



Liturgical Notes through Fall 2021 and Early 2022

September 2021

COVID Update

In light of increased cases from the Delta variant, more inquiries have been coming in regarding whether new diocesan-wide mandates will be instituted in churches. We continue to monitor the regional COVID situation and remain in consultation with Catholic infectious disease specialists. As of now no changes are planned, so the directives from May ([found here](#)) still stand.

Please take the time to review the current directives again, because they give pastors a great deal of discretion for implementing precautions and addressing COVID concerns among parishioners. In particular, even though there is no universal diocesan masking mandate, our directives do allow the following:

“Pastors who perceive sufficient support among their parishioners for the opportunity to continuing worshiping with a fully masked congregation can designate particular Mass times at which masks continue to be required. Another possibility, if deemed adequate at a parish, is that a clearly defined section of the church could be demarcated as reserved just for those who wish to continue wearing masks. Having such provisions available and publicized as needed would be welcomed by the immunocompromised and by those families concerned about the health of their children.”

Moreover, please reiterate to parishioners (and especially to any liturgical ministers or volunteers) that our directives do instruct that we should stay home (with Mass obligation lifted) if feeling unwell:

“Anyone (whether vaccinated or not) with a cough or fever, or who may otherwise be feeling sick, should still remain home.”

Thank you again for your continued attentiveness to the pandemic response. There seems to be founded hope that COVID will reach a more stable, endemic level in the coming months, which hopefully means we would see an end to very dramatic surges in cases.



Fall Calendar Notes

➤ Upcoming Holy Days of Obligation

- Wednesday, December 8 — Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
- Saturday, December 25 — Nativity of the Lord

- ◆ **Reminder:** Funeral Masses and ritual Masses are not permitted on any Holy Day of Obligation. If there is a need to celebrate a funeral liturgy on this day, the “Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass” found in the Order of Christian Funerals, nos. 177-203, would be used.

➤ Upcoming Celebrations Not Found in the Roman Missal

Since the 2011 publication of the third edition of the *Roman Missal* in English, several new celebrations have been added on the universal and United States calendars. The USCCB has [created this helpful webpage](#), listing those celebrations and including the respective texts prescribed for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. Below is a list of such memorials that will be observed in the coming months:

- September 17 – Optional Memorial of Saint Hildegard of Bingen
- October 5 – Optional Memorial of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos and Optional Memorial of Saint Faustina Kowalska
- October 11 – Optional Memorial of Saint John XXIII
- October 22 – Optional Memorial of Saint John Paul II
- December 10 – Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Loreto

Also, please note that officially inscribed into our diocesan calendar on **February 1st** is the **Optional Memorial of Saint Maria Katharina Kasper**, founder of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. Texts would be drawn from the Common of Virgins. The proper collect is currently only available in Latin and German

➤ Anniversary of Cathedral Dedication

Thursday, December 9, marks this year’s observance of the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. It is observed as a feast outside the Cathedral, using option II in the Common of the Dedication of a Church.



➤ Observing Our Lady of Guadalupe

Because the Third Sunday of Advent falls on December 12 this year, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe does not get celebrated in 2021. There is also no provision for the actual feast itself to be transferred to another day.

However, since this feast is so meaningful – especially to our Hispanic communities – one way to continue to observe the occasion is by celebrating a Votive Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Saturday, December 11 (it would have to be celebrated before 4 PM) or on a nearby available weekday evening. The readings and Mass prayers from the feast would be used, with the main change being the replacement of “feast” with “commemoration” in the proper prayers. And since GIRM no. 53 allows for the Gloria to be sung “at particular celebrations of a more solemn character,” including a Gloria during this special votive Mass would still be possible.

➤ The Dual Obligations for Christmas and Holy Family

Christmas (December 25) falls on a Saturday this year and remains a holy day of obligation. The next day – Sunday, December 26 (Feast of the Holy Family) – also has its own, distinct obligation. There are thus two separate obligations to fulfill.

Since Christmas outranks Holy Family, on the evening of Saturday, December 25 the prayers and readings of the Christmas “Mass during the Day” would still be used, and Evening Prayer II of the Nativity would be prayed.

Nonetheless, attending Mass on Saturday evening (anytime after 4:00 PM on Dec 25) can count towards **either** the Christmas obligation **or** the Holy Family Sunday obligation—**but not both**. This chart may prove helpful in explaining the dynamics:

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)	Holy Family
Obligation may be fulfilled from the evening of Friday, December 24 (starting 4:00 PM) through the end of Saturday, December 25.	Obligation may be fulfilled from the evening of Saturday, December 25 (starting 4:00 PM) through the end of Sunday, December 26.
For example, one may attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigil Mass of the Nativity on Dec 24 • Mass during the Night (celebrated at any time overnight on Christmas Eve) • Morning/afternoon/evening Masses on December 25 	For example, one may attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon/evening Masses after 4 PM on December 25 (even though the Mass texts will be for the Nativity) • Morning/afternoon/evening Masses on December 26

(continued)



(Christmas / Holy Family Obligations, Continued)

So this year, for example, someone can actually go to a Christmas Mass in the morning on Saturday (Christmas Day) to fulfill the Christmas obligation, and then go to another Christmas Mass after 4:00 PM also on Saturday to fulfill the Holy Family obligation. No matter how it is accomplished, the key is that the two obligations must be fulfilled separately.

