



Office of Liturgy

LITURGY ADVISORY  
FOR THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS  
2017/2018

**The Season of Advent**

---

Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight. (Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year, 39)

Advent begins with First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of the Sunday that falls on or closest to November 30 and it ends before First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of the Nativity of the Lord. (Norms, 40)

The weekdays from December 17 up to and including December 24 are ordered in a more direct way to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord. (Norms, 42)



ADVENT

## **The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**

- During Advent the faithful should be encouraged to participate in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in preparation for Christmas. The *Rite of Penance* provides examples for the use of Form 2 of this sacrament in communal celebrations. A penitential celebration should be scheduled during the season for the benefit of the faithful.

## **Order of Celebrating Matrimony**

- Whenever Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the Ritual Mass “The Celebration of Marriage” is used with sacred vestments of the color white or of a festive color. (*The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, 34)
- When the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated on a Sunday or solemnity, the Mass of the day is used with the nuptial blessing, and the special final blessing. On days when the Ritual Mass may not be used, one of the readings from the ritual may be chosen except from Holy Thursday to Easter, and on the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, or on holydays of obligation. On the Sundays of the Christmas season and in Ordinary Time, the entire Ritual Mass may be used in Masses that are not parish Masses. (OCM, 34)
- When a marriage is celebrated during Advent or Lent or other days of penance, the parish priest should advise the couple to take into consideration the special nature of these times. (cf. OCM, 32)

## **Funerals**

- Good liturgical practice would suggest reflecting the liturgical season in the choice of music and scripture. The Season of Advent may also reflect a change in the color of vesture and employ the option to use violet (see *Order of Christian Funerals*, 39).
- Funeral Masses are not permitted on solemnities that are holydays of obligation, on Holy Thursday and the Easter Triduum, and on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season (GIRM, 380).
- When the Funeral Mass is not permitted the Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass may be used (cf. OCF, 178).

## Other Liturgical Considerations

- The color of the Season of Advent is violet. In order to distinguish between this season and the season of Lent, the bluer hues of violet may be used. Blue vestments are not authorized for use in the United States. Rose colored vesture may be worn on the Third Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete Sunday*).
- During Advent, the playing of the organ and other musical instruments as well as the floral decoration of the altar should be marked with a moderation that reflects the character of this season, but does not anticipate the full joy of Christmas itself (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 236).
- During Advent, the secular world focuses on decorating, shopping and rushing towards the celebration of Christmas, the Church gives us the Season of Advent as a way to practice discipline and patience in preparation for the great mystery of the Birth of Christ. Projecting, the celebration of Christmas onto a season that is to be marked by waiting and spiritual preparation seems to miss the point of Advent. Therefore, church environments should not reflect this kind of thinking and the integrity of Advent is to be kept without the addition of environmental elements indicative of the Christmas Season, i.e. Christmas trees, manger.
- The Advent Wreath (see Chapter 47 of the *Book of Blessings*)
  - The use of the Advent Wreath is a traditional practice which has found its place in the Church as well as in the home. The blessing of an Advent wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or on the evening before the First Sunday of Advent. The blessing may be celebrated during Mass, a celebration of the word of God, or Evening Prayer (*Book of Blessings*, 1509).
  - If the Advent Wreath is to be used in church, it should be sufficient size to be visible to the congregation. It may be suspended from the ceiling or placed in a stand. If it is placed in the presbyterium (sanctuary), it should not interfere with the celebration of the liturgy, nor should it obscure the altar, lectern, or chair (*Book of Blessings*, 1512).
  - When the Advent Wreath is used in church, on the Second and succeeding Sundays of Advent the candles are lighted either before Mass begins or immediately before the opening prayer; no additional rites or prayers are used (*Book of Blessings*, 1513).

**Season of Advent**  
(December 3, 2017 – December 24, 2017)

**December 2017**

|           |               |   |                   |
|-----------|---------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>First Sunday of Advent</b>   | violet            |
| 7         | Thursday      | Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church  | white             |
| 8         | <b>Friday</b> | <b>Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b>  | white             |
|           |               | Holy Day of Obligation – Patronal Feastday of the United States of America  |                   |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>Second Sunday of Advent</b>  | violet            |
| 12        | Tuesday       | Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe – Patroness of the Americas  | white             |
| 13        | Wednesday     | Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr   | red               |
| 14        | Thursday      | Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church  | white             |
| 16        | Saturday      | <i>Anniversary of the Installation of Bishop John Noonan as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Orlando.</i>   |                   |
| <b>17</b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>Third Sunday of Advent</b>   | violet<br>or rose |
|           |               | <i>December 17 is the beginning of the “O Antiphons”</i>  |                   |
| 23        | Saturday      | Advent Weekday  | violet            |
|           |               | <i>Masses scheduled after 4:00 p.m. EST are in anticipation of the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Attendance at one of these Masses fulfills the Catholic’s obligation to attend Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. See note in red box on page 6.</i> |                   |
| <b>24</b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>  | violet            |

**Masses scheduled up to 4:00 p.m. EST are for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Attendance at one of these Masses fulfills the Catholic’s obligation to attend Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. See notes in red box on page 6.**

## The Season of Christmas

---

After the annual celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the Church has no more ancient custom than celebrating the memorial of the Nativity of the Lord and of his first manifestations, and this takes place in Christmas Time (Norms, 32).

The Church begins its celebration of the Nativity of the Lord from First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of the Nativity of the Lord up to and including the Sunday after Epiphany or after 6 January (Norms, 33). This year, the Solemnity of Epiphany falls on Sunday, January 8, 2017.

