



## **POLICY ON SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULING ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK**

*Original: 1985 - Revised: 2013*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In scheduling Sunday Masses, while considering the convenience of the community, we maintain concern for the quality of the celebration and the availability of elements that foster such a celebration.

To fulfill the requirements of the liturgy, every Sunday Eucharist, the fullest expression of parish worship, should include liturgical ministries, including music, as well as an environment that supports an experience of hospitality and mystery. As stated in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*:

“Every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation.” (GIRM, 40)

“It is most desirable that the faithful...partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs, Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.” (GIRM, 85)

The availability of the required liturgical ministers, especially of Priests, must be taken into account. Liturgical ministers must not be overburdened by being asked to serve too frequently.

It is with these considerations in mind that the following policy is presented.

1. Planning for the number and time of Masses is to involve consultation with the Priests, pastoral staff and parish pastoral council. It is necessary to justify the retention of a minimally attended Mass.
2. Sunday Masses are to begin at least ninety minutes apart. This accommodates necessary time for a proper celebration of the liturgy and time between Masses for the arrival and departure of parishioners.
3. In view of the emphasis of the Church on the primacy of Sunday and its observance, there is to be only one anticipated (vigil) Mass for Sunday in each Church. It may not be

scheduled before 4 PM.<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix, 7, for information on Masses in languages other than English)

4. Vigil Masses for Holy Days of Obligation may not be scheduled before 4 PM.
5. No Christmas Eve Mass may be scheduled before 4 PM.
6. The Easter Vigil Mass may not be scheduled before 8:15 PM.<sup>2</sup> No Masses may be scheduled on Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil.
7. Sunday evening Masses should only be scheduled according to need.
8. Careful consideration should be given to the scheduling of Masses in languages other than English so that they may occur at a convenient time and in a dignified place. As with English Masses, they should be celebrated with reverence and dignity, appropriate music, and liturgical ministers.
9. It is the responsibility of the Pastor, in consultation with the Priests, pastoral staff and the parish pastoral council, to review the parish Mass schedule on a regular basis to determine whether the schedule reflects the above policy and the needs of the parish.
10. The establishment or elimination of Ethnic Language Masses is governed by the Decree dated November 22, 2013 (see below).
11. Any exception to this policy is to be referred in writing to the Regional Bishop or Regional Vicar with copy sent to the Office of Divine Worship. The Regional Bishop or Regional Vicar will investigate and make a recommendation to the Archbishop. Particular questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Office of Divine Worship.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Commentary on Canon 1248: The obligation to participate in the Mass may be satisfied at any time during the twenty-four hours of the feast day itself, or on the evening before it. "Evening" should be understood as any time from 4:00 PM onward. The legislator uses the word "evening" (*vesper*), not "afternoon" (*post meridiem*); in keeping with the proper meaning of the word...an afternoon Mass before 4:00 is not an evening Mass and does not satisfy the obligation (*New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Canon Law Society of America, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Daylight Saving Time now begins on the second Sunday of March; therefore the Easter Vigil would never be earlier than 8:15 pm.

## APPENDIX TO THE POLICY ON SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULING

### Related Questions

The following questions are likely to be raised concerning the policy on Sunday Mass scheduling. Information concerning these topics is included here for easy reference.

1. Can a Nuptial Mass on Saturday afternoon fulfill the Sunday obligation?

The question arises whether attending a special Mass (such as a Nuptial Mass, Jubilee Mass, Confirmation Mass, etc.) on Saturday afternoon satisfies the obligation to participate in the Sunday liturgy. The Sunday obligation is ordinarily satisfied by participating in the Mass of the occurring Sunday with its proper prayers and Scripture readings. However, participation in any such special Mass after 4 pm (see footnote 2) on Saturday afternoon or at any time on Sunday technically fulfills the Sunday obligation.

2. Can Masses for special groups (e.g. Ritual Masses, Masses for small Christian communities, home Masses, etc.) be celebrated on Sundays?

The parish Eucharistic assembly is the foremost sign and manifestation of the Christian community being transformed into the Body of Christ. No other liturgical celebration should be allowed to lessen that sign value by drawing people away from the scheduled parish Masses on a consistent basis.

- a. At no time should special Masses (e.g. Confirmation, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, et al.) celebrated on Sunday lose the value of their unity with the larger Church's celebration of Sunday. When pastoral situations arise that warrant the celebration of Mass outside the regular Sunday schedule, care should be taken;
  - (1) that the texts be those of the occurring Sunday, except in cases in which the Sacramental ritual permits otherwise;
  - (2) that they be celebrated in a sacred place insofar as possible;
  - (3) that the frequency not be such that the parish community be consistently deprived of the presence of a particular group of people.
- b. The Sacrament of Baptism may be celebrated, at least on occasion, at a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass.<sup>3</sup>
- c. Occasionally, ritual elements of the sacramental preparation process for Confirmation and First Eucharist may be integrated into the parish Sunday Mass.

