

How does the Church propose that Christmas be celebrated?

Based upon the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy

Christmas Eve

- Prayers at the crib—In the homes of the faithful, family prayer should include a reading of St. Luke's account of the birth of Christ, the typical Christmas carols, as well as prayers of petition and praise, especially those of children.
- Recognizing why we have Christmas trees—The tree also offers an opportunity for family prayer. Apart from its historical origins, the Christmas tree has become a potent symbol today among Christians; it evokes both the tree planted in the center of Eden (Gen 2:9), and the tree of the Cross, which lends it a Christological significance showing that Christ is the true tree of life, born of human stock, of the Virgin Mary, the tree which is always green and productive. In Nordic countries, the tree is decorated with apples and hosts. "Gifts" can be added; but among the gifts placed under the tree, something should be included for the poor since they belong to every Christian family.
- What to eat? Eat the Christmas supper, of course! The Christian family, which traditionally blesses the table and gives thanks to the Lord for the gift of food, performs this ceremony with greater intensity at the Christmas supper which gives concrete expression to the joy of family ties.

At Midnight Mass, an event of major liturgical significance and of strong resonance in popular piety, the following could be given prominence:

- At the beginning of Mass, the proclamation of the Savior's birth according the formula contained in the Roman Martyrology could be made in song. This is annually done at Church of the Holy Spirit, and is a great lesson in secular and salvation history.
- The prayer of the faithful (intercessions) should really be universal, and where appropriate, use several languages; and the poor should always be remembered in the presentation of the gifts;
- At the end of Mass, the faithful could be invited to kiss the image of the Child Jesus, which is then placed in a crib erected in the church or somewhere nearby. It is powerful to kneel in front of the crib with Baby Jesus and simply thank Him for coming to earth to save us.