

Be a Good Steward of the Advent and Christmas Seasons

December is such a busy time of year, and a month that tempts us to lose sight of the profound spiritual importance of the Advent and Christmas seasons. The best way to stay focused on the coming of Jesus Christ is to be good stewards of his presence in our daily lives. Here are simple ways to exercise good stewardship of this sacred time of year.

which your children are allowed to handle. Kids love to make the Nativity story their own, and they especially love the angels!

5. Plan a project to help someone this Christmas: Identify someone with a genuine need, involve your whole family and see how happy you can make someone this Christmas.



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Set aside some time after Christmas Day to write thank you notes and help your children to write thank you notes for the gifts they receive. This is a wonderful habit for a lifetime, and a good way to foster a steward's gratitude for all gifts.

8. Write a Christmas letter to someone far away such as someone in the service, or perhaps someone working or ministering in a foreign country: It has been said that receiving a letter when you are far away from home is like opening a priceless gift on Christmas morning, no matter what day of the year. Many people are unable to travel home for the holidays, so it can be a very lonely time for them. Write a special Christmas letter to someone of your choice.

9. Enjoy an eco-friendly Christmas: Christmas is a time when a large number of people enjoy excess and extravaganza, but the environmental cost can be quite dramatic. Arguably, a million miles of unrecyclable wrapping paper is thrown in the trash every year. Look for simple ways to cut down on waste over this festive period. Where possible, use recyclable gift wrap.

10. Attend Christmas Mass together with family or friends: December 25 falls on Saturday this year so make sure you are present at the Table of the Lord. If you are alone this Christmas or don't have family living near you, invite a friend or a neighbor to join you.

1. Give God a very special gift this year: Let this gift be something personal that no one else needs to know about, and let it be a sacrifice. Perhaps your gift will be to commit to spending more time with God daily. Perhaps there is a habit you know you should give up. Why wait for a New Year's resolution? Start now.

2. Celebrate the season of Advent: Light the Advent wreath candles each night before dinner. If you have children, let them offer their own prayers to the Christ child for whom we are waiting.

3. Set aside a special time to read the Christmas story in the Gospel of Saint Luke 1:5-56 through 2:1-20: Consider reading this account with your family or friends and discussing it together.

4. Put a crèche up in your home at the beginning of Advent: Consider having one set that is "kid-proof"

Participate in your parish Adopt-a-Family program or call Catholic Charities or another charity and find a family through their programs. Make sure your children take part in shopping for a family who needs extra help and make them aware of the needs in your community.

6. Give a surprise gift of service to each member of your family: The idea of giving an unexpected gift of service to members of your family reveals your own love and concern for them. You might consider giving your spouse a day away, running an errand for your brother, or cleaning out a closet for your mother. Make it personal and meaningful.

7. Send Christmas cards and thank you notes that convey a spiritual message: This is an easy way to share your faith during the Advent season. Don't just sign your name! Include a personal message with each card.