



OFFICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

AUGUST 30, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT / CHRISTMAS EVE 2017

This year, the calendar aligns so that the Fourth Sunday of Advent falls on December 24, 2017 (Christmas Eve). This has not occurred since 2006. The following are frequently asked questions regarding this calendar issue:

Q: Are the faithful able to attend one liturgy on December 24th to fulfill their obligation for both the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas? Will it 'count for both'?

A: Despite falling on a Sunday, the faithful are still obligated to participate in two Masses between Dec 23-25th: one for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (anytime from 4pm on Saturday, Dec. 23rd until 4pm on Sunday, Dec. 24th) **and** one for the Christmas Solemnity (either on Sunday, Dec. 24th after 4pm or Monday Christmas Day). As the Church, we therefore complete our Advent journey with all four Sundays in preparation for the celebration of Christmas.

Q: What if a parish has a regularly scheduled Sunday evening liturgy (4pm or later)?

A: Masses which are regularly scheduled for 4pm or later on a Sunday will be celebrated as Mass for Christmas (suggested propers: Mass During the Night). The faithful of the parish, especially those who regularly attend a Sunday evening liturgy, will need to be invited and reminded to participate in a Mass for the 4th Sunday of Advent earlier in the weekend.

Q: What are options for best sharing the Advent / Christmas Mass schedule with the parish?

A: This calendar conflict, while potentially creating more work and stress for parish ministers, should still be communicated in a positive manner. Consider adding more focus to this year's celebration of Advent in your parish, emphasizing the uniqueness of each of the four Sundays and their Gospels. Consider bulletin announcements which include an invitation as well as approachable catechesis for both regularly attendees and guests:

- *Example addendum to the schedule: “This year, the Fourth Sunday of Advent will fall on December 24th, Christmas Eve. While this does not happen often (not since 2006), it reminds us of the need to plan ahead in order to participate in both the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas! Our Advent journey has brought us through three weeks of preparation and reflection on Christ’s coming into the world. While this year we only have one day of the 4th Week, the 4th Sunday of Advent will best prepare us to enter fully into the joyful celebration of Christmas. At a time when we often find ourselves busy with preparations for meals, travel, and shopping, keeping our observance of the 4th Sunday of Advent so close to Christmas allows us to take special opportunity to quiet ourselves before the Christmas celebration, to make us aware of Christ’s presence, and recognize the full impact and joy of the arrival of the Christmas Time. Please see the liturgy schedule to select which Masses for both the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas you will be participating in. May we together prepare for the peace of Jesus Christ to enter into our hearts and homes during this very special time of year.”*

Q: What are some options for our art and environment (decorating) for Advent and Christmas for the weekend?

A: Given the short timeframe between the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Masses, some adjustments may need to be made for the Christmas art/environment of the church. Here are some examples and suggestions:

- Decorate the church for Christmas earlier in the week before the 4th Sunday of Advent with larger/complex items (ie: trees, nativity scenes, etc); however, make notable distinctions for the Advent Liturgies that it is not yet Christmas (ie: keep Christmas lights off, the image of the Christ child out of the nativity scene, postpone placing flowers around the sanctuary until after the Advent celebrations, etc.).
- If possible, keep lights dimmer for the Advent liturgies; then illuminate the church more for Christmas liturgies.
- December 17th begins the “O Antiphons” of the Church, when the season of Advent focuses on preparation for the celebration of Christ’s birth. If the church is being used for weekday celebrations and rites between December 17th and 23rd, consider using this as a reason to begin to transition the church environment during this time.
- Be sure to continue to use violet Altar cloths and vestments for any remaining Advent liturgies.

Q: Are there special staff and minister considerations for this weekend?

A: Because of the condensed schedule, ministers will be very busy in preparation for and celebration of the liturgies. Ensure that everyone knows the schedule and assignments for the weekend early to ease any stress or confusion. Liturgies scheduled earlier on Sunday may also have to be adjusted to best allow ministers to prepare for the Christmas Eve liturgies. Extra time for homily preparation for priests and deacons will also be necessary earlier in the week(s) leading up to Christmas.

With any questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Divine Worship at worship@gbdioc.org.