

## *A WORD ABOUT 'MIDNIGHT MASS'...*

We've all heard the joke: "*What time is Midnight Mass?*" However, over the years, many churches have opted to have a Mass for Christmas earlier in the evening on Christmas Eve, and erroneously called it "*Midnight Mass.*" From a practical and logistical standpoint, it makes sense, as *Mass at Midnight* is difficult for all, especially since earlier Vigils are now allowed and Masses are also celebrated on Christmas morning. **A little historical perspective is in order:** *Mass at Midnight for Christmas dates back to the days before Vigil Masses were allowed and there was an all-day fast required on Christmas Eve.* Before Vigil Masses were allowed by Pope Paul VI in 1972, the earliest Mass for Christmas was at Midnight, technically Christmas Day. It was a much anticipated Mass, as it was considered the most beautiful liturgy of Christmas...and by then, *folks were really hungry!* Nevertheless, there remained a special formulary for "*Mass at Midnight*" in the Sacramentary of Pope Paul. **When the new Roman Missal was promulgated in 2010 this formulary was removed.** There is no longer a special formulary for "*Mass at Midnight*" since that time; it was replaced with "*Mass in the Night.*" Obviously, any Mass later than the normal Vigils could be considered "*Mass in the Night.*"

You may recall that Pope Benedict opted to celebrate "*Midnight Mass*" in Rome at 10 PM, Roman Time! I suppose as Pastor of the Universal Church, it was "*midnight somewhere!*" At that time he cited his age and the hardship it placed on others. It is no secret that the 4:00 PM Vigil on Christmas Eve is by far the most attended Mass of Christmas. And traditionally the number who attend 5:30 PM (*which we consider our "Children's Mass"*) is quite large, as is the 8:00 AM Mass on Christmas Day. While some of you *do* attend Mass at Midnight on Christmas, the numbers are not as they were many years ago.

With that being said, I announce that at St. Rita we will have **THREE** Masses on Christmas Eve: **4 PM Vigil, 5:30 PM Vigil** ("*Children's Mass*") and **8 PM "Mass in the Night."** This 8 PM Mass will have all the elements that we are used to at "*Midnight Mass*" and allow more to experience this beautiful liturgy and to enjoy the hard work and hours of preparation of our ministers, choir and musicians! ***THERE WILL BE NO MASS CELEBRATED AT MIDNIGHT ON CHRISTMAS AT ST. RITA.*** Masses on Christmas Day will be at *8 AM* and *9:30 AM*.

On behalf of our ministers, choir, musicians and clergy, I appreciate your understanding and support!

*–Fr. Craig Scott*