

# **Dec. 25, Jan. 1 are holy days of obligation**

In the season celebrating Christ's birth, Catholics will have two holy days of obligation, Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Canon law requires Catholics to attend Mass Dec. 25 for Christmas and Jan. 1 for the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God - each falls on a Tuesday.

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, and the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God honors her role in bringing Christ to the world, said Father Ross M. Syracuse, O.F.M. Conv., pastor of St. Casimir, Canton. "It celebrates Mary's role in the whole mystery and history of salvation, and it celebrates her unique place in that whole mystery of the Incarnation."

According to the Code of Canon Law, Catholics can fulfill the holy day of obligation by attending the liturgy for the feast the evening before the scheduled date. In this case, Catholics may attend a Christmas vigil Mass the evening of Dec. 24 or the vigil Mass for the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God the evening of Dec. 31.

"In other words, you can't attend a funeral or wedding Mass on those dates and have it satisfy your holy day of obligation," said Monsignor Jeremiah F. Kenney, division director of the office for canonical affairs of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The Jan. 1 holy day of obligation was called the feast of Jesus' Circumcision, but Pope Paul VI changed it to Solemnity of Mary Mother of God following Vatican II to signify the end of the octave of Christmas.