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Tips for living a spiritual, happy and holy Christmas

Before he died in Rome earlier this month, Bishop Javier Echevarria sent a Christmas message encouraging the faithful to take advantage of this holy season to grow in love for God and for others.

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MANILA, Dec. 21, 2016 –Before he died in Rome on the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe this year, Opus

Dei prelate Bishop Javier Echevarria sent a Christmas message encouraging the faithful to take advantage of this holy season to grow in love for God and for others.

“There is a risk, that the bustle of the environment will push us, almost without realizing it, to confusion: to make us lose focus that the Lord is very close,” warned Echevarría in the last pastoral letter he wrote for Christmas.

“Let us not forget that Jesus Christ comes each day of our existence in the sacraments, prayer, and works of mercy,” said the late head of Opus Dei.

For this, Echevarria, affectionately called “Father” by his many of his spiritual children and friends of Opus Dei spread throughout the world, offered some “tips” for a spiritually-filled, holy, and happy Christmas.

Gestures of piety

He advised, first of all, to “take greater care of the small gestures of piety that make our relationship with God warmer and more intimate.”

- Making the sign of the Cross slowly, “knowing we are welcomed by the Trinity and saved by the Cross”;
- Recollecting ourselves, with naturalness but with devotion, when saying the blessing or giving thanks at meals;
- Showing by our genuflections before the “perennial Nativity scene of the Tabernacle” the firmness of a real and living faith.

Examples of the Holy Family

The late Bishop also suggested
“Christian families should imitate the
examples of the Holy Family”:

- Meditate on the events of the Nativity scene; “on the serene and joyful air proper to the stable at Bethlehem”;
- “Set aside unimportant matters, distractions that lead us astray”;
- “Strive to maintain our peace and calm with God; be ready also to offer it to others”;
- “Closer family life in the days of Christmas should not be marked by arguments, anger, impatience or frivolity”;
- “Enjoy relaxing and praying together, nourishing good times together as a family; ironing out prejudices and small grudges that perhaps our heart may harbor.”

Works of mercy

“Don’t forget to remember during these days people who are alone or in need, and whom we can assist in one way or another.”

- “Carry out works of mercy and accompany almsgiving with a smile;”
- “Try to spread this concern to relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues.”

In connection to this, the prelate cited “a deeply Christian gesture, among many others, of the practice of some who during some nights go out to offer something to eat and drink to homeless persons.

To reach out and help more people with the late bishop’s Christmas message, Fr. Rolando Arjonillo, Filipino priest and administrator of the Catholics Striving for Holiness website and Facebook page, produced a video version of the pastoral letter that can be

downloaded and shared for free at
Catholics striving for Holiness (**Fr.**
Mickey Cardenas / CBCP News)

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