



— SHARING THE — *Christmas Message*



In all the rush and bustle of Christmas we may sometimes lose sight of the 'reason for the season'. Christmas is a family time and not just to holiday, party, eat, drink and do presents but to remember the great gift of God's love for us. Here are some ways families can share the true meaning of Christmas.

People and Relationships

The key to sharing the Christmas message is showing to others the unconditional love that Christ has for us. This means accepting family members as they are and without criticism or reproach. It means making peace and reconciling with someone we have become distanced from or out of good relationship with during the year. It means remembering with love and gratitude those who have gone before us and are with God. Our fundamental gift to others is enabling them to see the face of Christ in us.

Parish and School Communities

Join with other families in participating in Christmas celebrations and worshipping opportunities. Offer Christ's message of peace, hope and love to all you meet and recognise that these communities are a 'family of families'.



Invitation

Invite a neighbour or friend, whether a practising Catholic or not, to come with you to Mass on Christmas Day or to attend a parish carol service or similar celebration.



Faith in Action: The Elderly

Visit an elderly person who lives nearby. If they live on their own and do not have family, invite them to your Christmas family celebrations.



Faith in Action: Those in Need

Consider giving a few hours of your time to assist a local charity or service club during the Christmas season or to a parish which is providing Christmas lunch or similar activity for the needy.

Children and Grandchildren

Involve your children and grandchildren in Christmas story activities/readings and model Christ like hospitality and generosity within your family and community.

Christmas Cards

Try to use Christmas cards which have a nativity scene or other Christian imagery and message. Consider buying some of your Christmas cards and gifts from charitable organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society and St Columbans Mission. Perhaps make your own Christmas cards and make this a family activity where everyone makes a contribution.



Charity Giving and Receiving

Clear out your wardrobe of unwanted clothes and give them to Vinnies. Visit your local Vinnies, Oxfam or other charity shop to see if you can find suitable Christmas gifts and don't forget to wish the workers and volunteers a happy Christmas.

Why not try and make Christmas last all year long through continuing some special activity such as an ongoing donation to a particular charity or regular involvement in a parish ministry or school activity.

Special Gifts



Try making special gifts for members of the family rather than buying all your gifts e.g. craft, paintings, bookmarks.

Give a family gift to a less fortunate family which may not receive many gifts at Christmas e.g. through parish hampers.

Spend family time baking biscuits/cakes, wrapping gifts, and displaying Christmas decorations. This will help each member of the family to recognise the treasure of each other.

Online/Social Media



We live in a time when sharing with others is easier than ever before. Use social media to share a Christmas message with family and friends wherever they might be.

The Workplace

Where this is appropriate to your work context, include a crib or other Christian symbols in Christmas decorations at work.

Ecumenical Public Witness

Often Christian Churches come together in a locality and organise a public carol singing or similar event. Involve your family in these events and share the Christmas spirit with your fellow Christians.

The Joy of Christmas

The joy of Christmas is in the giving more so than the receiving and in showing your love for all those who are special to you. Instead of feeling 'frazzled' about finding the 'right' gift focus on the gratitude and love you have for the person you are buying a gift for, after all, it's the thought that counts!

There are many creative ways to make Christmas a truly Christ filled celebration where we show our love for our family and friends and our compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves. Sometimes all that is needed is a listening ear, a gentle touch, a word of encouragement. Remember that the greatest gift we can give is the gift of ourselves!

A Christmas message from Pope Francis



"I invoke the Christmas gift of joy and peace upon all: upon children and the elderly, upon young people and families, the poor and the marginalized May Jesus, who was born for us, console all those afflicted by illness and suffering; may he sustain those who devote themselves to serving our brothers and sisters who are most in need. Happy Christmas!" Midnight Mass Rome 25/12/13