

This year, the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) falls on a Saturday and is immediately followed on Sunday by the Feast of the Holy Family. In cases of consecutive feast days, there are often questions regarding which Mass is to be celebrated on Saturday evening. In the case of Christmas and Holy Family, both are days of precept (the latter because it falls on a Sunday), but Christmas occupies a higher place on the Table of Liturgical Days. Therefore, if pastors schedule Mass on the evening of Saturday, December 25, the Nativity Mass during the Day is celebrated. Most parishes do not offer a Mass on Christmas night.

On days such as these, there are also questions regarding the fulfillment of the obligation to attend Mass. In short, each obligation (in this case, one for Christmas and another for Holy Family) must be fulfilled with a separate Mass. The fulfillment of the Mass obligation does not depend upon the Mass prayers and readings but rather on the time of day at which one attends Mass.

- The obligation for the Nativity may be fulfilled from the evening of Friday, December 24 through Saturday, December 25.
 - For example, one may attend the Vigil Mass of the Nativity, or Mass during the Night (celebrated at any time), or morning/afternoon/evening Masses on December 25.
- The obligation for the Holy Family may be fulfilled from the evening of Saturday, December 25 through Sunday, December 26.
 - For example, one may attend afternoon/evening Masses on December 25 (even though the Mass texts will be for the Nativity), or morning/afternoon/evening Masses on December 26.

Confused? A suggestion is not to schedule Mass on the evening of December 25. This allows the priest and other parish ministers an opportunity to rest and avoids the confusion that is possible.

The situation with the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God on Saturday, January 1, 2022 is more straightforward. In the United States, the obligation to attend Mass on the Solemnity of Mary is abrogated when this celebration occurs on a Monday or a Saturday. In this case, because the Solemnity occurs on a Saturday and is not a day of precept this year, the Vigil Mass of the Epiphany is celebrated.