



Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation

- Wednesday, December 8 — The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 - Saturday, December 25 — The Nativity of the Lord
- All Saints (November 1) falls on a Monday this year, and is therefore not a holy day of obligation.
- The Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God (January 1, 2011) falls on a Saturday, and so is not a holy day of obligation.
- **Ritual Masses & Funerals:** Ritual Masses are not permitted on any of the days mentioned above. If any weddings are celebrated on January 1st, the Mass of the day is used, along with the nuptial blessing. Funeral Masses are not permitted on holy days of obligation (Dec. 8 & Dec. 25).

Observing the Obligations on December 25 and January 1

Since Christmas Day falls on a Saturday this year, there may be some questions as to how the Christmas obligation and the Sunday obligation can be observed.

There are indeed two separate obligations. If any Masses are scheduled after 4:00 PM on the evening of the December 25 (Christmas Day), those Masses can count for Christmas **OR** for Sunday, December 26 (Feast of the Holy Family) – but **NOT for both at once**. In other words, someone who has not already attended a Christmas Mass can fulfill his or her Christmas obligation in the evening of the 25th, but would then still need to attend Mass again the next day.

In terms of Mass texts, the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship has confirmed that because Christmas liturgically outranks Holy Family on the Table of Liturgical Days, if Masses are held on the evening of December 25, the daytime Christmas Mass should still be used. (For the same reason, Evening Prayer II of Christmas is celebrated.)

January 1 also falls on a Saturday, but since it is not a Holy Day of Obligation in 2011, the normal Sunday obligation rules apply. Regarding the Mass texts, since the Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord (Jan. 2) takes precedence, anticipated Masses in the evening of January 1 would use the Epiphany Mass (and Evening Prayer I of Epiphany is celebrated).

Other Notes

- **December 8:** The Holy Day Mass at 7:00 PM at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception will be celebrated by Bishop Rhoades, and will also commemorate the 150th anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral. All are invited to attend.
- **December 9:** December 9 is a significant day in our Diocese. It is the anniversary of Bishop Kevin Rhoades's ordination to the episcopate in 2004. It is also the liturgical observance of the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, transferred from December 8 and observed as a Feast in all the other parishes of the Diocese.
 - The *Ceremonial of Bishops* #1167 notes that a Mass for the Bishop on Dec. 9 (using Masses for Various Needs & Occasions I.3 - "For the Bishop") should take precedence over the dedication anniversary, except in the Cathedral itself (where the dedication is a Solemnity).
 - However, the Cathedral's dedication anniversary would still be observed by all in the Liturgy of the Hours for December 9, using the Common of the Dedication of a Church.
 - Although the optional memorial of St. Juan Diego is replaced on December 9, prayers and petitions invoking St. Juan Diego are certainly appropriate on this day as well, especially considering his important relationship to Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas.

(Continued...)

Notes on Christmas

- **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 : “...by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born 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 Gloria on Christmas:** “Angels We Have Heard on High” may not replace the *Gloria* at any Christmas Masses. As affirmed in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #53: “The *Gloria* is a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb. The text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other text.”
- **Combining Office of Readings with Christmas Mass at Night:** The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* proposes that, if feasible, “on Christmas Eve it is fitting that by means of the Office of Readings, a solemn vigil be celebrated before Mass” (#215). In #98, it notes that this may be accomplished in the following manner: “immediately after the second reading from the office, with its responsory, the rest is omitted and [Midnight Mass] begins with the *Gloria*.” The introductory rites of Mass are omitted; the opening prayer and readings follow the *Gloria*. Night prayer is not said by those who attend such a vigil on Christmas night (#215).
- **Proclamation of the Birth of Christ:** This is a beautiful text that is found in the *Sacramentary Supplement* and may be proclaimed or chanted at the beginning of the Christmas Midnight Mass, immediately before the *Gloria* is sung (if using the combined vigil with the Office of Readings, it occurs between the Office and *Gloria*). It functions as a formal announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ, and situates this event within human history and the divine plan for salvation.
- **Proclamation of the Date of Easter:** This is another beautiful formal proclamation found in the *Sacramentary Supplement*, which may be read or chanted on the Solemnity of the Epiphany (Jan. 2), either after the Gospel or following the Prayer after Communion. As noted in the *Supplement*, “[the Epiphany Proclamation] is a reminder of the centrality of the Resurrection of the Lord in the liturgical year.”

Looking ahead

Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion:

Fort Wayne: Sunday, March 13, 2:00 PM — Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

South Bend: Sunday, March 20, 2:00 PM — St. Matthew Co-Cathedral

Easter Vigil, 2011

Easter Vigil Time: On April 23, 2011, the end of civil twilight occurs at 8:58 PM EDT on the Fort Wayne side, and 9:04 PM EDT on the South Bend side. However, in the interest of practicality, the Vigil may begin at 9:00 PM throughout the Diocese.

Rather than mere sunset, true darkness is essential to the nature of the Vigil. The Roman Missal & the Congregation for Divine Worship’s *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* state, “The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night.” The USCCB Committee on Divine Worship even encourages waiting an extra 15-30 minutes after civil twilight ends, if possible.