

December 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

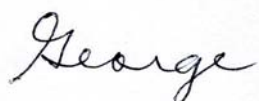
We enter the liturgical season of Advent, a time of waiting and preparation. Yet we do not only wait and prepare. Anticipation of the returning Jesus requires more than hoping and praying. We must also work steadily and tirelessly to tend and grow the seeds that Jesus planted among us almost two millennia ago.

Advent is a season of unimaginable hope. We might do well to re-read the second encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *On Christian Hope*. In it, the pope speaks eloquently of the grace of hope. "The dark door of time, of the future," he writes, "has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of new life." Yes, through the coming of Jesus, we are offered the gift of new life, the life of grace. What a wonderful gift to ponder in this Advent season!

Pope Benedict XVI ends his encyclical with a reflection on Mary. He addresses her directly: "Thus, you remain in the midst of the disciples as their Mother, as the Mother of hope. Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you. Show us the way to his Kingdom! Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!" Here is an Advent prayer we might recite often during Advent. We can have no better company for this season than the Mother of our Lord.

Attached is a list of the particular feasts of December. I have also attached a helpful "ordo" for the liturgical year, which was drawn up by Brother Dennis Bautista. His community uses it to assign liturgical responsibilities for community prayer. You may find it helpful in the same way in your community or you may use it for other purposes. Special thanks to Dennis for offering this worship aid to us! As we wait with active expectation, let us remember 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