

MIDLETON PARISH CHRISTMAS MASSES

Over the past few weeks, the priests of the parish, along with the parish council, have been giving considerable thought to the arrangements we should make for Christmas. Having discussed many options and possibilities, we have come to the following decisions. Before giving the details I would just like to outline the context.

- We are in the midst of a global pandemic, a once in a century event. Gatherings of any kind carry an increased risk of the virus spreading.
- At present there is no obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, Christmas Day, or any other day.
- Due to official restrictions, the number of people at any one Mass in Holy Rosary Church is restricted to 100, in two groups of 50.
- Last Christmas, between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, around 5,000 people attended Mass in the parish. Large numbers of people also came to Mass on the Sunday after Christmas, way more than the limit of 100 for each Mass.

The question then is, how, given the above, can we arrange our Christmas celebrations in the safest possible way for everyone?

Some parishes are implementing a ticket system, but are finding that demand is much higher than the number available. A lot are already booked out, leaving many people very disappointed. The difficulty we see with a ticket system is that it would exclude a large number of people, and would make a distinction between those who got a ticket, and those who didn't, for whatever reason. We believe it would also cause difficulties for our volunteer stewards, who might have to turn away people who turned up without a ticket. We would not want to create that kind of unpleasantness at the door of our church at Christmas. Similarly, outside speakers or screens still leave us with the problem of controlling numbers, and of people congregating before or after Mass.

To ensure the safety of the parishioners, and to allow everyone to have the same experience of Christmas, the following is our Christmas Mass schedule:

Monday December 21st – Wednesday 23rd: Masses at 8am, 10am, and 7.30pm with limit of 100 in two groups of 50

Thursday December 24th Christmas Eve : All Masses behind closed doors on parish television and internet only.

Mass at 8am and 10am

Church open for private prayer from 10.30am. Church closes at 4pm.

Childrens' Christmas Mass at 6.10pm

Midnight Mass at 9pm.

Friday December 25th Christmas Day: All Masses behind closed doors on parish television and internet only.

Mass at 8am, 10am

Church open after the 10am Mass for private prayer and visits to the crib.

Holy Communion will be available in the church up to 12.30pm. A queuing system will be in place, to ensure social distance.

Church closes at 5pm

Saturday December 26th: St Stephen's Day: All Masses behind closed doors on parish television and internet only.

Mass at 10am.

Church open for private prayer from 10.30 until 4pm

Vigil Mass at 6.10

Sunday December 27th: All Masses behind closed doors on parish television and internet only.

Mass at 8am, 10am, 12 noon.

Church open for private prayer after the 12 Mass,

Holy Communion available until 2.30pm.

Church closes at 5pm

Monday December 29 - Friday 2 January : Masses open to the public with limit of 100 in two groups of 50.

Mass at 10am, 7.30pm

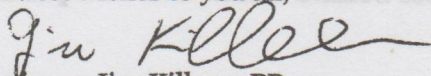
Masses at usual times from Saturday January 3rd onwards in line with Covid19 restrictions.

For many people, coming to Mass, receiving Communion, and visiting the crib are what makes Christmas for them. Whereas it won't be possible to do them all at the same time, we hope that by joining us on parish television or online and then coming to the church for communion on either Christmas Day or the Sunday, you will in some way have a meaningful Christmas experience. We have also put on extra evening Masses before and after Christmas weekend and we invite you to attend one of those.

This decision has not been taken lightly and I know that many people will be disappointed and some will be angry about it. We will all miss a normal Christmas, and we priests will miss it very much as well. What we are asking is that we sacrifice our traditions for this one year for everyone's health and safety.

Finally, I am happy to inform you a webcam is being installed in the church this week, and our Mass will be available on the internet from next weekend. Further details about this will be announced once they become available.

With best wishes to you all,


Monsignor Jim Killeen, PP