

Christmas in South India

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Culture ..tradition.. faith mixed in our celebration.

Christmas means..carol singing..candle light service , Christmas tree, house decoration, Christmas cake , family prayer ,big dinner , gifts, sharing our love and joy with family and friends..these are all makes me happy when I think about my celebration back at home.

My Christmas always connected with mission school and church, holy cross cathedral, Nandyal diocese , Church of South India.



After all souls day(Nov 2) young people from our church and students from mission hostel starts planning about carol singing ,candle light service and Christmas service singing. This is united candle light service all are welcome to this service. There are many other faith people join in this service.

We always look forward for this carol singing.

Carol singing , it starts everyday morning 4a.m to 6 a.m. It is like a wake up call with Christmas melodies. I like this because of my dad and grand father were head of this group and most of the time we get opportunity to sing with them. Girls never join in this singing (may be because of our traditional barriers)So, it was great privilege to me to sing with the group end of the singing where they will come to our home to keep their instrument, lamps and books. There will be firewood on road sides to take a break . Everyday one house will provide coffee and snacks after the carol singing. There will be sign up sheet where people can put their names and arrange breakfast for carol singing group. Most of the young girls will help their families to arrange this in homes.

Next exciting and interesting singing group is church carol group. I was always part of it .This will be mixed group , teenagers, youth(upto 35years) and some adult members from the church. Everyday we will gather at 6:pm after our college or work and practice up to 9p.m. One of my dad's friend is major pianist, he always make fun of people voices and gives energy to the group. This is very important in our church , because it involves and shows how much parents encourage their children to take part in this event. There will be 100 choir members with full white dress and singing in parts, solos , special no's. It brings eternal joy to our souls to worship God. This service is a special service on 23 Dec evening with church procession and lightening candles. Our regular church congregation are more than two thousand, for Christmas there will be nearly ten thousand people. Special electronic screens will be arranged four sides of the church to follow order of service. Everyone look forward for this time. Most of young people they take break from their tuitions specially to join in carol singing.

There will be no of committees to celebrate event . Youth committees are for decorating church, carol singing, sports and games and men committees for food arrangement for poor and stall arrangements(it may be food counter or some gift corner). Church always been opened because of morning , evening prayers, carol singing and decoration group. One way prayers, singing and other way people preparing church with colourful bulbs, crapes and balloons. It's full of joyful and loving occasion for all of us.



Christmas shopping, this is big and expensive task in the family. We need to plan from month of October and to save money for our family purchases and also clothes for leprosy people. My mother every year she does this. Our

traditional practices and rituals are very expensive. People need to prepare sweets and purchase clothes to exchange with other family members. We have three family group parties for Christmas day. One is my Mom, dad school group, one is from my church youth and other one is from my other faith friends. We decorate house with full of crapes, color bulbs and balloons. My grand mother is expert in Christmas paper cuttings. My mother makes beautiful sofa sets, door , window curtains and Christmas sweets. My dad prepares chicken (it's a tradition to cut a chicken in the family on Christmas day). Before Christmas day on 24 night, we will have a family prayer where we keep our new clothes and presents and do our thanks giving prayer and wait for the Christmas cross, where carol singing group take to each family to bless and greet. We prepare beautiful flower garland for cross and family offertory and sweets for the group. After that my mom and dad go to midnight Christmas service at 12.30. We will go to morning 7a.m service. Church will filled with thousands of people , sitting all around in cold weather with colourful clothes and nice perfumes. Bishop will give special Christmas message in four services on this day. There will be many Christmas stalls opened for whole week for congregation. As soon as we come back from church we all start working for big meal-lunch. At 3:00p.m we have games and sports for whole congregation. Anyone can participate in this. At 5.00p.m there will be Christmas tree for children where children will get Christmas gifts and sweets. This will continue whole night with different church groups Christmas plays , dramas and singing.



Children will be baptised and there will be special prayer cell opened whole week for rural village people. We observe many other faith communities joining in these prayers. Christmas is not only for Christians it is for every religion, big or small. It brings unity among our communities and joy forever. There is no age barrier everyone actively involves in this celebration.

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