



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.



Christmas is going to be different this year ...

... but the love, peace and joy remain!

Christmas is going to feel strange this year but we can guarantee that the love, peace and joy that the Christ-child brings always endure. Some of us will come to Mass this Christmas, others may not be able to. So here are some things to reflect on as we prepare to celebrate the festivity of Christ's birth.

Will I be able to go to Mass this Christmas?

Yes, absolutely! As long as you are open to the possibility of attending Mass on a day other than Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. But remember to check Mass times and booking arrangements with your local parish. Visit <https://rcadc.org/directory/churches/> to get their contact information.

How will it be different this year?

To help accommodate larger than normal congregations whilst maintaining social distancing, most of our parishes will be offering extra Masses during the Christmas Octave.

What is the Christmas Octave?

Derived from the Latin *octave* (eighth), the Christmas Octave is the eight-day period between the solemnities of Christmas Day (December 25th) and Mary, the Mother of God on January 1st. An octave can be traced back to the times of the Old Testament when celebrations such as the festival of booths lasted eight days. In the New Testament Christ's Resurrection happened eight days after his entry into Jerusalem. Because of this the number eight is considered in Christian thought as a symbol of the everlasting. The Octave was introduced into the liturgy of the Church in the fourth century after the date for Christmas was settled.

Will the Masses celebrated during the Octave still feel like Christmas?

Yes! Many of the prayers from Christmas Mass will be repeated throughout the Octave. Carols will still be the main staple of liturgical singing (although congregational singing won't be allowed). There will still be the opportunity to visit the Christmas Crib and the homily will still teach about the wonderful gift of Christmas!





ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

Why is it important to celebrate Christmas over the Octave?

The Octave gives us time to impress upon our souls the mysteries, joys and graces of this wonderful feast. We can treat each of the eight days as Christmas Day; after four weeks preparing throughout Advent we have eight days of celebration for the birth of Christ leading us through the longer celebration of the Christmas season.

What if I cannot get to Mass over the Octave?

During these times of the COVID-19 Coronavirus it may be difficult or impossible to get to Mass over the Octave. There are ways in which we can keep the solemnity and celebration of Christ's birth at home.



1. Join the Christmas celebrations online

Throughout COVID-19 a number of our parishes have been livestreaming Masses and services online. Whilst coming to Mass online can never be the same as being physically present, the livestreams offer us an opportunity to stay connected, especially during Christmas. To find out which parishes offer livestreaming check out <https://rcadc.org/staying-connected/>

2. Place the Christmas Crib at the centre of your home

The first thing we can do to celebrate Christmas at Home is to place our Christmas Crib (Nativity Scene) in a prominent location; make it the focal point for the home. Popularised by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 after he got permission from Pope Honourius III to set up a live manger, nativity scenes brought the story of Christmas to people in a language they could relate to before the Bible was available in multiple languages.

Did you know? When setting up your Crib, Mary should be closer to the baby Jesus because of her sacred relationship to him.



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

Here is a family blessing for the crib at home:

[Make the sign of the Cross together]

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Household: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: We hear in St. Luke's Gospel that "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 1:2-8)

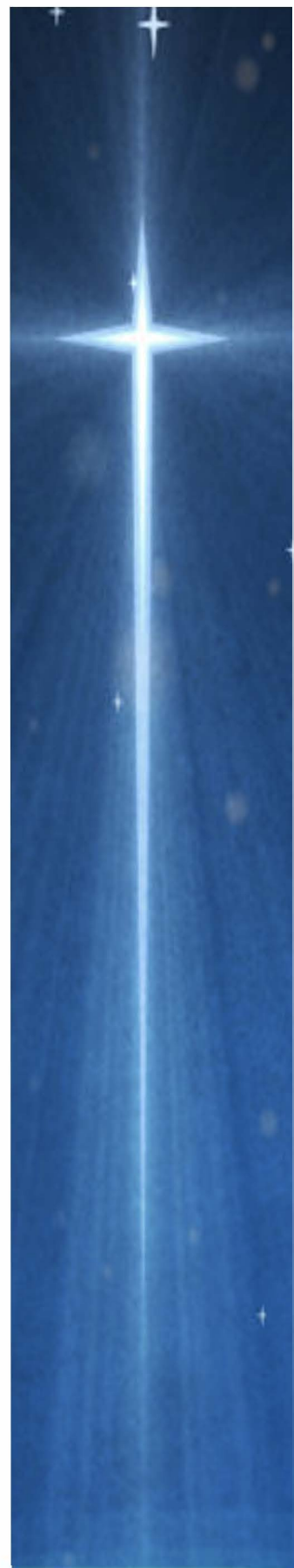
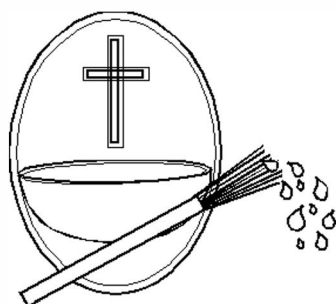
Leader: Let us pray ...

