



THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS

GOING TO MASS THIS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATING EIGHT WONDERFUL DAYS!

*Our Christmas church celebrations this year are going to be different.
But no less special ...*

Will I be able to go to a Christmas Mass this year?

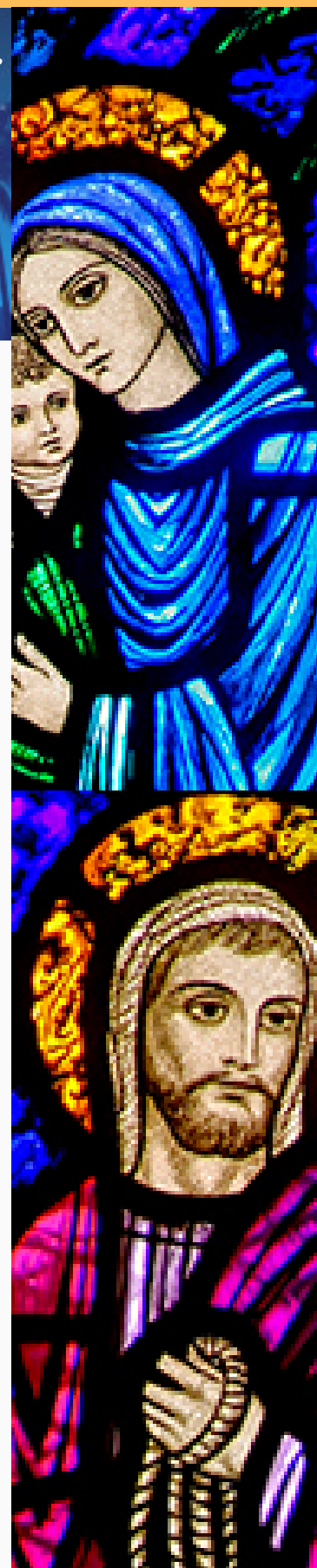
Yes! So long as you book ahead in good time and are open to the possibility of attending a Mass on a day other than Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

What will be different this year?

To accommodate larger than normal congregations over the Christmas period while at the same time ensuring social distancing, most of our parishes will be putting on extra Masses during the eight-day period between the great solemnities of Christmas 25th December (including Christmas Eve) and Mary, Mother of God on 1 January. Liturgically, this period is known as the “**Christmas Octave**”.

What's the significance of the Christmas Octave?

Derived from the Latin word for eighth *Octava*, the concept of an “octave” can be traced back to the Old Testament, when certain celebrations such as the feast of Booths and feast of the dedication of the temple lasted eight days. In the Early Church a tradition arose whereby the number eight became associated with the Resurrection (since it was on the eighth day after His entry into Jerusalem that Christ rose from the grave). Saint Augustine describes the eighth day as “everlasting...hallowed by the resurrection of Christ”. The tradition is this reason why many baptismal fonts are *octagonal* in shape. Christmas octaves were introduced into the liturgical calendar soon after the date of Christmas was settled in the late Fourth Century.





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Will the Masses celebrated during the Octave after Christmas Day have a “Christmas feel”?

Absolutely! As always, many of the liturgical prayers of Christmas Day are repeated during the Octave. Where possible, carols will be played (although not sung), there shall be visits to the Crib and the homily will focus on the Christmas mystery. In addition, each day of the Octave has a distinctive emphasis due to its readings and the saint being commemorated. On Saturday 26th, we remember the Church’s first martyr, **St Stephen**; Sunday 27th is the feast of **The Holy Family**; Monday 28th is the feast of the **Holy Innocents**; and on Tuesday 29th we will celebrate the Feast of **St Thomas Becket**. The Octave concludes with Solemnity of **Mary, Mother of God** on 1st January when we honour the role of Mary in our salvation.



Why is it important to celebrate Christmas during the Octave?

Because Christmas is just too important to limit to a single day’s celebration! We spend four weeks of Advent anticipating and preparing for the Christ child to be born. We therefore need plenty of time to simply enjoy the great mystery once arrived. The Octave actually fits within a longer period of “Christmastide” - the twelve days commencing on Christmas Day and concluding on the Feast of the Epiphany on 6th January - the visit of the Wise Men. In some countries, people wait until Epiphany before exchanging gifts. For example in Ireland Epiphany is popularly known as “Little Christmas”.

What should I do next?

Check the arrangements for Christmas Masses in your parish by visiting its website and checking its the news bulletin.