### **Order of Celebrating Matrimony and Funerals** (see page 2)

### **Other Liturgical Considerations**

- The color of the Season of Christmas is white. Gold vesture also may be used in place of white.
- Four Masses are assigned for the Solemnity of Christmas: a Vigil Mass, a Mass during the Night (historically referred to as the “Mass of the Angels”), a Mass at Dawn (historically referred to as the “Mass of the Shepherds”), and a Mass during the Day (historically referred to as the “Mass of the Incarnate Word”). These titles were given because of the proper Gospels assigned to each of the Masses. While the *ORDO (Order of Prayer for Liturgy of the Hours and the Celebration of the Eucharist)* contains a pastoral note stating that the readings of any of the Christmas Masses may be used according to the pastoral needs of each celebration, those preparing the Masses of Christmas should consider the richness of the mystery of the Incarnation as it unfolds in the proper sequence of readings for the four Masses of Christmas. For this reason it is laudable to use the proper readings for each Mass.
- Although many traditions observe The Mass during the Night at midnight, it is not a requirement. It may be celebrated at a late evening hour before midnight.
- The Gospel reading at any Mass is to be proclaimed by either a deacon or a priest. It is not permitted to have the Gospel proclaimed with multiple readers or voices with the exception of the Passion of the Lord which is proclaimed during Holy Week (cf. GIRM, 109). It is not permitted to replace the appropriate Gospel reading with a pageant or portrayal of the Gospel. Such events are to occur outside of the context of Mass.
- In the Nicene Creed, at the words “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate,” all kneel at all Masses celebrating the Nativity of the Lord (*Roman Missal*). (Those who cannot kneel may bow in the usual fashion).

- “Christmas Proclamation” (*Roman Missal*, Appendix I, Various Chants for the Order of Mass)
  - This text, *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 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. It may not replace any part of the Mass (*Roman Missal*).
  - The minister who chants the proclamation should be chosen based upon their ability to render the sung text well to the edification of the assembly (cf. *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 23).
  
- Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene (see Chapter 48 of the *Book of Blessings*)
  - The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene, according to pastoral circumstances, may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another more suitable time (*Book of Blessings*, 1542).
  - The blessing may be given during a celebration of the word of God, during Mass, or even during another service, e.g., a carol service (*Book of Blessings*, 1543).
  - If the manger is set up in church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium (sanctuary). A place should be chosen that is suitable for prayer and devotion and is easily accessible to the faithful (*Book of Blessings*, 1544).

*4th Sunday Advent/Christmas*

- A Catholic is obligated to attend Mass on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and on the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas). Pastors should catechize the faithful on the unfolding of the mystery of the incarnation and the joy of marking our Savior’s coming—particularly in these last days of Advent. Thus, there are two obligations to fulfill: one for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and one for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.

*Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday of the Octave of Christmas)/Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*

- In the United States, the Catholic Bishops have stated that when the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God falls on a Saturday or Monday, it is not a holy day of obligation. Pastors should still provide Mass appropriately for the faithful who will still come to Mass on January 1<sup>st</sup> regardless of the lifting of the obligation to attend. n.b. All Masses on Sunday, December 31, 2017 are for the Feast of the Holy Family. There are no anticipated Masses for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God this year.

**Season of Christmas**  
(December 25, 2017 – January 8, 2018)

**December 2017**

24 Sunday Vigil of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord white

**Vigil Masses may not begin earlier than 4:00 p.m. EST. Attendance at Masses scheduled after 4:00 p.m. on Dec. 24th and throughout the day on Dec. 25th fulfills the Catholic's obligation to attend Mass for *The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)*. See notes in red box on page 6.**

*It is laudable to maintain the proper sequence of readings for the four Masses proper to the Nativity of the Lord: Vigil Mass, Mass during the Night, Mass at Dawn and Mass during the day. The readings of any of the Christmas Mass may be used according to the pastoral needs of each celebration.*

*The Gospel reading at any Mass is to be proclaimed by either a deacon or a priest. It is not permitted to replace the appropriate Gospel reading with a pageant or portrayal of the Gospel. Such events are to occur outside of the context of Mass.*

25 Monday **Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)** white

*Holyday of Obligation*

26 Tuesday Feast of St. Stephen, The First Martyr red

27 Wednesday St. John, Apostle and Evangelist white

28 Thursday The Holy Innocents, Martyrs red

29 Friday Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord white

30 Saturday Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord white

31 Sunday **Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph** white

*All Masses scheduled this day are for the Feast of the Holy Family.*

*See notes in red box on page 6.*

## January 2018

|   |               |  |       |
|---|---------------|--|-------|
| 1 | Monday        | Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God<br><br>The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord<br><br><i>Not a Holyday of Obligation. See notes in red box on page 6.</i>   | white |
| 2 | Tuesday       | Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen,<br>Bishops and Doctors of the Church   | white |
| 4 | Thursday      | Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious   | white |
| 5 | Friday        | Saint John Neumann, Bishop   | white |
| 7 | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord</b><br><br><i>The Epiphany Proclamation may take place after the reading of the Gospel, or within or after the homily. It may be solemnly sung by the deacon, presider, or cantor from the ambo.* See the Roman Missal, Appendix I: The Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts.</i><br><br><i>*The minister who chants the proclamation should be chosen based by their ability to render the text well to the edification of the assembly. (cf. Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, USCCB, § 23).</i> | white |

---

---

English translations from *Book of Blessings* © 1987, *Ceremonial of Bishops* © 1989, *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* © 2013, *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). All rights reserved.