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Saviour was great
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.
To our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,
and raise up our thought to him,
who is God-with-us and Saviour of all,
and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Household: Amen.

[The leader sprinkles the Christmas Crib with Holy Water]





ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

3. Chant, recite or listen to the announcement of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the Roman Martyrology (The Christmas Proclamation)

The announcement of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord from the Roman Martyrology draws upon Sacred Scripture to declare in a formal way the birth of Christ. It begins with creation and relates the birth of the Lord to the major events and personages of sacred and secular history. What better way to start Christmas morning!

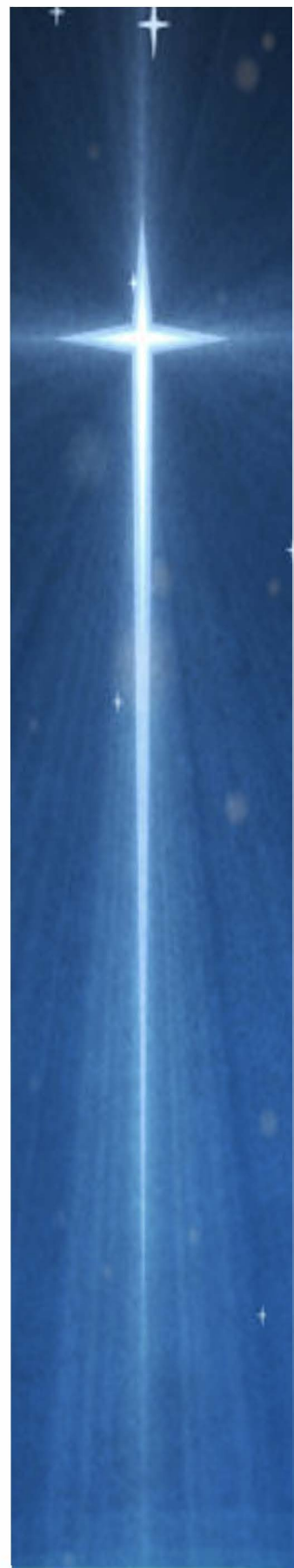
THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Twenty-fifth Day of December,
when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,
when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,
and formed man in his own likeness;
when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds after the Great Flood,
as a sign of covenant and peace;
in the twenty-first century since Abraham, our father in faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;
in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel were led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;
around the thousandth year since David was anointed King;
in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;
in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;
in the forty-second year of the reign of Caesar Octavian Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,

JESUS CHRIST, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to consecrate the world by his most loving presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and when nine months had passed since his conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,
and was made man:
The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

You can listen to the proclamation here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hupYRF9ww08>





ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

4. Make your own Nativity Play at home

The Nativity is a central part of our children's lives this time of year. Some schools have been unable to perform Nativity Plays or Concerts this year. So why not make your own Nativity Play as a family at home. Here is a script you could use:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=1271>



5. Hold a ceremony to formally light and bless your Christmas Tree!

The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world. According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing. The prayer of blessing can be found at <https://rcadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tree-Blessing.pdf>





ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

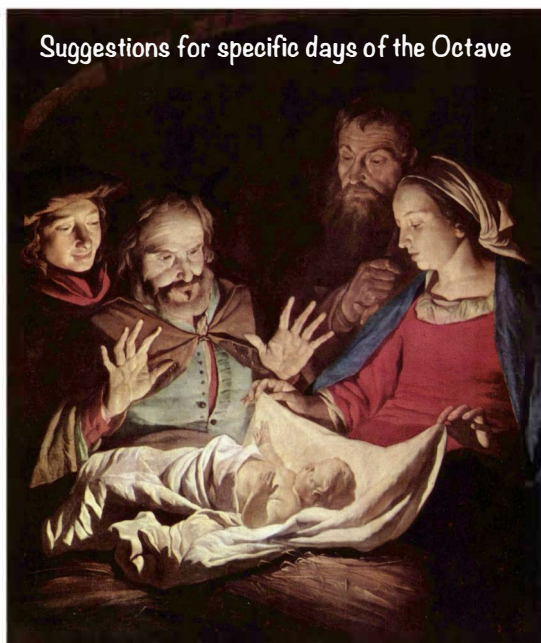
ARCHESGOBAETH CAERDYDD

CELEBRATING THE WONDERFUL SEASON OF CHRISTMAS.

6. Perform a work of Mercy each day.

Core elements of the Christmas narrative are the need of Mary and Joseph for accommodation and the announcement of Christ's birth to lowly shepherds. And all through Christ's ministry he reached out to those most in need materially, spiritually and morally. This Christmas there are many people in need physically, emotionally and spiritually. Consider ways in which you can reach out in Christmas especially to those who will be alone because of the Coronavirus. Pick up the telephone, stop by with a Christmas card or offer a Christmas lunch. There are many ways we can reach out this year.

Activity Suggestions for the Christmas Octave:



DECEMBER 26th - St. Stephen's Day

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=988>

DECEMBER 27th - THIS YEAR: The Feast of the Holy Family

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=989>

DECEMBER 28th - Holy Innocents

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=285>