➤ Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on January 1, 2022

The Solemnity of the Mary, the Holy Mother of God, falls on a Saturday and is therefore not a holy day of obligation. Evening Masses offered on Saturday, January 1, 2022 should make use of the prayers and readings of the Vigil Mass of the Epiphany of the Lord (since Epiphany has an obligation attached and also outranks Mary, Mother of God), and Evening Prayer I of the Epiphany is prayed.

➤ Other Christmas Notes

- Genuflection at Christmas Masses – At all Masses for the Nativity of the Lord, the assembly should be reminded beforehand to **genuflect during the Creed** at the mention of the Incarnation: **“and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”** Particularly on this day (and also on the Solemnity of the Annunciation), we pay homage to the great mystery of the Incarnation by symbolically touching ourselves to the ground, just as the Son of God came down among us as man.
- “Since the Christmas season begins with the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve and ends with the Baptism of the Lord, the placement and removal of Christmas decorations should coincide with these times” (*Built of Living Stones*, #125). If a manger or crèche scene is set up in church, it should be not be placed in the main part of the sanctuary, but should be somewhere easily accessible for the prayer and devotion of the faithful (*Book of Blessings* #1544). The Nativity scene should only be blessed once each season (typically at the first Mass on Christmas Eve, or prior to it), though it could be revered with incense at subsequent Christmas liturgies.



- **The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Roman Martyrology** – Located in Appendix I of the Roman Missal, it “may be chanted or recited, most appropriately 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.” This proclamation “may not replace any part of the [Christmas] Mass.”
- **The Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts** – Found in Appendix I, this may be proclaimed after the Gospel at “Mass during the Day” for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord (Jan. 2, 2022).
- **Blessing of Homes** – The Christmas season—and especially Epiphany—is a traditional time when homes are blessed. Parishes could promote the pious Epiphany custom of families using chalk (which can be blessed and distributed by the parish ahead of time) to mark both the year and the initials of the Magi (which also form a Latin abbreviation for “May Christ bless this house”) above the doors of their homes: **20+C+B+M+22**. This could be done in conjunction with a home blessing provided online by the USCCB: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/blessing-home-and-household-epiphany>
- **Regarding the song “Mary, Did You Know?”** – A reminder: the Christmas song titled “Mary, Did You Know?” has become popular through radio and pop culture, and has sometimes been adopted in liturgical contexts around Christmas. However, several rhetorical questions posed to Mary in the song’s lyrics present difficulties for us as Catholics. Besides the fact that the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel makes it clear that Mary did indeed know that her Son would bring salvation and rule the nations, the biggest problem comes in these lines: “Did you know that your Baby Boy has come to make you new? This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you.” This is at least an implicit denial of the Immaculate Conception, by which Mary was extraordinarily preserved from sin at her first moment of existence. While there is an atemporal side to God’s activity, at face value “This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you” conveys a sense of Mary at that moment still awaiting salvation along with everyone else (as opposed to being already cleansed by a “prevenient grace,” as the Prayer over the Offerings for Immaculate Conception on December 8 says). And since the song was not written by/for Catholics, that’s surely the intent. But we have to affirm that Mary was not still awaiting a future salvation when Jesus was born—in fact, her purity was necessary for the Incarnation. Due to these problematic lyrics, this song should not be employed in any liturgical context—even as prelude music.



Looking Ahead to Early 2022

Rite of Election / Call to Continuing Conversion:

- South Bend: Sunday, February 27, 2:00 PM — St. Matthew Cathedral
- Fort Wayne: Sunday, March 6, 2:00 PM — Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Chrism Masses:

- South Bend: Monday, April 11, 7:00 PM — St. Matthew Cathedral
- Fort Wayne: Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 PM — Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Easter Vigil Start Time, 2022

On Saturday, April 16, 2022, the end of civil twilight is at 8:50 PM EDT on the Fort Wayne side, and 8:55 PM EDT on the South Bend side. Therefore, around 8:50 PM would be the earliest possible time to begin the Easter Vigil in the diocese.

Since the USCCB encourages waiting an extra 15-30 minutes (because total darkness occurs after civil twilight ends), 9:00 PM or later would really be the most appropriate start time.

The Roman Missal states that the Vigil must begin in true darkness, “after nightfall.”