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## *Seek the Lord*

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ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

On Christmas morning, in the opening prayer of the *Mass at Dawn*, we ask God to allow the light of faith, which radiates from the incarnate Word, to shine through in our deeds. This prayer reminds us of a beautiful truth: the gift of our faith is not something we keep to ourselves; rather, having received the very life of God within our souls, He then calls us to share that divine goodness with others.

Jesus Christ is the model of such self-giving. Out of love for us, with nothing to gain for Himself, He entered into our human nature and offered Himself for our redemption from sin. During the season of Advent, we prepare ourselves to celebrate this mystery at Christmas. Christ's birth into this world invites us to renew our awareness of the humble nature of God's saving love and His desire to reveal the truth of our humanity by becoming human Himself.

The Lord, who has given us everything out of love, asks us, in turn, to give of ourselves for others. We live in a world desperately in need of love. Our faith invites us to put the love we have received from God into action, thereby recognizing the inherent dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God. The Church has outlined the 14 Works of Mercy, the practical, time-honored ways we can put our love into action. The Corporal Works of Mercy are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned,

shelter the homeless, visit the sick and bury the dead. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish the sinner, bear wrongs patiently, forgive others, comfort the afflicted and pray for the living and the dead. There are so many ways in which we can strive to love others as God has loved us!

As we prepare this Advent to celebrate the mystery of the Lord's Incarnation, it is a fitting time to reflect on the love we have received from God and what our response to that love may be. As individuals and families, we can discern how God may be inviting us to grow in our love for others. There are many opportunities to share Christ's love with others through our parish communities and other groups, including the many charitable ministries which offer assistance or provide services addressing the wide range of needs in our society. Maybe there is one such ministry which is uniquely suited to your own talents and interests. If so, this might be the perfect time to get involved.

I pray that this Advent may be a fruitful period of prayer and preparation for each of you, for your families, for our parishes and for our archdiocese as a whole. May we welcome the Christ Child and know that with the love He has come to offer us, He also calls us to offer that love to our brothers and sisters here on earth. And may the peace, joy and fullness of life that only Christ can bring be yours this Advent and Christmas!