



FROM THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP

NOTES FOR NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

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November 6—Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral

On November 6 we celebrate the fourth anniversary of the dedication of Saint Benedict Cathedral. The anniversary of the dedication of a cathedral is a proper Feast for a diocese, and a Solemnity in the cathedral itself. Prayers and readings for Masses this day should be taken from the Common of the Dedication of a Church: On the Anniversary of the Dedication (FYI—the readings used for the dedication Mass were 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Psalm 84; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 2:13-22). Similarly, those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours would use the texts from the Common of the Dedication of a Church. Funeral Masses may still be celebrated this day. Pray for our “mother church,” all who contributed to its beautiful renovation, and all who have prayed for and served our diocese in its walls through the years.

Honoring Veterans on November 11

Q.: What are some ways we could honor our veterans on or near November 11?

A.: While there is no “official” blessing or prayer that is used to recognize and thank those who have served in the armed forces, there are a few options for this day or the weekend nearest to it:

- ✘ The simplest method is to include a petition in the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass for our veterans;
- ✘ also at Mass, Solemn Blessings #12 and 13 speak of the blessings of peace, and safety from adversity;
- ✘ Chapters 70-71 in the *Book of Blessings* could be adapted to give thanks for their service;
- ✘ November 11 is also the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, patron of soldiers. Perhaps a prayer card or medal of the saint could be blessed and given to veterans this day or over the weekend.

World Day of the Poor November 19

The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time marks the fifth World Day of the Poor, established by Pope Francis in 2016. The theme for 2023 is “*Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor*” (*Tobit 4:7*). While the prayers and readings for the 33rd Sunday are used for the Mass, it would be appropriate to at least include an intercession that speaks to our preferential option for the poor in our world. You can read the Holy Father’s message for 2023 [here](#). For more information please visit the Holy See’s [World Day of the Poor page](#).

Liturgical Options for Thanksgiving

Q.: What are the liturgical options available for Thanksgiving Day?

A.: There are several options available to us. On the liturgical calendar, November 23 is Thursday of the 33rd week in Ordinary Time, as well as the optional Memorials of Saint Clement, Saint Columban, or Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro. So the Mass of the day could always be celebrated.

For Thanksgiving, the *Roman Missal* also provides proper prayers for Masses on Thanksgiving Day, complete with its own proper Preface. These are found in the Proper of Saints at the end of November. The readings may be from the day or could be taken from the section “In Thanksgiving to God,” nos. 943-947 of the *Lectionary for Mass* (volume IV). These proper prayers and readings may be used at the discretion of the pastor or priest celebrant. In addition, the *Book of Blessings* provides a blessing of food for Thanksgiving Day, which may be used in or out of Mass. See chapter 58, nos. 1755-1780, for the full order of service.

Of course, every Mass is the greatest celebration of thanksgiving we can hope to offer (the word “Eucharist” coming from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning “thanksgiving”).

December Calendar Notes—Three Days for the BVM

In a span of five days in December, we will have the opportunity celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary under three distinct titles. In the midst of our Advent preparations, let us celebrate our Blessed Mother!

December 8—The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This **is** a holy day of obligation in 2023. It is our national feast day, with the United States under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrating her Immaculate Conception. Since the Solemnity takes precedent over Memorials and Feasts, Masses the evening of Wednesday, December 7 (Memorial of Saint Ambrose) would be anticipatory Masses for the Immaculate Conception. There are not proper vigil Mass prayers and readings for this Solemnity.

December 10—Our Lady of Loreto

In 2019, Pope Francis ordered the inscription of Our Lady of Loreto into the General Roman Calendar as an optional Memorial on December 10 (the day her feast is celebrated in Loreto). In 2023, December 10 is a Sunday, so the 2nd Sunday of Advent would take precedent over the Memorial. Mention of our Lady could still be made in the introduction of Mass or as part of the intercessions.

December 12—Our Lady of Guadalupe

In 2023 December 12 is a Tuesday, which means this Feast can be celebrated on its proper day. While it cannot be transferred to Sunday, this feast for the patroness of all the Americas could be acknowledged on Sunday by including mention of it in the Prayer of the Faithful, using the Collect from Our Lady of Guadalupe to conclude the intercessions, or singing a Marian hymn, perhaps after Communion. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!

Readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Just a reminder—per the *Lectionary for Mass*, the readings for the proper Vigil Mass of the Nativity (#13 in the *Lectionary*) may be used for the Masses of Christmas Day, and, in fact, the readings from any of the Christmas Masses (#s 14-16) may be used at the other Christmas Masses depending on pastoral need. The preference would still seem to be to use the assigned readings at their assigned Masses since there is some continuity in their order (especially Mass at Midnight and Mass at Dawn), but they may be rearranged if it is pastorally helpful.

