

CHRISTMAS IN THE TIME OF COVID

Everyone is in agreement that this Christmas is like no other Christmas the world has known. The suffering and death of millions, the displacement and hunger of more millions, the difficulties and challenges faced by nearly everyone on this planet have nearly pushed Christmas to oblivion. Nearly, but not quite. The resilience of people of all races has come to the fore and enabled them to hold on to the meaning of Christmas and the fulfillment of God's promised redemption, through toned down but nevertheless hopeful celebrations of Christ's birth.

Pope Francis spoke to Catholics around the world on Christmas Day:

"At this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, it is all the more important for us to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters," he said in his "Urbi et Orbi" ("to the city and the world") message.



This year, due to COVID safety restrictions, the pontiff delivered his remarks from a lectern inside the Vatican instead of from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica for a crowd of thousands who traditionally fill the square. It was livestreamed for viewing around the world.

Pope Francis said this call for solidarity was especially aimed at "people who are the most fragile, the sick and all who at this period find themselves without work or in grave difficulty due to the economic consequences of the pandemic and to women who have been subjected to domestic violence during these months of confinement."

The pontiff also touched on the plight of children caught up by war, singling out victims in Syria, Yemen and Iraq in his Christmas message.

"On this day, when the word of God became a child, let us turn our gaze to the many, all too many, children worldwide, especially in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, who still pay the high price of war," he said.

"May their faces touch the consciences of all men and women of good will, so that the causes of conflicts can be addressed and courageous efforts can be made to build a future of peace," he said. (CBS News)

Christmas parties and gatherings were discouraged, allowed only to a maximum of 10 people of the same household. Nonetheless, people found ways to be with family and friends, many through zoom, possibly the most popular application of its kind nowadays. Here are some zoom Christmas gatherings:

High School 1965



BS Psychology 1982

High School 1962





**Lina Noveno (HS 65, BSN 69)
in New Jersey**

**Sol Balda-Ilagan (HS 65)
with husband, Lito,
and children
in the US and Canada**



Other groups sent pictures of their Christmas gatherings via social media:

The SPC Malate Community.

Sr. Evangeline also shared an activity that the community undertook, in answer to the call of Pope Francis:

An Afternoon Chat with Street Dwellers

We are very happy that we were able to provide a home for 100 street dwellers even just for one afternoon.



“Solidarity is a moral virtue born of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future. Solidarity finds a concrete expression in service, especially that of taking care of the most vulnerable people. Service, which is more than just getting involved in seasonal acts of generosity, requires ‘being’ with the weak, looking to their faces, touching their flesh, and going beyond our personal desires, wishes and plans in order to help them. Service makes our talents bear fruit and gives meaning to our lives, especially when they are done with gratuitousness.” -Excerpts from the 2020 Christmas Message of Mother Goretti Lee, SPC Superior General