



Ten ways to Celebrate Christmas

At Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation: God entering human history in the person of Jesus. How will our hearts and homes welcome Emanuel ('God-with-us')? Add your best ideas to the thoughts that follow.

1. Tell the Jesus story

The crib is a beautiful symbol of the Christmas message and a simple teaching tool for children and adults alike. Make this a sacred feature in your home. We can also familiarise our children with the Jesus story through books, CDs, DVDs, website, etc. Encourage them to create their own pictures, games and dramas based on the nativity theme.

2. Give gifts of self

What 'gift of the heart' will you give this Christmas? A gift of listening to a parent? A gift of playtime with your child? A gift of romance with your spouse? A gift of praise for your teenager? Choose a unique gift for the person you love, write it down on a card or scroll and tie it to the Christmas tree.

3. Make Advent prayerful

Prioritize moments of prayer during Advent: lighting the Advent wreath; prayer breaks (instead of coffee breaks); enter fully into the Advent liturgies and other parish celebrations. Sing Christmas carols—and mean it.

4. Cards that people keep

Write cards to be treasured. Don't settle for "Dear Pat, Happy Christmas, Love Alex." Add a few words that affirm, thank, build up and deepen bonds of faith. "Dear Pat, I thank God for our friendship. Your smile is uplifting. Love, Alex."

5. Share memories

What was your most memorable Christmas? How did Great Uncle Joe celebrate Christmas as a child? Simple table topics like these during the Christmas season are memory-makers in themselves.

6. Festivity with justice

Recall the simplicity of the crib. Rethink your material habits this Christmas. Cut back on commercial spending; pool your funds to assist someone in genuine material need. What other riches can we 'spend' on others this Christmas (time, love, family, faith)?

7. Make peace

Christmas: what better time to let go of old grudges and experience the peace of Christ? Take one of your deepest wounds and forgive the other from the heart; perhaps someone who has died. Receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Pray for peace in war-torn nations.

8. Take time

Relationships are essential to Christmas. Take time to nurture your key relationships. Cancel a work date to 'hang out' with your kids. Leave the shopping and write to a dear friend. Spend some precious, intimate time with your spouse. Or just sit in prayer and 'waste time' with God.

9. Lunch and love

Look for ways to infuse Christmas lunch with Christ's love. Pause to praise God in an extended grace. Pay attention to the person most easily overlooked at the table. Invite a neighbour. Choose conversation topics that are inclusive and lifegiving. Assist a parent struggling with a young child. Thank the cook!

10. Share the spirit

Share something of Christmas with a person you wouldn't usually see. E.g., a friend in a nursing home, in hospital, in jail. Help serve meals at a hostel for the homeless. Invite a neighbour to lunch.

Helpful Hint

Christmas Masses are often crowded so check Mass times well ahead and get there early. Allow time to mingle with the congregation afterwards. Take your child to the nativity crib in the church and say a prayer there. What prayer from the depths of your heart do you bring to the Lord this Christmas?