Book of Blessings and the Christmas Season

While the official liturgical season that is Christmas is relatively short, there are several liturgical blessings particular to the season that are good to recognize and celebrate. The *Book of Blessings* (BB) and *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (HB) provide the content.

Blessing of Nativity: BB, chapter 48; HB, pg. 78—Probably the most obvious blessing is the blessing the nativity scene or manger, either at the parish or at home. Chapter 48 of BB provides the Order for blessing the nativity either in or out of Mass. It would seem to make sense that the nativity be blessed only once over the course of the Christmas liturgies, ideally at the first Mass of Christmas Eve or prior to it. However, it could also be revered with incense at any subsequent Christmas liturgies, perhaps during the incensing of the altar and cross at the Entrance. The shorter form in BB is the same as what is found in HB for blessing the home nativity.

Blessing of a Christmas Tree: BB, chapter 49; HB, pg. 78—Both BB and HB also provide a blessing for the Christmas tree (BB, chapter 49; HB, pg. 78). Trees set up in the church are not blessed in the context of Mass. At home or at church, the blessing may be celebrated during Liturgy of the Hours or a liturgy of the Word.

Blessing of Family: BB, chapter 1—This Feast is an appropriate time to recognize the sacredness of the family and ask for God’s special blessing upon them. BB chapter 1 (nos. 62-67) would be most useful for this.

Blessing of Homes During the Christmas Season: BB, chapter 50; HB, pg. 88—Epiphany is a traditional time when homes are blessed. One could also easily incorporate the Epiphany custom of marking the doors of the home with the year and the initials of the Magi (which is also an abbreviation for “May Christ bless this house” in Latin): 20+C+B+M+24. Texts for these blessings are also available online from the [USCCB](#).



Advent Wreaths

Q.: What is the most appropriate place for the Advent wreath in the church?

A.: Advent wreaths, in terms of usage in churches, are a relatively recent development. This Germanic custom has become the customary reminder that the Advent season is upon us and stands as a visual reminder of our anticipation of the celebration of the Nativity at Christmas.

Traditionally, the wreath consists of three violet candles and one rose candle that correspond to the Sundays of Advent. However, one may use four candles of the same color. A new candle is then lit for every Sunday of Advent.

While there is no hard and fast rule for the placement of the wreath, there are some basic guidelines for its usage:

- ✘ It should be of a suitable size for the space – do not use a small tabletop wreath for your church, but also do not use an oppressively large wreath that overwhelms everything around it, either.
- ✘ It may be placed in the sanctuary, at the entrance of the church, in another visible location or devotional chapel in the church proper, or perhaps even suspended from the ceiling.
- ✘ Wherever it is placed, it should never obscure or interfere with the action of the Mass or other liturgies that are celebrated in the church. It also should not replace the altar candles or the Easter candle.

The blessing of the Advent wreath may take place on the first Sunday of Advent in the context of Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, or a Liturgy of the Word. Ideally, the wreath should only be blessed at one liturgy and not repeatedly blessed over the course of a weekend. For all subsequent uses of the Advent wreath, the appropriate candles may be lit either before Mass or other liturgy, or just before the Collect of Mass.

For more information on blessing, placement, and usage, please see Chapter 47 of the *Book of Blessings*.

Reminder—Christmas Creep 2023 & Mary Mother of God 2024

“Christmas Creep” for 2023—December 25 will land on a Monday this year. This leads to a very busy few days in the parish for those responsible for the various ministries and liturgical preparation. As a reminder of scheduling for those days, here are a few things to keep in mind in preparing:

- ✘ With Sunday morning (and Saturday evening) Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent leading into the slate of Masses for Christmas that evening, it may be necessary to “pull back” a bit for the Advent Sunday in order to not overburden the various ministries those days.
- ✘ On Sunday, December 24, Masses after 4 PM would be for the Vigil of the Nativity rather than for Sunday.
- ✘ December 25 is always a holy day of obligation. Please let your people know in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2023 of that fact, and of the need for them to participate in Masses both for the Sunday and for Christmas. Participating in Mass the evening of December 24 only fulfills one obligation—no “double dipping” for Christmas!
- ✘ Mass intentions—As is the case with any holy day of obligation, one of the Masses for Christmas must be said *pro populo* (“for the people”).

Much of this can also be said for the following New Year’s Day Masses for Mary, Mother of God. However, in 2024 January 1 is a Monday, so it would not be a holy day of obligation. Masses the evening of December 31 would be for the Feast of the Holy Family rather than anticipatory Masses for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.



Fulfilling One’s Obligations

Q. If one goes to Mass on a Sunday that does not use the Sunday readings or prayers, have they fulfilled their obligation?

A. One common misunderstanding about fulfilling one’s obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays is that it has to be the Mass of the day, using the prayers and readings (the “propers”) for that particular Sunday. In fact, fulfilling the obligation is dependent on the *time* of the Mass rather than the *texts* used.

