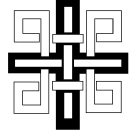


SEASON OF CHRISTMAS 2023-2024

Sunday Cycle B; Weekdays Year II
24 December 2023 – 8 January 2024



The Christmas season begins with Evening Prayer I of Christmas on Sunday, December 24, 2023, and continues through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on Monday, January 8, 2024.

SEASONAL FOCUS

The Christmas season celebrates the memorial of Christ's birth and early manifestations. This season is second only to the yearly celebration of the Triduum. (*UNLY* #32)

LECTIONARY

⌘ Cycle B of Sunday readings is proclaimed. Year II readings are proclaimed for weekdays.

KEY DATES

⌘ NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS) – Monday, December 25, 2023 [White]
[Holy Day of Obligation]

It may be prudent to remind the faithful that the obligation to attend Mass for the 4th Sunday of Advent is separate and distinct from the Christmas obligation. Some possibilities for meeting both obligations include:

- 12/23 Saturday Evening Mass + 12/24 Sunday Evening Mass
- 12/23 Saturday Evening Mass + 12/25 Monday Mass at any time
- 12/24 Sunday Morning Mass + 12/24 Sunday Evening Mass
- 12/24 Sunday Mass at any time + 12/25 Monday Mass at any time

SCHEDULING NOTE: Christmas Eve on a Sunday poses a particular challenge for the schedule of Masses. Priests are ordinarily limited to celebrating or concelebrating Mass no more than 3 times on December 24 (Canon 905 / *GIRM* #204). This law should be observed if at all possible. Parishes may elect to change the schedule of Masses (e.g. combining two Sunday morning Masses into one), so long as the faithful are reasonably able to meet the 4th Sunday of Advent obligation. Archbishop Fabre extends permission on this occasion only for priests to celebrate more than 3 Masses on December 24, only if it is necessary for the benefit of the faithful.

Reminder: Masses for Christmas Eve may not begin before 4:00 p.m.

The texts at #13-16 in the Lectionary may be used, according to the pastoral needs of each celebration, for any Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. (Lectionary #13)

At all Christmas Masses, during the Creed all kneel at the words “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.”

The Gloria is sung or recited at all Christmas Masses and on all days within the Octave of Christmas (December 24-January 1, inclusive).

Vigil of Christmas (Sunday, December 24, 2023):

Lectionary #13 (or #14-16)

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25 or 1:18-25

Mass during the Night:

Lectionary #14 (or #13, 15, or 16)

Isaiah 9:1-6; Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

The Proclamation of the Birth of Christ may be sung or recited during the Liturgy of the Hours or before the beginning of the Christmas Mass during the Night. It may not replace any part of the Mass. The text can be found in Appendix I of the *Roman Missal*.

Mass at Dawn (Monday, December 25, 2023):

Lectionary #15 (or #13, 14, or 16)

Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

Mass during the Day:

Lectionary #16 (or #13-15)

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Participation Aids

The Masses on Christmas are probably the best attended of the entire year. This offers us the opportunity to show Christian hospitality. A worship aid can be a great help to the many visitors we encounter at these Masses. A sample Christmas pew card in English or Spanish can be downloaded at www.archlou.org/worship and may be reproduced on letter size paper, front and back. The card includes the spoken texts of the liturgy for the assembly. The texts of the Gloria, Sanctus, and Mystery of Faith are included, even though in most cases these will be sung.

⌘ **FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN, MARTYR—Tuesday, December 26, 2023 [Red]**

Lectionary #696

Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6-8ab, 16bc-17; Matthew 10:17-22

⌘ **FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE—Wednesday, December 27, 2023 [White]**

Lectionary #697

1 John 1:1-4; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:1a, 2-8

⌘ **FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS—Thursday, December 28, 2024 [Red]**

Lectionary #698

1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:2-5, 7cd-8; Matthew 2:13-18

⌘ **FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH – Sunday, December 31, 2023 [White]**

Lectionary #17

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or Colossians 3:12-21 or Colossians 3:12-17; Psalm 128:1-5; Luke 2:22-40 or Luke 2:22, 39-40 OR FOR YEAR B: Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3 or Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Psalm 105:1-6, 8-9; Luke 2:22-40 or Luke 2:22, 39-40

At Mass on the Feast of the Holy Family, a priest may wish to make use of the “Blessing of a Family” as found in the *Book of Blessings* #62-67.

⌘ **SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD – Mon., January 1, 2024 [White]**

Lectionary #18

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

PLEASE NOTE: Monday, January 1, 2024 – the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God – is NOT a Holy Day of Obligation this year, in accord with the complementary norm to canon 1246 §2 confirmed for the dioceses of the United States of America.

