

Calendar Notes for Advent and Christmas 2023-2024

In 2023, the Solemnity of the **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary** is Friday, December 8. Among other things, this is the National Patronal feast, and thus is a Holy Day of Obligation no matter on what day of the week it falls. Masses during the day on December 8 are for the Solemnity.

The **Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe** is celebrated on Tuesday, December 12.

Sunday, December 24 (Christmas Eve)

This year, December 24 falls on the fourth Sunday of Advent. The precept to participate in Mass for the fourth Sunday of Advent can be fulfilled by participating in Mass on Saturday evening, December 23 or on the morning of Sunday, December 24. The precept to attend Mass for Christmas, December 25 can be fulfilled by participating in Mass on Sunday evening, December 24 or any Mass on Christmas Day, December 25.

Vigil Masses for Christmas: The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* note that the “liturgical day runs from midnight to midnight, but the observance of Sunday and solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day” (no.3). Based upon this norm, the policies of the Archdiocese of Chicago note that “the time for the vigil liturgy is ordinarily between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm, but not earlier than 4:00 p.m.” (202.7, Book IV, Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures, *The Sanctifying Office of the Church.*) Please consult your Episcopal Vicar in regard to Christmas Eve Masses earlier than 4:00pm.

The **Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph** will be observed on Sunday the 31st of December and the **Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God** on Monday, January 1, 2024. Note, because it falls on a Monday, the Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God is *not* a Holy Day of Obligation this year.

The **Solemnity of Epiphany** is celebrated on Sunday, January 7, 2024; remember that the third edition of the Roman Missal includes a proper for the *Vigil Mass of Epiphany*.

The season of Christmas closes with the **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord** on Monday, January 8, and Ordinary Time resumes on Tuesday, January 9. The following Sunday, January 14, is the *Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*.

The Book of Blessings

During the last weeks of this Calendar Year, and the first weeks of the new Liturgical Year, there are various liturgical celebrations that would enhance the liturgical life of the parish. Consider celebrating these occasional rites either during Mass or in other parish settings (catechetical gatherings, parish meetings, etc.).

Some Orders of blessing that might be used include:

*The Order of Blessing an Advent Wreath may be used within or outside of Mass. Most parishes bless the Advent wreath on the first Mass of the First Sunday of Advent.

However, consider inviting families to bring their advent wreaths from home and use this order for blessing either within Mass or after all the Masses.

*The Order for Blessing a Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene,

*The Order for Blessing a Christmas Tree

*The Order for the Blessing of Homes During The Christmas or Easter Seasons may all be used during the Christmas Season.