

2019 Advent/Christmas Liturgical Notes

Advent Wreath

The domestic custom of the Advent wreath draws attention to the light that Christ brings as Christmas approaches and emboldens us to bear witness to that light in the world. It began as a domestic-Church tradition in Germany in the sixteenth century and has since found its way into the liturgical space of most Catholic Churches. Although popular, the Advent wreath is not a primary liturgical symbol and it should not overshadow the celebration of the Eucharist. The CCCB *A Book of Blessings* presumes the wreath will be blessed in schools and homes (p. 204). The *Book of Blessings* based on the *Roman Ritual* provides direction for when the Advent wreath is in the church and blessed during the Mass (p. 647ff).

- 1. Placement of the Advent Wreath**

If the Advent wreath is to be used in church, it should be large enough to be visible. It may be suspended from the ceiling or placed on a stand. The placement should not interfere with the celebration of the liturgy, nor obscure the altar, ambo, or chair. Depending on your church architecture, consider placing the Advent wreath in the narthex, at the entrance to the nave, or in areas off to the side rather than directly in line with the primary liturgical symbols.

- 2. Blessing of the Advent Wreath**

The blessing of an Advent Wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or the evening before. When blessed at Mass, the Advent wreath is blessed only at the first Mass of the season. The blessing takes place at the end of the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful).

- 3. Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

On the Second and succeeding Sundays of Advent the candles of the Advent wreath are lighted either before Mass begins or immediately before the opening prayer. No additional rites or prayers are to be used.

- 4. Encouraging the Advent Wreath in the Domestic-Church**

With an Advent wreath at home, parishioners can keep their focus on Christ by reading a passage of Scripture or saying an Advent prayer each evening as they light the candle(s).

Proclamation of the Nativity and Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts

Proclamation of the Nativity

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ is a text from the *Roman Martyrology* that draws upon Sacred Scripture to formally declare the birth of Christ. The text is in Appendix I of the *Roman Missal* on p. 1442. According to the rubric one can chant or recite the text before the beginning of Christmas Mass during the Night (Midnight Mass). No additional direction is given. It would be appropriate to make the announcement before the entrance procession but if necessary, it might also work well between the Greeting and the Penitential Rite in the place where the celebrant may introduce the Mass for the day. It would be appropriate for a deacon, cantor, or lector to make the proclamation. The ambo or lectern would be suitable locations from which to make the proclamation. [Notation](#) for the text is available from the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in the US. They also provide an [audio file](#).

Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts

In keeping with ancient tradition a deacon or cantor may announce the moveable Feasts of the coming year on the Epiphany of the Lord following the proclamation of the Gospel. The text and notation is found in the *Roman Missal* pp. 1440–1441. [Notation](#) in pdf is available from the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in the US. They also provide an [audio file](#).

Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church

Cathedral Dedication

The liturgical life of the diocese flows from the role of the Bishop and the centrality of the cathedral church. The anniversary of the cathedral church's dedication is celebrated as a Feast throughout the diocese and as a proper Solemnity in the cathedral parish itself. St. Mary's Cathedral was dedicated on December 11, 1957. All parishes should celebrate the anniversary on December 11, 2019 as a Feast of the Lord. Liturgical instructions for Mass and Office are in the Ordo 2019–2020 note 25b on p. 52.

Parish Celebration

The Anniversary of the Dedication of the parish church (formerly known as its Consecration) is observed as a Solemnity in the parish church and takes precedence over the Sundays of Ordinary Time. It is an opportunity to celebrate as a community, to connect with the history of the parish, and look forward to the future. Liturgical instructions for the Mass are in the Ordo 2019–2020 note 24 p. 49.