

My Dear Parish Family,

St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians says, *The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* As we prepare to celebrate the Birth of our Savior, pure grace has born into the world.

As now St John Paul II told us in his Christmas message in 1991, *Behold I announce the Midnight. From the depths of Bethlehem's night, which is the night of all mankind, a gift has been given. 'The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all men' (Titus 2:11). What is grace? Grace is divine pleasure. It is focused fully on this child who lies in the manger. For this child is the eternal Son, the Son of divine pleasure, the Son of eternal love.*



This Day in which our entire life has been born, we come to the manger of divine love. We offer our whole being in thanksgiving for this great gift of grace, of God becoming man and being born into the world. Because grace has entered into the world, we are called to change our hearts to reflect this great gift that has been given to us.

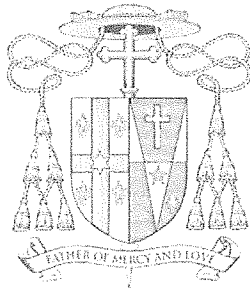
During this Holy Season, may we pray these words of St. John of the Cross. *How gentle and loving is Your awakening, O Bridegroom Word, in the center and depth of my soul...Awaken and enlighten me, my Lord, so that I might know and love the blessings You ever propose to me, and I might understand that you have moved to bestow favors on me and have remembered me.* These words of St. John of the Cross must ring in all hearts this Christmas Season.

It is a good reminder too that as our culture stops celebrating Christmas on December 25th, the Christmas Season does not end for Christians until the Feast of Baptism of the Lord and that falls on Sunday January 11th this year. Christmas is too great a gift to just celebrate for one day and so may we enter this joyous season all the way through.

Just a quick note that Fr. Jerry Vincke has graciously offered to celebrate Mass on Friday December 26th for us at 9am and so there will be Mass that day even though it is not listed in the bulletin.

May His grace penetrate our hearts to help reveal the love of God the Father and may the peace and all the blessings of the coming of the Christ Child be with all of you. Merry Christmas!

May God Bless you and Mary keep you,
Fr. Christopher Coman



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Christmas, 2014

My Dear Friends,

One of the most sacred places in all the world is the church of the Nativity in the city of Bethlehem. It is an old church built upon the site commemorated as the place where Jesus was born, placed in a manger, and visited by the shepherds and magi.

In order for pilgrims to venerate this holy place, they must, literally, go down on hands and knees to reach in and touch the spot marked by a glass star. I have had the privilege of doing so twice; and, each time, I remember how humbling it was to bow down and acknowledge that very place where the Word of God became flesh.

Scripture tells us that it was Jesus who emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave and coming in human likeness. It was Jesus who humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. With a humility that brought him to the point of humiliation, Jesus committed himself to do His Father's will, at all times and in all things. And because of this, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name above every name, so that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth.

You and I are called to imitate the humility of Jesus, even if it means humiliation. But for us, it is so easy to become self-absorbed, pre-occupied with a sense of our own needs and importance. Sometimes God's will seems impractical, even painful to bear. At other times, we do not even stop to seek God's will. It is much easier to choose on our own that which appears to be more comfortable, more sensible, more prosperous or personally fulfilling.

Next year, the formal Synod on the Family will take place in Rome. Next September, Pope Francis will honor us by visiting my home city of Philadelphia to participate in the World Meeting of Families. With this emphasis on the human family and its importance not only in the Church but in the world itself, we call upon the Holy Family of Nazareth...Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We pray that, by their inspiration, we may be humbled in the sight of God more aware of and responsive to God's will and the needs of His most vulnerable children. And, in these times when people of faith are often humiliated for their beliefs and morals, we ask the Holy Family to strengthen us in our resolve to follow the Lord Jesus in obedience to the Father's will.

May the Holy Family watch over and protect you. Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

God Love You!

+ Bishop Cistone

Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone
Bishop of Saginaw