

Ideas for Christmas in a time of pandemic

Begin with **Advent rituals**

- Advent wreath
- Advent calendar
- Note particularly the feasts that occur during this season: St. Nicholas (Dec 6), Immaculate Conception (Dec 8), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec 12), St. Lucy (Dec 13).
- Baking! Make this occasion to work together, to share family recipes, to tell stories how some of these recipes have been handed down through generations. Or, to start a new tradition of your own! Someone might want to gather these recipes and create a family recipe book!
- Decorating Everyone can have a hand in this! Whether it be inside or outside, the glow of lights and festive decorations brighten a home as well as a heart!
- This is a great time to include nationality customs that we often don't get around to doing
 - Irish custom of having a candle in the window [a sign of welcome for the holy family journey] and a sign for each other during this time that we hold each other in prayer
 - Research nationality customs from around the world; include African American (Kwanzaa) customs
 - Simply ask Google for more information and ideas
- Listen to Advent/Christmas instrumental music from Mark Ehrbar and our instrumentalists, or from your favorite CDs, Pandora selections, etc.
- Gift-giving options
 - Including the poor [a Corporal Work of Mercy] in your plans
 - Ministries and services that support those most in need: Thea Bowman Center, the Food Bank, the Gesu Food Fund, and many other organizations with a mission for those most in need
- Parish Giving Tree -
 - Gesu's Advent Giving Tree will be completely virtual this year; see parish website for more details
- Prayer/Scripture options many of which can be found on our parish website
 - Blessings for the Advent Wreath, the Creche or Manger Scene, the Christmas Tree
 - Meal Blessings, Home Blessings

If your extended family is unable to gather this year, come up with some new ways to do this

- Zoom or Facetime calls
- Care packages
- Traditional Christmas cards: if people have the time, include a family update letter or a handwritten personal greeting.
- Have kids take the time to write to grandparents, etc.
- Do the ideas below at the same time wherever family members are gathered

This section notes **home rituals** that could be used by families whether or not they attempt to come to church for Mass on Christmas. Offer a good explanation of the Christmas Mass schedule, and the concerns/cautions that people might be worried about this year.

- Blessing of the Christmas Tree
- Blessing of the Creche or Manger Scene
- Prayer while wrapping gifts
- Christmas Table Prayer
- Let's come up with a Christmas eve -- brief -- prayer service for families. Opening Prayer, Read the Gospel, prayers of the faithful, Our Father/Hail Mary and a Closing prayer.
- Blessing of the home and household - Epiphany Blessing

The Diocese of Cleveland will be offering options on their website (not available until after 11/23)

On Christmas itself, gather the family [and any guests]

Celebrate Christmas Mass with the parish - in person, or via livestream

Please note that details about parish Masses will be coming in December

If a family chooses to celebrate *Christmas at home*, here are some suggestions:

Pray with the livestreamed parish Christmas Mass at a time that works best for all of you

Place the Christmas creche in a prominent place, and light a candle

Perhaps replace the Advent wreath candles with white candles, or place a white candle in the center of the Advent wreath.

Read the Christmas Gospel

Add Intercessions for your family, for those unable to be with us, for our country and world, for those who are alone at this time, ... [add your own!]

[offer examples of a litany they might use]

Sign of peace

On Christmas or sometime during the season, stop in at church to pray at the Christmas Creche.

Visit the *Nativity Room* displaying a collection of nativities from around the world.
(it is also the Ushers' room)

Include your own family rituals ... display pictures of those not present, include storytelling to share stories that can go on for more generations.

After the Christmas holiday, have kids write special thank you letters to family members from near or far whom they didn't see in person, but who may have sent them Christmas presents.

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