

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

By the first day in December, we will have already launched into the Advent season. Who knows exactly when the Advent season began to go overboard with activities, spending and excess? We all feel caught and don't know how to downsize from what we have created in our communities and ministries, with our families and friends.

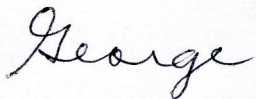
If we are ever going to examine simplicity and how to become more Christ-centered during Advent and Christmas, this might be the year. The economy presses on us; time slides past us fast and furious. We multi-task, juggle, rush to get things done and speed our way through each moment. Sometimes our demeanor is compromised. We get short with people we love; we cheat ourselves and neglect our health and are stressed by small things. We are tired of Christmas before it even arrives.

Yes, this might be the year to seriously consider the way we prepare in the weeks before Christmas. After all, this is our season to get ready for the Messiah.

Mark's Gospel for this Advent begins by quoting the prophet Isaiah: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.* John the Baptist is the first to appear in Mark's Gospel and to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. This Advent, it's our turn!

Although the month of December is mostly taken up with Advent, attached is a list of special feasts. As we enter into this season, let us wait with active expectation and let us remind ourselves that Christ being born again this Christmas is no longer dependent on Mary. It is dependent on us.

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George".

George J. Cerniglia, S.M.
Assistant for Religious Life