



## **December 22, 2005 - Archbishop's Schedule For December 24 & 25 Released; Text of Archbishop's Christmas Homily**

**BRIGHTON, MA** - The Archdiocese of Boston today provided the following information regarding Archbishop Sean O'Malley's Christmas Eve and Christmas Day schedule.

### **December 24 – Christmas Eve**

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 – Christmas Day**

7:00 a.m. Archbishop O'Malley will celebrate a televised Christmas Mass from WHDH-TV studios.

11:00 a.m. The Archbishop will visit St. Francis House, 39 Boylston Street, Boston, and offer his holiday blessing at their annual Christmas dinner.

*Additionally, the Archdiocese shared Archbishop O'Malley's Christmas Homily to members of the Archdiocese of Boston. He will deliver the attached Christmas message at Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross.*

### **ARCHBISHOP SEAN O'MALLEY'S 2005 CHRISTMAS HOMILY**

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

In some communist countries before the fall of the Iron Curtain, Christians resorted to saying the "Comrade has returned" to mean, "Christ is Risen." I hope that in our politically correct climate we will not be reduced to "Enjoy the Boss' Birthday" instead of "Merry Christmas."

Christmas is the center of our history. We calculate the date from Jesus' Birth 2005 years ago. For nonbelievers it is the year of the Common Era, but for us Catholics it must be unashamedly 2005 AD (anno Domini) the Year of the Lord. If we truly celebrate Christmas we will understand that God so loved the world that He sent us Jesus to be with us always, to be the Lord of History and the King of Hearts. Christmas is about God's love breaking into our world, a flash of light in a darkened sky.

When parents ask me how they can help their children understand Christmas I always urge them to take their children to the manger, to show them how Jesus was born in poverty and simplicity, to tell them that Jesus is God and Man and therefore we are now part of God's family. Teach your children the theology of Christmas reading the passages from Luke and Matthew's Gospels that describe Jesus' birth and then reflect with them on the words of the Christmas carols. The Christmas carols speak to us about the mysteries of the Incarnation, redemption and salvation in simple terms with great beauty.

The first Christmas carol was sung by the angels at Bethlehem and it is the basis of a prayer we often pray at Sunday Mass, the Gloria. Glory to God and peace on earth is the message. The two really go together. If we do not give glory to God by loving and obeying Him, our human relationships are not going to be what they should and we will not have peace. The destroyer of peace is selfishness and sin. Jesus came to establish true peace based on our relationship with God and with each other. The first Christmas carol was a preview of Jesus' program for a good life.

When I was Bishop in the Islands, we had a family whose name was Christmas. They had several children and, of course, could not pass up naming one of them "Mary Christmas." What a great name. For us Catholics it contains three of our greatest treasures: Christ in the center flanked by Mary, our Blessed Mother, and the Mass, the holy sacrifice and meal that gathers us as a family around Jesus who is born again in a manger, the altar, from which the flock is fed.



The best way to celebrate Christ's birthday is participating in Christ's Mass. It is Christ's Christmas gift to us. It is the gift that keeps on giving. A family needs to share together at the Lord's table, the Sunday Eucharist. It is then that we experience our spiritual family in the parish and where we are nourished by the Word of God and the Bread of Life. We do not go to Church to be entertained, but to worship God and to be reconnected with our Brothers and Sisters through Baptism. If we do not go to Sunday Mass we will wither up in a spiritual anorexia. Mass is about advancing Christ's program of Glory to God and peace on earth.

The other great truth of the Christmas story is the dark side. There was no room for Jesus in the Inn. "The light shone in the darkness and the darkness grasped it not." To escape the troops that Herod sent to destroy the Child, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt. Today there are many influences in our culture that are hostile to all that we hold sacred. There are forces that are ready to teach your children to be narcissistic, materialistic and "politically correct", but that will do little to prepare your children to commit themselves to their faith, their family and to the ideals of the Gospel and the teachings of Christ's Church. Each week many children spend as much time watching TV as they do in a classroom, as compared to two hours or so for CCD and Mass.

What elements will win their minds and hearts? It is impossible to isolate our children from all that surrounds them. We cannot build huge bubbles and lock them safely inside. It is, however, crucial to talk with your children about drugs, sex, alcohol, AIDS and abortion. They need to know that there is another way to live, and that God's way leads to love and happiness in this world and the next.

The manger scene also teaches something about what is truly important. The center is Christ. The center is a baby. The baby is surrounded by loving parents and not much else. The greatest thing a man can give his children is to love their mother. The greatest thing a mother can give her children is to love their father. The love of Mary and Joseph is the only treasure the Christ Child has. Being born in poverty and simplicity is God's way of speaking to us about what is truly important. Eisenhower used to say: "When I was young, we were very poor; but we didn't know it." He did not notice his family's poverty because there was so much love and joy in his home.

As you explain to your children that "there was no room at the Inn," teach them to have compassion for the homeless, the poor, the sick and the suffering. Teach them the need to share what we have received. When we do that, we are giving gifts to the Christ Child Himself. It might also be an opportunity to tell our children that success is not measured in money, but in goodness and love.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Sean P. O'Malley, OFM Cap  
Archbishop of Boston

Copyright © 2004-2006 Archdiocese of Boston; all rights reserved