



December 22, 2004 - Archdiocese of Boston Shares Schedule Information and Christmas Message from Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley

(Boston, Massachusetts) December 22, 2004...The Archdiocese of Boston today provided the following information concerning Archbishop Sean's schedule over the Christmas holiday. (Please note that the Archbishop will not be available for interviews at these activities and events.)

December 24 (In addition to the items listed, the Archbishop will be conducting private visits to various social service facilities in the Boston area.)

6:00 p.m. The Archbishop will celebrate a Christmas vigil mass for the Vietnamese community at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, 1400 Washington Street Boston.

Midnight Archbishop O'Malley will celebrate Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, 1400 Washington Street, Boston.

December 25

9:00 a.m. Archbishop O'Malley will celebrate a televised Christmas Mass from WHDH-TV studios.

10:30 a.m. The Archbishop will visit St. Francis House, 39 Boylston Street, Boston, and offer his holiday blessing to the men and women eating Christmas dinner. St. Francis House is New England's largest and most comprehensive daytime shelter, providing basic and emergency services, rehabilitative programs, job skills training and transitional housing for poor and homeless men and women in Boston.

In addition, the Archdiocese released Archbishop O'Malley's Christmas message to members of the Archdiocese of Boston:

Dearly beloved in Christ,

Saint Francis once reprimanded the Friars for fasting on Christmas. He said: "On Christmas even the walls should eat meat." My hope is that all of us will be filled with joy this Christmas. A joy that is born of the knowledge that our Lord loves us and wants to be close to us. All the holiday food, gifts and parties become tired exercises, indeed a parody, if we lose sight of the why of our celebrations.

One of the promotions for Christmas gifts says, "Give a gift that keeps giving." Gift cards and certificates, magazine subscriptions and similar things are included in this category. The Person who has given us a Gift that keeps giving is God. He has given us Christ at Christmas.

It is not by accident that Jesus is born in Bethlehem, which means the "House of Bread." Two thousand years later Christ is still being given to us at each celebration of the Eucharist. We draw near in our awe like the shepherds who went to the stable, we adore the Christ like the magi.

At every Mass Christ becomes little, vulnerable, commonplace, unthreatening. It is as Gandhi once remarked: "There is so much hunger in the world that God could appear only in the form of bread." The same Lord who comes to us in the form of a child, now comes to us as food. At the Presentation in the Temple Simeon rejoiced to receive the Christ Child into his arms; we rejoice to receive him in our hearts each time we receive Holy Communion.

At Christmas we look at the Baby Pictures and are filled with tenderness for our god who made Himself small and insignificant to be close to us. This Christ Child is today our Risen Lord who makes a gift of Himself to us each Mass as He feeds us with His Body and Blood.

The shepherds and the magi had the privilege of adoring the Christ Child in the manger which was a feed box that stored grain to feed the flock. Today each church has a manger which is the tabernacle where Christ our savior, the Bread that has come down from heaven, is waiting for our visit. This Eucharistic Year is an opportunity for us to refocus on this great gift that our Heavenly Father has given us. Like the shepherds we too must share the story with



others and invite our relatives, friends, and neighbors to join us on the journey of faith to Bethlehem, to the manger, to be part of a worshipping community that can rejoice in the great gift our God has given us, Christ the Lord, Emmanuel, God with us.

Be assured of my prayers for God's blessing on all of you and for peace in our world, in our communities, and in our hearts.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Boston

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