

# Christmas

## OF THE SEVENTY

*Members of the Seventy share how they celebrate the season and remember the Savior's birth.*



**H**ow can we celebrate Christmas so it is meaningful to each member of the family? How can we keep the Savior at the center of Christmas? What traditions can help us remember Him and His birth?

Members of the Seventy from various countries and cultures share ways they have answered these questions for themselves and their loved ones. Here they share some meaningful Christmas memories, testimonies, and traditions. (Their native countries are listed in parentheses.)



**Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis (Brazil):**

Christmas is a very special opportunity for my family and me to talk about some sacred things that we don't address in perhaps the same formal and specific way during other times of the year. It is an opportunity to show love to others and gratitude for things that have happened in our lives.



**Elder David S. Baxter (Scotland):** When our children were young, we would go carol singing on Christmas Eve, delivering gifts of Yule logs to less-active families in our ward.

We would light candles on Christmas Eve, read the Christmas story, have a special family meal, and then enjoy Christmas together.



**Elder Gérald Caussé (France):** In our family we have decided that Christmas is not just about having fun together, but it is also about focusing on Christ and serving others. About 10 years ago we formed a choir of family members. We went to hospitals and retirement homes and sang Christmas songs. At first it was a small group. We had babies in our arms and in strollers. But now these babies have grown up, and they are seasoned choristers. We have a 44-person choir sharing not only traditional French carols but also Church hymns, and we find great

# Traditions



success. After singing, the children go and distribute to the sick or elderly little presents we have prepared as a family. We try to have time with each person, talking about the true meaning of Christmas and also listening to him or her. Everyone always has a lot to share.

Our visits are special occasions to remember what we know about being a Christian and bearing the name of Christ. Christmas is a good reminder of how we need to behave during the whole year.



**Elder Eduardo Gavarret (Uruguay):**

Christmas is a special time in our lives. We are always filled with a warm feeling during that time. When the month of December arrives, we find that Christmas is a time of peace and being together with family. We have the tradition of writing letters to our friends, but we especially enjoy writing letters to the Savior and putting them on the Christmas tree as a gift we want to give Him.



**Elder Carlos A. Godoy (Brazil):** As a family we write our testimonies in copies of the Book of Mormon and send them to friends and relatives as Christmas gifts. Because it's Christmas, gifts are always welcome. And it's a nice way to share the gospel and to remember that Christ is the most important part of the day.



**Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. (South Africa):** On Christmas Eve we enjoy a sit-down dinner, after which we read Luke's account of the Savior's birth. On Christmas morning, dressed in our Sunday best, we attend a short Christmas meeting. At this meeting we also have a number of nonmembers and less-active members attend. Later we visit with friends and other family members at family gatherings and there strengthen our family ties in the true spirit of Christmas.





**Elder Donald L. Hallstrom (USA):** On Christmas Eve in years past we would gather to have a sweet and memorable period of testimony bearing. Each family member was given opportunity to express his or her feelings about the Savior and about our Father in Heaven. Those deep feelings of love would then turn us to one another, and expressions of love for family members would be most heartfelt. My father would then express his vision for the family and give powerful encouragement to each family member to remain true to the faith. Then in unity we would kneel together in a closing family prayer.



**Elder Paul V. Johnson (USA):** One of our traditions is that every year we attend a sing-in of Handel's *Messiah* as a family. We love that. We each have a score of the music, and it gives us a chance to sing the beautiful words, put to music by Handel, and recall the Savior's ministry.



**Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi (Japan):** Starting about 30 days before Christmas, my wife and I try to read the words of the prophets from the scriptures regarding the Savior's birth. If you read each day until December 25, you feel the Christmas spirit gradually build up, story by story, scripture by scripture. That's what we try to do in our family.

I always remember Nephi's reply to the angel's question about the meaning of the tree in his father's dream. Nephi said, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22). To me, Christmas is about the love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.



**Elder Erich W. Kopischke (Germany):** During this season, the whole house changes visibly. Boughs of fir trees are decorated, candle arches are placed in the windows, and strings of lights are hung. The children put Christmas decorations in their rooms, cookies and gingerbread are baked, and an aroma permeates the entire house—the scent of fir trees and cinnamon.



Christmas Eve is a favorite time for us to invite family and friends to our home. We light candles and start a fire in the fireplace. We have prepared special songbooks containing Christmas carols we like to sing. I bring out my accordion, and every person chooses a carol that we sing together. There is a special spirit that everyone enjoys.

Then we open presents. The little children go first. Everyone watches and shares the excitement as each present is unwrapped. After all the presents have been opened, the children quickly disappear with their treasures. The adults stay and chat. It's really like a special family home evening.

Sometimes we invite people over for Christmas Eve who might otherwise be lonely. These Christmases are particularly nice.



**Elder Michael John U. Teh (Philippines):** Christmas for me means Christ and my family. It is an opportunity to recommit myself to do better in my relationship with our Heavenly Father and the Savior and in how I am as a husband and a father. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend

sacrament meeting throughout the year because it is a time for me to renew those covenants and remember Christmas. It can be like Christmas every week, a time when I recommit myself to remember the Savior.



**Elder José A. Teixeira (Portugal):** The best way for our family to maintain and keep the spirit of Christmas, not only during the season but also throughout the year, is by reading the scriptures. As we read the scriptures as a family, we remind ourselves of the Savior and the true spirit of Christmas.

Christmas to my family and me really means Jesus Christ. It's a time of giving, a time of receiving, a time of reconnecting with our families, and a time to extend greater amounts of love to those around us.



**Elder Francisco J. Viñas (Spain):** I want to share with you an experience we had during my service as mission president in 1989. While we served in the Argentina Salta Mission, a





few days before Christmas, we received instruction from the Missionary Department that the missionaries had to stay in their apartments until further notice because of the invasion of Panama by the United States.

On the morning of December 24th, we loaded the mission cars and divided the mission into two parts: the assistants went to the north part of the mission, and my eight-year-old son and I went to the south of the mission. The purpose was to visit each companionship in their apartment, deliver food, and share a Christmas message with them. This was a great experience for my son and me. Being in each apartment and sharing with the missionaries was a wonderful experience for both of us—one we always cherish as a great Christmas memory.

My wife and two daughters stayed in the mission home, and my son and I returned in the early morning of December 25th. That was the first time that we were not together as a family for Christmas Eve, but it was for us the most memorable of Christmases.



**Elder Jorge F. Zeballos (Chile):** When you have a testimony of Jesus Christ—that He lives, that He is our Savior, our Redeemer—the best way to manifest your love for Him is by being obedient to His commandments. So to me, the best way to remember Him, not only during the Christmas season but every day, is by being obedient to everything He has asked us to do.



**Elder Claudio D. Zivic (Argentina):** Christmas for me and for our family means celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It means gathering as a family on Christmas Eve to have a home evening where everyone participates in presenting, reading, and singing of the special events of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. This has always been the most important celebration in our home, and we try to keep the spirit of the season by living the gospel each day. ■