



Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation

- Tuesday, December 8 — Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Friday, December 25 — Nativity of the Lord
- Friday, January 1, 2016 — Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Funeral Masses and ritual Masses are not permitted on any Holy Day of Obligation. If there is a need to celebrate a funeral liturgy on this day, the “Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass” found in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 177-203, would be used.

Other Important Dates

- ◆ **Wednesday, December 9** marks this year’s observance of the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, and should be observed as a Feast outside the Cathedral, using option II in the Common of the Dedication of a Church.
- ◆ **January 22 - Mass in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Human Life**
January 22, 2016—the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*—should be observed as a “particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life, and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion” (GIRM #373). The Roman Missal includes the “Mass for Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life,” which is found at no. 48/1 (with A & B options for the prayers) in “Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions.” White vestments are used.

Christmas Notes

- ◆ **Genuflection at Christmas Masses** – At all Masses for the Nativity of the Lord, the assembly should be reminded beforehand to **genuflect during the Creed** at the mention of the Incarnation: “**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.**” Particularly on this day (and also on the Solemnity of the Annunciation), we pay homage to the great mystery of the Incarnation by symbolically touching ourselves to the ground, just as the Son of God came down among us as man.
- ◆ **Christmas Décor** – “Since the Christmas season begins with the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, the placement and removal of Christmas decorations should coincide with these times” (*Built of Living Stones*, #125).

If a manger or crèche scene is set up in church, it should be not be placed in the main part of the sanctuary, but should be somewhere easily accessible for the prayer and devotion of the faithful (*Book of Blessings* #1544). The Nativity scene should only be blessed once each season (typically at the first Mass on Christmas Eve, or prior to it), though it could be revered with incense at subsequent Christmas liturgies.

- ◆ **The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Roman Martyrology** – Located in Appendix I of the Roman Missal, it “may be chanted or recited, most appropriately during the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. It may also be chanted or recited before the beginning of Christmas Mass during the Night.” This proclamation “may not replace any part of the [Christmas] Mass.” A recording of the chant is available at the bottom of this page: <http://www.npm.org/Chants/others.html>

Christmas Notes (continued)

- ◆ **The Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts** – Found in Appendix I, it may be proclaimed after the Gospel at Mass during the Day for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord (Jan. 3, 2016). A recording is at <http://www.npm.org/Chants/others.html>
- ◆ **Blessing of Homes** – The Christmas season—and especially Epiphany—is a traditional time when homes are blessed. Parishes could promote the pious Epiphany custom of families using chalk to mark the year and the initials of the Magi (which also form a Latin abbreviation for “May Christ bless this house”) above the doors of their homes: **20+C+B+M+16**. This could be done in conjunction with a home blessing provided online by the USCCB: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/objects/blessing-of-the-home-and-household-on-epiphany.cfm>
- ◆ **Regarding the song “Mary, Did You Know?”** – A Christmas song titled “Mary, Did You Know?” has become popular through radio and pop culture, and has sometimes been adopted in liturgical contexts around Christmas. However, several rhetorical questions posed to Mary in the song’s lyrics present difficulties for us as Catholics. Besides the fact that the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel makes it clear that Mary did indeed know that her Son would bring salvation and rule the nations, the biggest problem comes in these lines: “Did you know that your Baby Boy has come to make you new? This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you.” This is at least an implicit denial of the Immaculate Conception, by which Mary was extraordinarily preserved from sin at her first moment of existence. The Blessed Virgin Mary was not still awaiting a future salvation when Jesus was born—in fact, her purity was necessary for the Incarnation! Due to these problematic lyrics, this song should not be employed in any liturgical context—even as prelude music.

Flu Season: If it seems prudent as a means to reduce the spread of illness during flu season, any priest has the ability to omit the sign of peace after the Our Father at Mass. Offering or withholding of the Precious Blood to the people is also a decision made at the parish level.

The faithful may be reminded that anyone who is seriously ill (e.g., impaired by fever or other flu symptoms) has no obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

New Rite of Marriage: A new English translation for the Rite of Marriage was approved last summer and will include a number of new options and adaptations. Publication is anticipated sometime in 2016, and additional information will be distributed upon its release.

Looking Ahead to Early 2016

Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion:

Fort Wayne: Sunday, February 7, 2:00 PM—Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

South Bend: Sunday, February 14, 2:00 PM—St. Matthew Co-Cathedral

Chrism Masses:

South Bend: Monday, March 21, 7:30 PM—St. Matthew Co-Cathedral

Fort Wayne: Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 PM—Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Easter Vigil, 2016

Easter Vigil Time: On Saturday, March 26, 2016, the end of civil twilight occurs at 8:27 PM EDT on the Fort Wayne side, and 8:32 PM EDT on the South Bend side. Therefore, around 8:30 PM would be the earliest appropriate time to begin the Vigil throughout the Diocese.

The Roman Missal states that the Vigil must begin in true darkness, “after nightfall.” The USCCB even encourages waiting an extra 15-30 minutes after civil twilight ends, if possible.