



MEMORANDUM

To: Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Leaders, Parishes, and Religious Houses

From: Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas

Re: Advent and Christmas Seasons 2020

Date: Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (November 2, 2020)

*Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.*

-Communion Antiphon (Third Sunday of Advent)

As we prepare for the upcoming seasons of Advent and Christmas, kindly note the following information that may prove helpful as you plan liturgical celebrations.

The faithful are to be reminded that the dispensation to attend Sunday Mass, and Holy Days of Obligation, remains in place for the foreseeable future until you are notified otherwise. Those who are at high risk, especially the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions are to be strongly advised to refrain from Mass attendance out of concern for their own well-being and out of Christian charity for others. Pandemic precautions continue to be in force, including the wearing of masks/facial coverings, maintaining proper social distancing and the sanitization of the church.

ADVENT

- Pastors/Administrators/Pastoral Leaders may need to alter the schedule for the Sacrament of Penance to ensure social distancing. Additionally, parishes may need to schedule additional opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance; this includes penance services and individually scheduled times for confession.
- Tuesday, December 8, 2020 (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary), while normally a Holy Day of Obligation, the faithful are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass this year. Parishes are free to adjust their Mass schedule for this day as they deem appropriate.

- The Office for Divine Worship has posted on *Nuntius* the annual guide for the planning of Advent and Christmas liturgies as prepared by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC). It is also attached to this email for your convenience.

CHRISTMAS

- After consultation with the Diocesan Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, it was determined that Masses for the Vigil of Christmas (Thursday, December 24, 2020) are to begin, as is customary, **no earlier than 4:00 p.m.** Parishes may choose to adjust their Christmas Mass schedule by means of additional Masses or offering an overflow location for the faithful.
- Those pastors having pastoral care of multiple parishes may choose to request a one-time exemption in order to begin the Vigil of Christmas no earlier than 3:00 p.m. to best accommodate the faithful. The request should be made by each individual pastor to the Office of the Bishop. The faithful are to be informed that this exemption is valid for the year 2020 only.
- Because the faithful are seeking comfort and familiarity at this sacred time, it may be prudent to sing more familiar religious carols so they can easily participate. It is also prudent to limit the size of choirs and musicians by possibly having a cantor lead the congregation.
- Friday, January 1, 2021 (Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God), while normally a Holy Day of Obligation, the faithful are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass. Parishes are free to adjust their Mass schedule for this day as they deem appropriate.

During this time of thanksgiving, we recall the many blessings we have received from a loving and merciful God and we pray for the repose of the souls of all the faithful departed, especially those who died from COVID-19.

If you have any questions regarding the above information kindly contact the Office for Divine Worship at 419-244-6711.

May we prepare our hearts and homes to receive Christ who comes anew in Advent and Christmas.