

# Planning for Christmas

My Dear Parish Family,

As I write this note to you, we are less than one week away from Christmas, and I wanted everyone to be aware of the parish's plan for Christmas, so that you might make the right plans for you and your family.

As with most years, many people are trying to decide how to make Mass part of their Christmas plans, but this year it may be a little more difficult decision than in previous years because of the Coronavirus. For that reason, I wanted you to have all the pertinent information, so that you can make an informed decision for your family.

This note will discuss:

1. What is the Christmas Schedule at St. Paul of the Cross?
2. What to expect when you come to Mass?
3. Helpful tips

## Christmas Schedule

For this Christmas only the Bishop has given the parishes permission to have Masses earlier than usual on Christmas Eve, as early as 2:00 PM. So, here is our Christmas schedule:

### **Christmas Eve:**

\*2:00 PM [This Mass is new, and will only be offered this year]

\*5:00 PM [There will be NO pageant with the children this year]

8:00 PM

11:00 PM

### **Christmas Day:**

7:30 AM

9:00 AM

10:45 AM

### **New Year's Eve and Day (Mary, Mother of God):**

5:30 PM on Dec. 31

8:00 AM on Jan. 1

**\*\*REMEMBER:** Masses for Christmas and New Year's will be available beginning at 8 AM on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, respectively on our YouTube channel, [St. Paul of the Cross NPB.](#)

## What to Expect?

1. **ALL ARE WELCOME:** It has always been a wonderful characteristic of our parish that we are very welcoming. We ask that you remember and practice this quality as people come to our doors, especially if they are visitors.
2. **MASKS:** Bishop Barbarito has **REQUIRED** that all people who enter the Church are to wear a mask or face covering for the entire time that they are in the Church. An announcement will be made at the beginning of each Mass, and additional masks will be made available for those who have forgotten theirs. However...
3. **SOCIAL DISTANCING:** With the possibility of larger numbers for Christmas, we may not be able to maintain social distancing. We ask that you remember and plan for this possibility as you come to Church.

## Helpful Hints

1. **NOT FEELING WELL?** It should go without saying that if you, or someone you have been in contact with is ill, or may have been exposed to COVID-19, please refrain from attending Mass on Christmas, for your own good health and the health of our other parishioners.
2. **WHICH MASSES ARE MOST ATTENDED?** In past years, the 5 PM Mass was most attended, due in large part to the pageant (everybody loves the children!) After that, the other Masses on Christmas Eve are better attended than those on Christmas Day. Given that there is no pageant this year and that we have added another Mass at 2 PM, we are not sure how attendance will be, but please know that you are always welcome.

3. **WHAT ABOUT RESERVATIONS OR TICKETS?** Some churches have resorted to these options to control attendance. In our parish, we believe and live the credo that “All are welcome here.” We will not turn people away from our Church on Christmas Day.
4. **SHARE THE JOY:** Christmas is a time for great JOY for Christians, please bring that JOYFUL spirit with you to Christmas Mass, if you come.
5. **BISHOP’S DISPENSATION:** If you should feel uncomfortable coming to Mass, please remember that Bishop Barbarito has extended his dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day Mass obligation, including Christmas, for everyone. To quote that dispensation, “Simply stated [...], *no one is obliged or should feel obligated to come to church.*”
6. **YOUTUBE MASSES:** As we have done since the beginning of the pandemic, we will offer both Christmas and New Year’s Day Masses on our YouTube channel, [St. Paul of the Cross NPB](#), in order to allow you to participate in Mass safely from home. Masses will be available by 8 AM December 25 and January 1.
7. **PRUDENCE IN COMMON SPACES:** Like other common and public spaces, no matter how much effort we make to keep your church clean, you will be entering a space where you may come in contact with many people and other people may have touched the surfaces that you will touch. Please use the appropriate precautions, such as “social distancing,” face coverings and perhaps gloves.
8. **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** You are the best judge of your health. If you feel that it would be unwise or imprudent for you to attend Mass, please see #5 above. Finally, please also realize that as Christians we are called to care for one another. Some of the actions that are recommended actually do more to show that you care about others, such as using a face covering throughout the Mass. Please help us keep you and everyone else safe and healthy, especially during this Christmas season.

I look forward to seeing those who choose to attend Mass in person, and I especially look forward to the day when we will all be able to do so safely. I also want to thank you all for your continued support of your parish.

We are a community. We are a family. We are St. Paul of the Cross.

May God bless you, your family and the Parish Family of St. Paul of the Cross at Christmas and throughout the New Year,

Fr. Tom