⌘ **THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD – Sunday, January 7, 2024 [White]**

Lectionary #20

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

On the Solemnity of the Epiphany, the traditional Proclamation of the Date of Easter and other feasts of the liturgical year may be sung or recited after the Gospel according to the text given in Appendix I of the *Roman Missal*. This may be sung or recited at the ambo by a deacon, cantor, or other minister.

⌘ **FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD – Monday, January 8, 2024 [White]**

Lectionary #21

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or Acts 10:34-38; Psalm 29:1a, 2, 3ac-4, 3b, 9b-10; Mark 1:7-11 OR FOR YEAR B: Isaiah 55:1-11 or 1 John 5:1-9; (Ps.) Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6; Mark 1:7-11

*Because this Feast occurs on a Monday, only one reading is read before the Gospel. The readings assigned to Monday may be joined to those of Tuesday, January 9, so that the opening of each book will be read.

RITUAL CELEBRATIONS

- ⌘ The funeral Mass may not be held on Christmas or on the Solemnity of the Mary, Mother of God. The funeral liturgy outside Mass may be celebrated on any day during the Christmas Season. (*GIRM* #380, *OCF* #271)
- ⌘ “A Mass for the Dead, on receiving the news of a death, for the final burial, or the first anniversary, may be celebrated even on days within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord ...” (*GIRM* #381)
- ⌘ The nuptial Mass may not be used on Christmas, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, or on the Feast of the Epiphany. The Order for Celebrating Matrimony without Mass may be celebrated on any day during the Christmas Season. (*OCM* #34)

MUSIC

- ⌘ The Gloria is sung or recited at all Christmas Masses and on all days within the Octave of Christmas (December 24-December 31, inclusive), on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1), on the Sunday of the Epiphany (Jan. 7), and on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Jan. 8).
- ⌘ Common Psalms: “The psalm as a rule is drawn from the Lectionary ... Nevertheless, in order that the people may be able to join in the responsorial psalm more readily, some texts of responses and psalms have been chosen, according to the different seasons of the year and classes of saints, for optional use, whenever the psalm is sung, in place of the text corresponding to the reading.” (Lectionary #173/174)
- ⌘ Common Response for the Season of Christmas [Lectionary #173]
“Lord, today we have seen your glory.”
- ⌘ Common Psalm for the Season of Christmas [Lectionary #174]
Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4, 5-6 – “All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.”
- ⌘ Common Psalm for Epiphany [Lectionary #174]
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 – “Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.”

WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT

- ⌘ “Plans for seasonal decorations should include other areas besides the sanctuary. Decorations are intended to draw people to the true nature of the mystery being celebrated rather than being ends in themselves. Natural flowers, plants, wreaths and fabric hangings, and other seasonal objects can be arranged to enhance the primary liturgical points of focus. The altar should remain clear and free-standing, not walled in by massive floral displays or the Christmas crib, and pathways in the narthex, nave, and sanctuary should remain clear.” (*BLS* #124)
- ⌘ “These seasonal decorations are maintained throughout the entire liturgical season. Since the Christmas season begins with the Vigil Mass on Christmas and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, the placement and removal of Christmas decorations should coincide with these times...” (*BLS* #125)
- ⌘ “Objects such as...the Christmas crib, and other traditional seasonal appointments proportioned to the size of the space and to the other furnishings can enhance the prayer and understanding of the parish community.” (*BLS* #128)
- ⌘ “The use of living flowers and plants, rather than artificial greens, serves as a reminder of the gift of life God has given to the human community. Planning for plants and flowers should include not only the procurement and placement but also the continuing care needed to sustain living things.” (*BLS* #129)
- ⌘ Color of Sacred Vestments: White is the designated color for vestments during the Christmas season. Gold or silver colored vestments may be worn on more solemn occasions. Red vestments are designated for the Feast of the St. Stephen (Dec. 26) and the Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec. 28). (*GIRM* #346)

BLESSING OF A MANGER OR NATIVITY SCENE (See *Book of Blessings* #1541-1569)

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another more suitable time. The blessing may be given during a celebration of the word of God, during Mass, or even during another service, e.g., a service of lessons & carols (*BB* #1542, 1543)

The Christmas manger or nativity scene should be placed in an area that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible by the faithful. It must not be placed in the presbyterium, the area encompassing the altar, ambo, or presider's chair. (*BB* #1544 and *Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, October-November, 1989)

If the manger or nativity scene is blessed during Mass, a priest gives the blessing. If it is blessed outside of Mass, a priest, deacon, or lay minister may give the blessing. (*BB* #1546, 1547, 1562)

If the manger or nativity scene is blessed during Mass, this occurs at the conclusion of the General Intercessions (Universal Prayer). (*BB* #1563, 1564)

BB = Book of Blessings
BLS = Built of Living Stones
GIRM = General Instruction of the Roman Missal
LMI = Lectionary for Sunday Mass, Introduction
UNLY = Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year
OCF = Order of Christian Funerals
OCM = Order of Celebrating Matrimony