In order to fulfill the obligation for Sunday (which also applies to other holy days of obligation), one must participate in any Mass anytime in the thirty-two hour window from 4 PM the evening before through midnight the day of. This is how the Church celebrates its holiest of days—the feasting begins the evening before and continues through the next day.

More often than not, this will be the Mass of the day (especially when dealing with most holy days). Some days, however, allow for other Masses to be celebrated rather than the Mass of the day. A great example of this is Confirmation. The prayers and readings for Sundays in Ordinary Time may be replaced by prayers and readings from the ritual Mass for Confirmation. As long as that Confirmation Mass was celebrated in that 32 hour “Sunday window,” one would fulfill their obligation. This is also why that 3 PM wedding Mass on Saturday afternoon does not fulfill one’s obligation, but a 7 PM wedding Mass would.

Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation and Movable Feasts During the Christmas Season

December 25—Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)—It is **always** a holy day of obligation! Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord!

December 31—The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—This Feast is typically celebrated on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas. This would be a great day to bless the families of your community (see the “*Book of Blessings* in the Christmas Season” on page 3).

January 1—Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord: Mary, the Holy Mother of God—It **is not** a holy day of obligation in 2024 since it is a Monday. This is our diocesan feast day, with the diocese under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title “Mother of God.” Pray for the well-being of our diocese!

January 7—The Epiphany of the Lord—In the United States Epiphany is moved to the Sunday between January 2 and January 8, which in 2024 is January 7. **Please note**—in the *Roman Missal*, there are proper prayers to be used for Vigil Masses of Epiphany celebrated the evening of Saturday, January 1. The readings, however, remain the same for both days. There is also the tradition of announcing the dates Easter and the movable feasts for the year on Epiphany. The Missal (both English and Spanish) provide the text and music for this proclamation in the appendix. It is done after the Gospel by the deacon or by a cantor.

January 8—The Baptism of the Lord—This Feast is typically celebrated the Sunday after Epiphany, unless that happens to be January 7 or 8, in which case it is celebrated the day after Epiphany. As with any proper Feast, and since it is a Sunday, the *Gloria* is to be sung at this Mass. The Christmas season officially ends with the Baptism of the Lord. Fun fact: there is no First Sunday in Ordinary Time. Ordinary Time begins the Tuesday after the Baptism of the Lord.

Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ & the Announcement of Easter and Movable Feasts

As you make your preparations for the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany, you may wish to consider including the following practices on those days. Full texts for both of these are on pages 5-6.

Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

The announcement of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord from the *Roman Martyrology* draws upon Sacred Scripture to declare in a formal way the birth of Christ. It begins with creation and relates the birth of the Lord to the major events and personages of sacred and secular history. The particular events contained in the announcement help pastorally to situate the birth of Jesus in the context of salvation history. The text may be chanted or recited, most appropriately on December 24, 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.

Announcement of Easter and Movable Feasts

The proclamation of the date of Easter and the other moveable feasts on Epiphany dates from a time when calendars were not readily available. It was necessary to make known the date of Easter in advance, since many celebrations of the liturgical year depend on its date. The number of Sundays that follow Epiphany, the date of Ash Wednesday, and the number of Sundays that follow Pentecost are all computed in relation to Easter. Although calendars now give the dates for many years in advance, the Epiphany proclamation still has value as a reminder of the centrality of the resurrection of the Lord in the liturgical year and the importance of the great mysteries of faith which are celebrated each year. After the Gospel, a Deacon or cantor, in keeping with an ancient practice of Holy Church, announces from the ambo the moveable feasts of the current year according to the following text.

The musical notation for both of these can be found in Appendix I of the *Roman Missal*.



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
from the *Roman Martyrology*

The twenty-fifth day of December,

when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,

when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,
and formed man in his own likeness;

when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds after the Great Flood,
as a sign of covenant and peace;

in the twenty-first century since Abraham, our father in faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;

in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel were led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;

around the thousandth year since David was anointed King;

in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;

in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;

in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;

in the forty-second year of the reign of Caesar Octavian Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,

JESUS CHRIST, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to consecrate the world by his most loving presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

and when nine months had passed since his conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,
and was made man:

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.



THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF EASTER AND THE MOVABLE FEASTS for Epiphany 2024

Know, dear brethren (brothers and sisters),
that, as we have rejoiced at the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ,
so by leave of God's mercy
we announce to you also the joy of his Resurrection,
who is our Savior.

On the fourteenth day of February will fall Ash Wednesday,
and the beginning of the fast of the most sacred Lenten season.

On the thirty-first day of March you will celebrate with joy Easter Day,
the Paschal feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the twelfth day of May will be the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the nineteenth day of May, the feast of Pentecost.

On the second day of June, the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

On the first day of December, the First Sunday of the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ,
to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

