**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**Well, it has begun! The turkey was hardly out of the oven when the buying panic of our frenzied consumerism of Black Friday trumped the family bonding of Thanksgiving and mall madness overcame the joy and laughter of families coming together and enjoying each other’s company. As I watched the images on all the news stations of people brawling and tearing at each other, I shook my head in wonder, “What, in God’s Name, does any of that have to do with getting ready for Christmas?”**

**Have we become a totally insane people? I screamed at the TV, “WAKE UP, PEOPLE!” “WAKE UP FROM YOUR MADNESS! WAKE UP FROM YOUR GREED AND YOUR SELFISHNESS AND YOUR HATEFUL BEHAVIORS! WAKE UP FROM YOUR MEANNESS OF SPIRIT AND THE VIOLENCE OF YOUR HEARTS! WAKE UP! FOR GOD’S SAKE, WAKE UP, PEOPLE!”**

**But, of course, they couldn’t hear me. They never would.**

**It’s the same message of Paul to the Romans and Jesus to His disciples some 2,000 years ago, and, I guess, we still haven’t heard them all that well either.**

**Advent is the time for us to WAKE UP, TO WATCH AND LISTEN!**

**Do you see what I see? A star shining in the night! The light of God illuminating the universe as Almighty God takes on human flesh.**

**Do you hear what I hear? A song. God’s favorite song of all. The song of the redeemed. The song of the penitent sinner turning back to God with his whole heart.**

**Do you know what I know? God enfleshed in the helplessness of an infant child with the power of the Mighty King—then and now.**

**And He, this Infant King, speaks to us from the filth of a stable, lying in the poverty of a manger, “Pray for peace, people everywhere.**

**This child, this child, sleeping in the night, will bring us goodness and light.**

**My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**It is only this image that can bring us peace in what has become the madness of the world. And make no mistake about it. Our world has gone mad. It’s like a run-away train roaring down the tracks and people standing on the tracks oblivious to the danger. The madness of consumerism reared its ugly head this weekend. Drug and alcohol addictions and the recurring problems they bring—crime, domestic violence, wasted lives—are tearing apart the very social fabric of our society.**

**One day we are going to wake up to the moral drift in our society concerning sexual behavior and wonder what in the world have we done to our children, some of whom are “sexting”, that is creating their own pornography on their cell phones? What has become of the sanctity of marriage vows? I sometimes smile when I hear people rant and rave about homosexuals being a threat to marriage in this nation. It seems to me that heterosexual people are doing quite well destroying the institution of marriage all by themselves. I’m sure no Bible-thumping, fire and brimstone, kind of preacher, but I am concerned.**

**St. Paul was concerned too. Rome in his time wasn’t much different than America in our time. People are people. Unless someone sounds the alarm from time to time, society has a tendency to deteriorate—to be pulled down by those forces within our own nature—those weaknesses of the flesh with which all of us are familiar. Paul was warning the church at Rome: “Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.”**

**Now, Advent, is the time to reset our moral bearings. Now is the time of salvation! Jesus Himself warns us today, “…you also must be prepared for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man WILL come.”**

**“WAKE UP, PEOPLE!” “WAKE UP FROM YOUR MADNESS! WAKE UP FROM YOUR GREED AND YOUR SELFISHNESS AND YOUR HATEFUL BEHAVIORS! WAKE UP FROM YOUR MEANNESS OF SPIRIT AND THE VIOLENCE OF YOUR HEARTS! WAKE UP! FOR GOD’S SAKE, WAKE UP, PEOPLE!”**

**Can you hear me? Will you ever hear me?**