

## Consecutive Holydays of Obligation: The Fourth Sunday of Advent & the Solemnity of Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

In just under three weeks, we will celebrate the birth of our Lord and this year Christmas happens to be on a Monday. The preceding day is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Every Sunday is a holy day of obligation and the *Code of Canon Law (CIC)* no. 1247 states, "On Sundays and other holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass." Christmas is one of the other days decreed in *CIC* 1246 §1 to be a holyday of obligation and it is always a holyday regardless of the day of the week on which it falls. By now some may be thinking, "If Christmas is on a Monday, am I obligated to attend Mass on Sunday *and* Monday?" The answer is "Yes." A second question which sometimes follows the first is, "Can I fulfill both obligations by attending only one Mass?" That answer is "No." Since there are two days which hold obligations, each obligation must be fulfilled by a separate Mass.

Canon 1248 §1 states:

"A person who assists at a Mass celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either *on the feast day itself or in the evening of the preceding day* satisfies the obligation of participating in the Mass" (emphasis added). "On the feast day itself" is self-explanatory, but what constitutes "in the evening of the preceding day?" The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have set "evening" as beginning at 4:00 PM. Therefore in normal circumstances – and using Sunday as an example – attending any Mass beginning between 4:00 PM Saturday and 11:59 PM Sunday fulfills the obligation. With that stated, how does it work with consecutive holy days of obligation: is there overlap on the evening of the first feast day? Yes: for a period of eight hours – in this circumstance, between 4:00 and 11:59 PM on Sunday, December 24 – attending a Mass could fulfill either obligation.

Likely, the easiest and "liturgically pure" way to fulfill both obligations is to attend one Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and one Mass for Christmas.

Here at the basilica, Masses for the Fourth Sunday of Advent follows our normal weekend schedule (5:00pm on December 23 and 9:00 & 11:00am on December 24). Our Christmas Mass schedule is 5:00pm on December 24, midnight Mass, and 10:00am on December 25.

However, since the obligation is tied to the calendar day and not the Mass celebrated, a person could fulfill the Sunday obligation by attending the 5:00pm Christmas Vigil and the Monday obligation by attending midnight Mass or 10:00am Mass on Christmas.

I pray that this helps you determine your Christmas Mass plans.

P.S. January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, is **not** a holyday of obligation this year. This is one of the celebrations that the bishops decided to dispense or lift the obligation when it falls on a Monday or Saturday. We will have only one Mass that day at 10:00am in the Upper Basilica followed by Shrine devotions in honor of Our Lady.

Anthony Gallina  
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