



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

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Advent, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each year, at the beginning of Advent, the Church re-echoes the words of John the Baptist in the desert: *"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths"* (Matt. 3:3).

In our world of busy schedules, we are often pressed to simply attend a function or host an event let alone prepare for it. And yet, without the proper preparation, the celebration can be less effective or, worse yet, fail. Anything of value is worth the preparation!

This year, Christmas commercials on TV began immediately after Halloween, alerting people that there is not much time to prepare for holiday gift-giving! I imagine that the Thanksgiving Day parades mean that it's "crunch time."

Making time to prepare spiritually for the coming of the Savior can be just as challenging but no less necessary. In these days of anticipating the birth of the Messiah, you and I need to prepare a way for the Lord to enter our lives, to make straight His paths. For each of us, the task is different. For some, it means reconciling with someone we have hurt or forgiving someone who has caused us pain. For some it means re-establishing a habit of prayer and meditation so that Jesus can inspire us in our life of faith. For others it may mean seeking forgiveness for sins through the Sacrament of Penance. Whatever your own circumstances, please make the time to *"Prepare the way of the Lord!"*

May our Lord continue to bless you and your loved ones and may Mary our Mother watch over you always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Cistone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone
Bishop of Saginaw