



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors and Parochial Administrators
From: Bishop Michael F. Olson
Date: December 1, 2017
Re: Advent Message to Priests of the Diocese

Dear Brother Priests,

As we enter Advent, we are each reminded that this season is both a hopeful season of joyful expectation and a prayerful season of penitential preparation for both comings of Christ.

This becomes clear to us as we are called upon to absolve the sins of our parishioners in various communal penance services throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth. As confessors, we not only absolve sins but we also guide our penitents on the path of ongoing conversion from such current evils as heightened individualism, a crisis of identity, and a cooling of fervor in the faith which can lead to a mere “pretense of religion.” (2Timothy 3:5)

In order that we as priests might ourselves enter into this season of conversion to shepherd more intentionally our parishioners on this path of conversion to holiness, I share the following quote from Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* for our own personal and communal examination of conscience as priests called to shepherd the People of God in our local church.

“Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity. At the same time, the spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelization. As a result, one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervor. These are three evils which fuel one another.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*#78)

As we come together this Advent as priests for penance services and for fraternal dinners, I would like to suggest that we discuss this quote from Pope Francis among ourselves and how it might apply to our own lives. Encourage each other. Challenge each other. I would also encourage us to reflect upon it in our personal prayer throughout Advent. Thank you for your ongoing generosity in ministry especially during this time of year.

I remain,
Fraternally Yours in Christ,

+Michael F. Olson
Bishop of Fort Worth