

CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation - God becoming man to save us.
 God comes to us where we are to guide us to where He is, so that we can spend eternity with Him in heaven.

CHRISTMASTIDE - the Christmas Season

The BIRTH of Christ was not celebrated by the earliest Christians. It was custom at the time to celebrate a saint's DEATH, not their birth. Thus, Good Friday & Easter Sunday took center stage.

Today, our Christmas Season celebrates not only the Birth of Christ, but also the Holy Innocents, the Holy Family, Mary, Mother of God, the Epiphany, and the Baptism of Christ.

12 DAYS of CHRISTMAS

In the past, the Christmas Season began with the birth of Christ and ended with the Epiphany. The days between these celebrations were known as the 12 days of Christmas.

OCTAVE of CHRISTMAS

Octave means 8. The number 8 held a special significance in the Old Testament. The Jewish people would often honor a feast for 7 days, followed by a solemnity on the 8th day. Also, baby boys were circumcised on the 8th day & it took 8 days to dedicate the Temple.

Today, we celebrate the Octave of Christmas.

It begins and ends with 2 Holy days of Obligation: Christmas & the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The days in between are days of celebration when we can more deeply contemplate the Incarnation.

CHRISTMASTIDE

Celebrate the entire Christmas season, by focusing on the following:

1	DECEMBER 25	OCTAVE of Christmas	CHRISTMAS DAY: The word Christmas derives from the combination of Christ and Mass. It is the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christmas is a <u>Holy Day of Obligation</u> and is 2nd in importance in the liturgical calendar only to Easter.
2	DECEMBER 26		Feast of ST. STEPHEN
3	DECEMBER 27		Feast of ST. JOHN the APOSTLE
4	DECEMBER 28		Feast of the HOLY INNOCENTS: The Holy Innocents were the infants slaughtered under King Herod's order to kill all male babies aged two and under once he learned of Christ's birth. Greek sources suggest that Herod killed around 14,000 boys. Some medieval authors speculate the number to be as great as 144,000. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes the murdered infant boys as its 1st martyrs.
5	DECEMBER 29		Feast of ST. THOMAS BECKET, Bishop and Martyr
6	DECEMBER 30 *** 2nd Sunday of Christmas		Feast of the HOLY FAMILY: The general breakdown of the family prompted the popes to promote the observance of this feast with the hope that it might instill into Christian families some of the faithful love & the devoted attachment that characterize the family of Nazareth. The Holy Family is the model for all Christian families.
7	DECEMBER 31		Feast of St. SILVESTER I, Pope
8	JANUARY 1		MARY, MOTHER of GOD: This <u>Holy Day of Obligation</u> reminds us of the role that the Blessed Virgin played in the plan of our salvation. Christ's Birth was made possible by Mary's fiat: " Be it done unto me according to Thy word. "
9	JANUARY 2		Feast of Ss. BASIL the GREAT and GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Bishops
10	JANUARY 3		Feast of The MOST HOLY NAME of JESUS
11	JANUARY 4		Feast of St. ELIZABETH ANN SETON
12	JANUARY 5		Feast of St. JOHN NEUMANN, Bishop

CHRISTMAS

JANUARY 6

3rd Sunday of
Christmas

Closest Sunday to
January 6

Feast of the EPIPHANY of the LORD: Epiphany means a sudden revelation. This feast commemorates the coming of the 3 Kings to the baby Jesus Christ. Through the Magi, Christ revealed himself to the Gentiles. The arrival and homage of the Magi meant the kingship of Christ was revealed to ALL people.

The Magi brought with them gifts of GOLD, FRANKINCENSE and MYRRH, which were common gifts to give to a King in that day. However, many have suggested spiritual meanings for the gifts: GOLD - for a king, FRANKINCENSE - for a God, MYRRH - for a mortal.

In many Catholic cultures, this is the primary day of gift giving in recognition of the arrival of the Magi and their presentation of gifts to the Child Jesus.

EPIPHANY HOME BLESSING: Epiphany is the traditional day to bless our homes.

Take a piece of chalk and trace the following on the inside door frame of your house:

20 + C + M + B + 18

Say the following prayer:

Lord God of heaven and earth, You revealed your only-begotten Son to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our concern for others may reflect your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

JANUARY 7

Feast of St. RAYMOND OF PENYAFORT

JANUARY 8

Feast of St. ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

JANUARY 9

Feast of St. ADRIAN OF CANTERBURY

JANUARY 10

Feast of St. GREGORY OF NYSSA

JANUARY 11

Feast of Bl. WILLIAM CARTER

JANUARY 12

Feast of St. MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS

JANUARY 13

Feast of St. HILARY

4th Sunday of
Christmas

Sunday after Jan 6
(Unless Epiphany is
on that date and then
on Monday.)

Feast of the BAPTISM of the LORD:

In submitting Himself humbly to the baptism of St. John the Baptist, Christ provided the example for the rest of us. If even He should be baptized, though He had no need of it, how much more should the rest of us be thankful for this sacrament, which frees us from the darkness of sin and incorporates us into the Church, the life of Christ on earth!

At his Baptism, Christ's Flesh blessed the water, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father announced that this was His Son, in Whom He was well pleased. This event marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry.

CELEBRATING the CHRISTMAS SEASON: How can we keep Christmas not just as a day, but as a season?

Light the white Christ candle along with the other candles in your Advent Wreath.

Keep the tree up & shining bright until the Baptism of the Lord.

Celebrate all the feast days in the Christmas Season.

Read scriptures stories of Jesus' childhood.

Bless your house on Epiphany.

Sing carols every day.

CELEBRATE!