

MEMORANDUM



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of Calgary

DATE November 16, 2021
TO Priests, Deacons, and Parish Office Staff
FROM Fr. Wilbert Chin Jon
SUBJECT 2021 Advent and Christmas

Introduction

These guidelines for Advent and Christmas have been written with the current health and safety restrictions in place. A separate memorandum will be released if and when the provincial restrictions change and how they affect guidelines surrounding the celebration of Mass. The liturgical guidelines of September 2021 remains in effect.

https://www.catholicyc.ca/uploads/6/5/5/7/65570685/memorandum_new_provincial_temporary_measures_-_september_16_2021.pdf

Advent Season

Deans are asked to meet and discuss with the priests of their respective deaneries to determine the most effective ways for making available the Sacrament of Penance during the season of Advent. A key pastoral guideline is predictability and reliability of schedule for the weeks of Advent.

The Diocese will continue to provide Advent and Christmas spiritual and pastoral resources for the faithful through all communication channels.

Christmas Season

The following considerations are being offered to you to assist you in your liturgical planning for the Christmas season.

- *Christmas Eve* and *Day* fall on Friday and Saturday respectively this year.
- The *Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph* falls on Sunday, December 26.
- In keeping with last year's permissions...
 - The earliest allowable Christmas Eve Mass is 2:00 pm
 - The number of Christmas Masses for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is left to the decision of the Pastor in collaboration with the parish team
 - The use of the parish hall for the following is allowed by the Diocese if your municipality allows you to consider the hall as a separate space for gathering.

Whatever provincial and/or municipal restriction limits placed on the occupancy of the nave should also be applied to the hall.

- as overflow for the Mass being celebrated in the church nave
 - as overflow for the Mass being celebrated in the church nave with the livestream of the Mass
 - as an acceptable space for the actual celebration of Mass in parishes where there is more than one priest.
- It needs to be stated that in spite of the earliest allowable Christmas Eve Mass is at 2:00 pm, this does not mean that parishes are required to provide early Masses. This unusual provision this year and last year is provided with the permission of the Bishop for parishes that require more Masses on Christmas Eve due to the size of the parish. Preference should still be given for Masses in the evening on Christmas Eve.
 - In the same spirit, the maximum allowable number of Masses per priest does not require priests to celebrate as many Masses on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Only if it is deemed a pastoral necessity.

Suggested Mass Times

Christmas Eve Friday, December 24	Christmas Day Saturday, December 25	Holy Family Sunday, December 26
Maximum of three (3) Masses per priest if necessary.	Maximum of three (3) Masses per priest if necessary. The latest Christmas Day Mass must be offered before 4 pm. <u>It is recommended that an anticipated Sunday Mass for Holy Family NOT be offered in the evening of Christmas Day.</u>	Regular parish Sunday Mass schedule is recommended.

- The eve of the *Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, December 31, falls on a Friday with the Solemnity on Saturday.
- The Solemnity of the *Epiphany of the Lord* will be on Sunday, January 2, 2022. It is recommended that an anticipated Sunday Mass for Epiphany be offered at the usual Saturday parish evening Mass time. Regular parish Mass schedule is recommended on Sunday.
- The Christmas season ends after the Evening Prayer II of Sunday, January 9, on the *Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*.

Further Considerations

Consultation and collaboration with staff and volunteers

- In order to successfully implement health and safety guidelines for these Christmas celebrations, careful planning with the parish council, parish office team, safety coordinators and volunteers would be necessary.
- Additional Masses must not be scheduled if the required number of volunteers cannot be assured at these Masses. The concern for the health and safety of the people is a priority.

Crowd control

- The use of the parish hall requires more effort from the clergy and the volunteers to manage the crowd. Proper physical distancing is required at all times in all spaces including halls, walkways and the narthex between cohorts and households.
- People are discouraged from congregating in the church, halls, and hallways before or after Mass. They can visit outside the parish facilities but away from high traffic areas.
- Proper signage should be provided to give directions to the people at these Masses as people who are unfamiliar with your facility may be attending.
- All spaces must be managed to avoid being at overcapacity. If possible, parishes are to use different exit doors for the people gathered in the parish hall and in the church nave to avoid these crowds to intersect with each other. As much as possible, guidance should be provided to the people for ingress and egress.
- Sufficient time must be given between Masses to effectively manage parking and foot traffic.
- Fire regulations are to be strictly observed as usual.

Online registration

- If your parish chooses to use online registration for Christmas Masses: The plan for online registration and its management requires prudential and creative planning. For example: Opening the online registration too far in advance of Christmas may cause the families to overcommit and therefore potentially not show up for the Mass. Families who make more realistic plans closer to Christmas may feel excluded and not welcomed.
- In addition, we need to be vigilant of these planning variables related to the ongoing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in December.
 - Any change in the provincial restrictions on the allowable maximum number of attendees for worship services may directly affect Christmas Masses and the maximum number of registrations in your online registration system.
 - Any provincial restrictions on family and social gatherings in homes may also directly affect the Christmas celebration plans of families and their Mass attendance.
 - Volunteers will need to be more informed with respect to their volunteering commitments under the most up to date and current conditions. While volunteers may

already be invited to sign-up sooner in the parish, it would be helpful and a good practise to require them to confirm their involvement a week before Christmas.