DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

November 27, 2026

Let Us Meet at Bethlehem

"Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As I begin my first Advent among you as your shepherd, I would like to share a simple invitation for this holy season: let us prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord as we journey together to Bethlehem.

Advent is a time of waiting**.** In these four weeks, we prepare for so much: gifts and meals, family gatherings and celebrations. Yet, amid all the activity, it is easy to lose sight of the reason for our preparations and, above all, of the One for whom we are preparing. The word *Advent* means "coming." During this season, we remember Christ's first coming at Bethlehem and look forward to his return in glory. Our whole Christian life is an Advent. Yet Christ is already among us: in the Eucharist and in his Word, in the poor, the stranger, and those who need our love. He comes to meet us every day, often in ways we might not expect.

As I visit the parishes of our diocese, I see this faith expressed in so many generous ways: through giving trees, gift drives, meals for those in need and countless acts of generosity and care. I am deeply grateful to those who give of themselves to bring hope and joy to others. May all these good works lead us, and those we serve, to Bethlehem, where we encounter the One who is the source of every gift and the heart of our Christmas celebration.

When Jesus was born, the world was busy too. Caesar Augustus had ordered a census and people were occupied with the demands of everyday life. Yet, amid all that activity, God entered human history. The shepherds, keeping watch through the night, and later the Magi, guided by the star, recognized the presence of the newborn King. They remind us that encountering Christ requires a watchful heart and the openness to follow where God leads. As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, “Only a watchful heart is able to believe the message” (Christmas Homily, 2008).

Many people around us are still searching for meaning, belonging, hope and Christ—sometimes without even knowing it. Perhaps someone in our family, among our friends or in our neighbourhood is waiting for an invitation, a word of encouragement or simply someone who will accompany them. This Advent, I invite you to pray for that one person who may be searching and, if you can, to invite them to join us for Mass this Christmas. A simple gesture can open the door to a meaningful encounter with the Lord.

As Christmas approaches, may the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our daily prayer and our acts of kindness help prepare a place for Christ in our hearts and homes. May this Advent journey bring us all closer to him and to one another. May we arrive at Bethlehem with hearts ready to welcome the Child who comes to us, bringing God's love, peace and hope. I look forward to meeting you there.

With my prayers and blessing for a holy Advent,

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