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<sup>3</sup> "On Sunday, baptism may be celebrated even during Mass, so that the entire community may be present and the necessary relationship between baptism and Eucharist may be clearly seen, but this should not be done too often." *Rite of Baptism for Children*, 9

- d. “It is appropriate that children receive their first Communion on one or other of the Sundays of Easter.” (from *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, 1988, 103.)<sup>4</sup>
- e. Norms already exist for the celebration of Masses with children that allow the special needs of children to be met within the context of the community celebration.<sup>5</sup>
- f. Home Masses are not permitted on Sundays or holy days of obligation. No Priest may celebrate a Mass in a home without the permission of the local Pastor. While permitted on occasion, regular celebrations of Mass in a home are forbidden.
- g. Mass may never be celebrated in a Funeral Home.

3. Is the Mass for the people (*pro populo*) still obligatory?

Yes. Canon 534 states that the Pastor is obliged to apply the Mass, either himself or through another, for the people entrusted to him each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. This Mass is to be celebrated as one of the regularly scheduled parish Masses and no stipend is to be taken.

4. Are funeral Masses permitted on Holy Days of Obligation?

No. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 380, “(Funeral Masses) may be celebrated on any day except for Solemnities that are Holy Days of Obligation, Thursday of Holy Week, the Paschal Triduum, and the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, with due regard also for all the other requirements of the norm of the law.” On these days the body of the deceased may be brought to the church and the Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass (OCF, 77) may be celebrated. A Mass should be offered for the deceased at a later time, even if the family cannot attend.

When the precept to attend Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation is abrogated, funeral Masses are permitted.

Pastors are to communicate this regulation to funeral directors and others involved in scheduling and planning funeral liturgies.

5. May Mass be celebrated in a nursing home, hospital, or prison?

Masses may be regularly scheduled in hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons for Sundays, holy days of obligation and weekdays. On Sundays and holy days of obligation, compliance with liturgical ministries (see the “Introduction” above) is

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<sup>4</sup> See *Liturgical Principles for Planning the First Communion of Children Baptized as Infants*, Archdiocese of Newark

<sup>5</sup> See *Directory for Masses with Children*

expected. These Masses are primarily permitted to serve the needs of the patients and residents of these institutions.

Staff are permitted to attend such Masses which, on Sundays and holy days of obligation, fulfill their obligation. Ordinarily, however, staff members should attend Mass in their own parishes.

The liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil may only be celebrated in a parish church (see 6 below).

6. May Masses be celebrated on Sundays in college and university campus chapels?

Yes. Campus Ministry ordinarily provides Masses on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation and weekdays for students and staff on or near campus. During the Easter Triduum, where these communities are small, they should comply with the following directions found in the *Roman Missal*, “The Sacred Paschal Triduum,” 2-3:

“The celebrations of the Sacred Triduum are to be carried out in cathedral and parochial churches and only in those churches in which they can be performed with dignity, that is, with a good attendance of the faithful, an appropriate number of ministers, and the means to sing at least some of the parts.

“Consequently, it is desirable that small communities, associations, and special groups of various kinds join together in these churches to carry out the sacred celebrations in a more noble manner.”

7. May a second Mass be scheduled in a language other than English on Saturday evening?

Yes. Parishes may schedule a second Mass on Saturday evenings to accommodate language needs in accordance with the Decree on the establishment or elimination of Ethnic Language Masses dated November 22, 2013 (see below). These Masses must comply with the above items, namely, they must be scheduled 90 minutes apart and require a full complement of liturgical ministers.

8. Any exception to these related questions is to be referred in writing to the Regional Bishop or Regional Vicar with copy sent to the Office of Divine Worship. The Regional Bishop or Regional Vicar will consult with the Archbishop for a final decision. Particular questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Office of Divine Worship.



**Most Reverend John Joseph Myers**  
By the Grace of God and the Favor of the Apostolic See  
Archbishop of Newark

**DECREE**

By this decree, I hereby promulgate the procedure in establishing or eliminating an Ethnic Language Mass in the Archdiocese of Newark.

1. The Pastor contacts the Regional Bishop/Vicar, Coordinator of Multi-Cultural Affairs and the Coordinator of the particular Language Ministry to discuss the need to establish or eliminate an ethnic Language Mass and ministry for a specific ethnic community in the parish.
2. The neighboring Pastors are consulted by either the Regional Bishop/Vicar, or the Dean, to determine if they could support the request, or if they would find difficulty with establishing or eliminating a Mass and ministry for a specific ethnic community in the parish.
3. Based on an affirmative response, the Pastor writes a letter to the Archbishop requesting permission to establish or eliminate a Mass and ministry for the ethnic community. If there are objections, the Coordinator of Multi-Cultural Affairs and the Coordinator of the ethnic ministry continue the discussions.
4. The Regional Bishop/Vicar writes a letter to the Archbishop in support of the Pastor's request. The letter is copied to the Vicar General, the Coordinator of Multi-Cultural Affairs and the requesting Pastor.
5. The Archbishop responds to the requesting Pastor with a letter granting permission to establish or eliminate the Language Mass for the ethnic community. The letter is copied to the Vicar General, the Regional Bishop/Vicar, and the Coordinator of Multi-Cultural Affairs.

Given at my Chancery the 22 day of November, 2013

  
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✠ Most Reverend John J. Myers  
Archbishop of Newark

Attest:

  
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Reverend Monsignor Michael A. Andreano  
Chancellor