

What Are We Praying and Why?

One Christmas Feast – Three Christmas Masses

On only two days of the year there are three different Masses (sets of Mass prayers and scripture readings) that can all be celebrated. One is All Souls Day, on November 2nd, the other is Christmas. The three Christmas Masses are the Mass at midnight, Mass at dawn, and Mass during the day. The provision of three Masses for this one feast, and permission for priests to celebrate all three (the norm is only one Mass per day, except in cases of necessity, such as on Sunday when other priests are not available), highlight the central and foundational importance of the mystery celebrated, namely the mystery of our redemption itself. The focus of the Mass at midnight is how the darkness is scattered by the revelation of God's grace in the birth of the messiah; the Mass at dawn focuses on how the light of God's love for us takes on flesh as the Savior appears; the Mass during the day focuses on how God has spoken to us through his Son, the Word made flesh, revealing his saving love to all people. The Masses at midnight and dawn use Luke's account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, while the Mass during the day uses the opening chapter of St. John's gospel, which makes no reference to any of the historical details of Jesus' birth, but the eternal (that is – beyond the bounds of time) dimension of the meaning and message of Christmas. Are even three Masses enough?

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.

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