

# Do I have to go to Mass twice on Christmas Eve this year?

Copyright © Catholic Herald 2014. Posted Tuesday, 5 Dec 2017

Christmas Eve falls on the 4th Sunday of Advent this year. What does that mean for Mass attendance? As per usual, Catholics are obliged to attend Mass on a Sunday, but the following day is also a holyday of obligation.

This may all seem straightforward so far – why not just go to Mass on Sunday then again the following day? However, there is a big complication: vigil Masses. These Masses, which let you fulfil an obligation the evening before the feast day, are especially popular at Christmas. Many families with young children, for example, treat the Christmas Eve crib service as an annual tradition, thus keeping the following day free for all the other activities associated with Christmas

However, if those families go to a Christmas Eve vigil Mass this year, have they also fulfilled their Sunday obligation? The short answer is: no.

The Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales says that you *cannot* fulfil both the Sunday and Christmas obligations in just one Mass. They told the Catholic Herald:

The primary purpose of a holyday of obligation is to call the faithful to celebrate particular dimensions of the mysteries of Christ and His Church. Since obligation is attached to specific mysteries being celebrated, it is not possible to fulfil two obligations in one celebration.

So those who usually go to Mass on Sunday evening take note: if the evening Mass is for Christmas rather than the fourth Sunday of Advent, you have to go to a different Mass earlier in the day, or on Saturday evening.

Of course, there are all sorts of ways you can fulfil the obligations that weekend, depending on what your parish offers.

Here is a graphic to serve as a rough guide:



