



Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation

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

*** Regarding Obligations for Immaculate Conception & Second Sunday of Advent:**

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) falls on a Saturday this year, but as the patronal feast of the United States, it remains a holy day of obligation.

Since the Second Sunday of Advent (December 9) outranks Immaculate Conception, all Masses in the evening (after 4 PM) of Saturday, December 8, should use the prayers and readings for the Second Sunday of Advent. Nonetheless, attending Mass on Saturday evening can count towards either the Sunday obligation or the Immaculate Conception obligation—but not both.

So, for example, someone can go to a Saturday evening Mass (Dec 8) to fulfill the Holy Day obligation, and then go to Mass on Sunday (Dec 9) to fulfill the Sunday obligation. No matter how it is accomplished, the key is that the two obligations must be fulfilled separately.

And of course, Friday evening Masses for the solemnity (Dec. 7 after 4 PM) count towards the Immaculate Conception obligation.

- ◊ 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

January 22 - Mass in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Human Life

January 22, 2019—the observance of the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*—is 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’s “Mass for Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life” 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.

Use of new *Misal Romano* mandatory on First Sunday of Advent

The mandatory implementation date throughout the United States for the official Spanish edition of the Roman Missal for use in the United States (the *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición*) is the First Sunday of Advent (December 2, 2018). Parishes that host Spanish Masses should ensure they have replaced the old *Misal Romano* with the new translation, which is available from Catholic Book Publishing and Liturgical Press.

Parishes can get a 20% discount on any edition of the new *Misal Romano* through Good Shepherd Books & Gifts in Fort Wayne. Please call 260-399-1442 for details.

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 reverenced 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://npm.org/chants-of-the-roman-missal/appendix-1-other-chants/>
- ♦ **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. 6, 2019). A recording is at <http://npm.org/chants-of-the-roman-missal/appendix-1-other-chants/>
- ♦ **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 (which can be blessed and distributed by the parish ahead of time) to mark both 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+19**. 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 reminder: the 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.

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(continued from page 2) While there is an atemporal side to God's activity, at face value "This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you" conveys a sense of Mary at that moment still awaiting salvation along with everyone else (as opposed to being already cleansed by a "prevenient grace," as the Prayer over the Offerings for Immaculate Conception on December 8 says). And since the song was not written by/for Catholics, that's surely the intent. But we have to affirm that 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.

Funerals in the Family Home for Children Who Die Before Baptism

The Roman Missal includes Mass prayers "For the Funeral of a Child Who Died before Baptism" (Masses for the Dead, Part I, Option F).

The Missal also includes the following note as part of that Mass's rubrics:

"Should a child whom the parents wished to be baptized die before baptism, the diocesan bishop, taking into consideration pastoral circumstances, may permit the funeral to be celebrated in the home of the deceased child."

Bishop Rhoades has granted this permission in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. This may take the form of a Liturgy of the Word (Funeral outside Mass) or – if it can be suitably arranged – an actual funeral Mass in the home of the child.

This option may be of particular pastoral benefit in cases of miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss.

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

Looking Ahead to Early 2019

Rite of Election/Call to Continuing Conversion:

Fort Wayne: Sunday, March 3, 2:00 PM—Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
South Bend: Sunday, March 10, 2:00 PM—St. Matthew Cathedral

Chrism Masses:

South Bend: Monday, April 15, 7:30 PM—St. Matthew Cathedral
Fort Wayne: Tuesday, April 16, 7:30 PM—Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Easter Vigil Start Time, 2019

On Saturday, April 20, 2019, the end of civil twilight is at 8:55 PM EDT on the Fort Wayne side, and 9:00 PM EDT on the South Bend side. Therefore, around 9:00 PM would be the earliest possible time to begin the Vigil throughout the diocese.

Since the USCCB encourages waiting an extra 15-30 minutes (because total darkness occurs after civil twilight ends), 9:15 PM or later would really be the most appropriate start time. The Roman Missal states that the Vigil must begin in true darkness, "after nightfall."
