will be on January 25, 2022 at 10 a.m. in the Church and 7 p.m. in the School Gym. **You need only attend one session.** This is an exciting time for our Church! It is a world-wide effort for voices to be heard. Where is the Holy Spirit guiding the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Information on the Listening Sessions, as well as how to sign up, can be found on the Parish website ([www.urolm.org](http://www.urolm.org)).
3. Our own Monsignor Turro will be turning 100 years old on January 26, 2022. His family will attend Mass the weekend before his birthday. At the family's request, we will postpone the big celebration until the summer months. There is a mailbox in the Gathering Space for you to place birthday cards and notes to Monsignor. God bless Monsignor Turro for his many years of priestly ministry and the many years spent here at OLM.
4. **OUR MASS SCHEDULE WILL CHANGE BEGINNING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2022.** The 9 a.m. Sunday Mass will now be at 9:30 a.m. Also beginning on Sunday, February 6, 2022, we will offer a 6:15 p.m. Sunday evening Mass.

Finally, on Thursday, January 6, 2022, the New Jersey Legislature advanced S49/A6260, legislation similar to the proposed S3030/A4848 “Reproductive Freedom Act.” This new legislation would codify in state law the right to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. The bill will be voted on by the full Senate and Assembly on this coming Monday, January 10th. Please go to our Diocesan website or the NJCC website to learn more about this proposed legislation that denies all rights of a child in the womb and please contact your Senate and Assembly representatives encouraging them to oppose and vote against this bill. You can access the New Jersey Catholic Conference Action Alert at [www.njcatholic.org](http://www.njcatholic.org). On this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, let us recall that both John and Jesus were unborn children in their mother’s womb when Mary visited Elizabeth and heard the words, “Blessed are you among women and Blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

I wish each of you a Happy and Healthy New Year. May the Peace of Christ be with you always.

With love and deep appreciation for all of you,

*+ Father Venant*

*(baptism date = March 6, 1966)*