

## **New Weekend Mass Schedule**

**Saturday 4 p.m. St. Thomas the Apostle**

**Sunday 8 a.m. St. Bridget**

**Sunday 11 a.m. St. Thomas the Apostle**

St. Thomas the Apostle & St. Bridget  
Catholic Parishes

*Wish You All a Peaceful, Blessed and  
Joyous Christmas Season.*

### **St. Thomas the Apostle**

251 North Craft Highway, Chickasaw, AL 36611  
251-452-9837

#### **Mass Schedule:**

- ❖ Christmas Eve Vigil - 6 p.m.
- ❖ Christmas Day - 9 a.m.
- ❖ New Year's Day - 9 a.m.

### **St. Bridget**

3625 West Main Street, Whistler, AL 36612  
251-452-9837

#### **Mass Schedule:**

- ❖ Christmas Eve Vigil - 4 p.m.



**Remember, the New Mass Schedule Will  
Begin December 24<sup>th</sup>.**



## **Quirk of Calendar Requires Two Obligations for Masses at Christmas Time.**

By a quirk of the calendar that happens every five or six years, Advent 2023 is the shortest it can be. The fourth “week” of Advent is only one day, Dec. 24.

As a result, the Catholic faithful have an obligation to attend Mass twice between the afternoon of Dec. 23 and Dec. 25, to participate in Masses for the fourth Sunday of Advent, and for Christmas.

According to guidance from the Archdiocese of [Mobile], “The obligation to attend Mass for the fourth Sunday of Advent and the Solemnity of Christmas are two separate obligations which cannot be fulfilled by attending one Mass. Those who wait until 4 p.m. or later on Sunday, Dec. 24, to fulfill their obligation for the fourth Sunday of Advent would need to attend Mass on Christmas Day to fulfill their obligation for the Solemnity of Christmas.”

What that boils down to is that you can attend a vigil Mass Saturday, Dec. 23, or a Mass Dec. 24 before 4 p.m. to fulfill the first obligation. Then you would attend a Christmas Eve vigil Mass Dec. 24 or a Christmas Day Mass Dec. 25.

So, you could fulfill the obligations by attending two Masses on Dec. 24 – one in the morning for the fourth Sunday of Advent and another after 4 p.m. for Christmas.

A somewhat similar situation comes up the following weekend without the requirement to attend two Masses, as New Year’s Day is designated as the Solemnity of Mary. It is also the World Day of Prayer for Peace, first designated as such by Pope St. Paul VI in 1967.

All Masses celebrated in the Archdiocese of [Mobile] after 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 31, are to be celebrated for the Solemnity of Mary. However, the Solemnity of Mary is not a holy day of obligation in 2024, since it falls on a Monday. “Those attending Mass after 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 31, fulfill their Sunday obligation,” the guidance from the archdiocese said.

The next time this situation comes up will be when Dec. 24 falls on a Sunday again in 2028.



## How to Fast During Advent

There is a rich tradition of fasting during this festive season.

In secular society, the Christmas season begins around Thanksgiving time and ends after Christmas Day. This often entails weeks of feasting on delicious treats at every meal.

For most of Christian history, however, the period of time before Christmas was seen as a period of fasting.

### **Eastern tradition of fasting**

Beginning in the 8th century, Eastern Christians doubled down on their preparations for Christmas. They firmly believed in the ancient maxim, “fast before you feast,” and followed Christ’s example of fasting for 40 days in the desert before he began his public ministry. To properly prepare for the glorious celebration of Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup>, they fasted for 40 days, beginning November 15<sup>th</sup> and ending on Christmas Eve. Unlike the current observation of Lent in the West (in which Sundays are exempt from fasting) the Eastern fast includes Sundays. It is also called “Philip’s Fast” as it begins after the feast of St. Philip the Apostle in the Byzantine calendar.

The fast is quite rigorous and consists of two primary periods. According to one of the Orthodox churches, “The first period is November 15 through December 19, when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Similarly, fish, wine, and oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays.

The second period is December 20<sup>th</sup> through 24<sup>th</sup>, when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil only on Saturday and Sunday during this period.” As a note, the rules of fasting tend to differ according to each particular church.

### **Latin tradition of fasting**

In the Western (Latin) Catholic Church, there was a separate fasting tradition during a time called “Advent Embertide,” which corresponds to the tradition of “Ember Days.” This was a liturgical custom that revolved around the changing of the four seasons and consisted of 3 days set apart for fasting and prayer.

There were also specific regulations for fasting on these three days and special Masses were said. For these reasons it was known as a “mini-Lent,” highlighting the importance of prayer and fasting.

According to the 1917 Code of Canon Law, this included the following.

*The law of abstinence forbids the eating of flesh meat and of broth made of meat, but does not exclude the use of eggs, milk and the products of milk*

*(namely cheese and butter), and any seasonings of food, even those made from the fat of animals. The law of fasting ordains that only one full meal a day be taken, but does not forbid a small amount of food in the morning and in the evening. As regards the kind of food, and the amount, that may be taken, the approved customs of one's locality are to be observed. One may partake of both fish and flesh meat at the same meal. The full meal may be taken in the evening and the collation at noon.*

While Catholics are generally no longer under any obligation to fast during Advent, it is a tradition that many are reviving to help them spiritually prepare for the great feast of Christmas.

If you are considering a fast during Advent, consult a spiritual advisor to determine what you and your body can handle that will lead to a fruitful time of preparation.

