

# The Twelve Days of Christmas Creation Challenge

Jaqui Remond | 01 November 2017

Ho ho ho! It's Christmas time again. This Advent season we are responding to the papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* to live simply, change our lifestyle and be part of a



**cultural revolution to look after God's Creation. Imagine celebrating Christmas in a way that deeply honours the gift of Creation? What if living out our Christian faith in 2017 calls for us to experience Advent and Christmas differently? Could we, for example, practice living waste free throughout the silly season?**

God's plan is not about making creation (which includes humanity) into a set of objects to be used and discarded. So what does it mean to experience the season of Advent in a way that truly honours being in loving relationship with our Creator, one another and all creation?

## 1. Christmas Tree

A living tree in a pot that grows each year is a waste free choice for a Christmas tree for many years. Before it gets too large to move, plant it somewhere thoughtful and visit it when you can to water it and enjoy its shade and all of the life that the tree sustains. Choose a species appropriate for the place, such as a native Wollemi pine or cypress. Planting endemic species connects corridors of life.

## 2. Christmas Decorations

Reusing decorations from previous years is a great waste-free option. New decorations can be made from all sorts of bits and pieces that might be put in the rubbish, possibly to landfill. Google 'get creative Christmas decorations' or 'Fairtrade Christmas decorations' to see how you can get creative and help others while you celebrate the season.

### **3. Solar Lights**

Placing solar lights on the exterior of your house, such as decks and balconies, school grounds, and your Christmas tree is a sure winner rather than burning fossil fuels that costs the earth, yourself and our neighbours. A clean energy festive glow is the way to light up Christmas responsibly.

### **4. Candles**

Illuminate your Christmas with candles made from bees wax and non-genetically modified soy wax. Avoid candles made from palm oil and cheap paraffin wax, a petroleum by-product of crude oil that emits much particulate pollution when burned — a major ingredient in air pollution. Look for pure essential oils to provide fragrance and for a wick made of unbleached cotton.

### **5. Food**

The festive food and traditional Christmas feast can be modified to offer organic, free range and vegetarian fare. Eating the fruits of the earth without damaging precious top soil by adding pesticides and fertilisers is worth paying a bit extra for and it tastes great too. Use your leftovers in creative ways or freeze food rather than throwing food away.

### **6. Carols**

One of my favourite ways to commune with creation and our Creator is to sing festive tunes with family and friends. Christmas get-togethers that offer carol singing are memorable and create a magic energy that connects us in a unique universal joy.

### **7. Presence**

While giving and receiving presents is important for some, particularly children, it is really our presence with creation that makes the big difference. This Christmas listen to the many voices of creation – give family and friends your attention and love. Initiate conversations and dialogue about our planet this Christmas, and notice what changes might emerge through the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

### **8. Wrapping**

Whatever present you choose to give can be wrapped in artwork made by pre-schoolers or primary students who may be prolific in their early years of education with drawing and painting on large sheets of paper. My children's paintings make unique wrapping paper that family members enjoy receiving.

### **9. Gifts that give life to the planet and its inhabitants**

If you buy something as a gift think about where it came from, who made it, how far it travelled and where it might end up. There are so many organisations that you can support this Christmas by giving gifts to family and friends that make a difference in the world – whether it's a bamboo toothbrush, finding something at a local market or a gift that also gives to charity.

### **10. Meditation and prayer**

Sharing Jesus love for the whole world through a five minute or hour long meditation. Sitting still in silence and being present to the mystery of God's love is the best gift to yourself, so that you can share Christmas joy with all creation. Pope Francis talks about being in 'sublime communion' with creation, which calls us to be in right relationship with all. So give yourself some time to be in the world holistically.

Spend some time each day in prayer through the Advent season, and reflect on how Jesus' coming transformed our relationship with the world. Madonna magazine has a series of daily reflections during Advent this year, linking the daily Gospel readings to Laudato Si'. You can find them at [www.pray.com.au](http://www.pray.com.au).

### **11. Family**

Spending time with relatives is often a highlight of the Christmas season. Whether it be cooking together, playing games, such as backyard cricket or enjoying a cup of tea. This is the quality time when families create memories together – storytelling that gets passed on from one generation to the next. What story do you want to share about God's Creation this Christmas?

### **12. Nativity**

Honour the true meaning of Christmas by setting up a nativity at home and in the church, classroom or office. This can be a small or large scale scene that reminds us about the arrival of baby Jesus. In all the fun and energy that gets shared on Christmas Day, remember to put the focus on Jesus by singing happy birthday to Jesus as a family and celebrating Christmas Mass.

Jaqui Remond is Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia. For more visit [catholicearthcare.org.au](http://catholicearthcare.org.au) (<http://catholicearthcare.org.au>).

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