



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

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Christmas, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus Christ, the Child of Bethlehem, is the Son of God and Savior of the world!

In proclaiming the birth of Jesus, St. Luke describes this remarkable event in a rather short and simple manner: *"...the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger."*

The simplicity of Christ's birth is in stark contrast to the complexity, consumerism, violence and disorder of the world in which he was born and, indeed, our own world. Saint Pope John Paul II spoke of a *"culture of death;"* and, Pope Francis has described our current times as a *"culture of indifference."*

It is in this world of turmoil and self-love that God became flesh, becoming like us in all things but sin, so that we might know His love and kindness and be ambassadors of mercy to others. The birth of Christ is not only a gift to the world but a call to discipleship for all of us...a call to be disciples of God's mercy and compassion. In his Christmas homily last year, Pope Francis reminded us that *"Only God's mercy can free humanity...Where God is born, hope is born. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war."*

This Christmas season, I pray that the Christ Child will help you to simplify your own life, be attentive to those things which are for your salvation, and become a person of mercy for others. May you, your family and loved ones experience the many blessings which God has in store for those who love Him. And may Mary, our Mother, wrap you in her mantle of hope and peace. Merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Bishop Cistone*

Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone
Bishop of Saginaw