



**ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA**  
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LITURGY OFFICE

## **Scheduling of Christmas Masses**

Presented here are some general principles regarding the celebration of Christmas Masses and the particular guidelines for the Archdiocese of Regina when considering schedules for your parishes.

### **The Masses of Christmas**

In our Roman Catholic tradition, the liturgical celebration of Christmas includes four distinct celebrations of the Eucharist. The Vigil Mass of Christmas may be celebrated on December 24, either before or after Evening Prayer I. On Christmas itself, following the ancient tradition of Rome, three masses may be celebrated, namely: The Mass During the Night (often referred to as Midnight Mass), the Mass at Dawn, and the Mass During the Day. Each celebration possesses a unique character which is defined by its proper liturgical texts and the time of day when it is to take place.

It is interesting to note that in the official liturgical texts and rubrics, the first of the three Masses of Christmas itself is not referred to as "Midnight Mass" but rather as "Mass During the Night" (Missa in Nocte). Traditionally this has translated into Midnight Mass which is a custom dear to many hearts and a laudable practise where pastorally and practically feasible. However, the fact is the rubric refers to Mass during the night and the current Lectionary and the revised Roman Missal no longer refer to "midnight" as such. None of this means to say or imply that Mass at Midnight is abrogated.

Regarding the readings for the feast, a rubric in the Lectionary for Christmas indicates that it is permitted to choose among the readings for the three Masses of Christmas, depending on pastoral needs. However, this choice must respect the proper liturgical order of Old Testament, Psalm, Epistle, and Gospel. Notably, the rubric appears in the Lectionary only after the readings of the Vigil Mass on December 24 and refers only to the three Masses of the Christmas solemnity itself (During the Night, Dawn, During the Day). It would appear, therefore, that the readings for the Vigil of Christmas Mass fall outside the possibility for selection. The pastoral choice offered for the readings does not necessarily extend to the other liturgical formulas (Collects, etc.) and so these must be respected in accordance with the time of celebration.

### **Additional Masses**

The following questions will be helpful to pastors and liturgical committees when determining a schedule of additional Christmas Masses During the Night and/or Masses on Christmas Day.

1. Is there a genuine pastoral need for additional Masses in this parish, or are additional Masses being considered simply for convenience?

2. Will the multiplication of Christmas Masses During the Night diminish or obscure the importance of December 25 as the day on which the universal Church celebrates the Nativity of the Lord?
3. Can the needs of special groups be met more properly within a regularly scheduled Mass of Christmas Day (e.g. families with young children)?
4. Are there sufficient liturgical ministers available for additional Masses so that worthy celebrations can take place without undermining their quality?
5. Will the scheduling of additional Masses place an undue burden on the parish priest, or necessitate his celebrating more than three Masses on the feast of Christmas?

### **When Christmas is Celebrated on Saturday**

It is important to keep the celebration of Christmas and Sunday distinct, and to be mindful of the extra demands which are placed upon priests and other liturgical ministers when Christmas and Sunday are celebrated on consecutive days.

The following recommendation will be helpful:

1. The regularly scheduled Saturday evening Mass in anticipation of Sunday is to be omitted altogether.

### **When Christmas is Celebrated on Monday**

Sunday is the original and primary feast day for the Christian people, and the heart of the liturgical year. Christmas, the celebration of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of his birth as our Saviour, is a distinct feast. For this reason, it is important to keep the two celebrations distinct. It is therefore recommended that no Sunday Mass be celebrated on Sunday evening, in order to avoid any confusion between the two celebrations.

## **Particular Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Regina**

Given the pastoral situation in the Archdiocese of Regina of most priests serving more than one parish community and having to generally celebrate more than one Mass on any given Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation, the following guidelines for the celebration of Christmas Masses are established:

1. Parishes should work towards avoiding several Christmas Masses During the Night when possible, especially if they begin in the early evening, and when necessary, their number should be kept to a minimum.
2. Christmas Masses During the Night should be scheduled no earlier than 7:00 p.m.
3. When Christmas is celebrated on Saturday the regularly scheduled Saturday evening Mass in anticipation of Sunday should be omitted altogether.
4. When Christmas is celebrated on Monday, in order to keep Sunday distinct from Christmas there should be no Sunday Masses celebrated on Sunday evenings, and no Christmas Masses During the Night should be celebrated before 7:00 p.m.

Peace in Christ,  
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