

Liturgical Living: The Nativity of Our Lord

Merry Christmas! While many people pack up the decorations on December 26, for Catholics the Christmas season is just beginning.

So, how long is Christmas? 8 days? 12 days? 40 days?

The short answer: The Christmas season begins with the vigil Mass on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (January 11 this year).

A more complicated answer:

*The Christmas Season begins with the Christmas Vigil Mass on the evening of Christmas Eve. The Roman Catholic church returns to green vestments (Ordinary time) the day after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. However, many churches and families celebrate until the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, which is February 2. The Vatican leaves up their tree and nativity until then. From December 25th to February 2nd is **40 days**.*

*Liturgically, we celebrate an octave of Christmas, which is **8 days**. The octave of Christmas ends on January 1, which is a holy day of obligation (the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.)*

*The Epiphany (when the kings show up to see Baby Jesus) is traditionally celebrated on January 6, but it gets moved to the closest Sunday in the United States. There are **12 days** from December 25th to January 5th that lead up to the traditional Epiphany. These days are referred to as the “12 days of Christmas”, but because the Epiphany moves around, there are rarely exactly 12 days.*

The richness of the liturgical Christmas season allows us to keep the Christmas spirit alive as we continue to celebrate. Here are some ideas:

- Read about the religious history of [The Twelve Days of Christmas](#) song
- Visit [this website](#) for activity ideas for each of the 12 Days of Christmas
- Play Christmas music – it’s still Christmas!
- Download a free printable packet of activities [here](#)
- Visit Our Lady of Fatima Shrine to enjoy the Christmas lights display
- Make a [traditional Christmas pudding](#) (this is really a cake)

Whether you celebrate the octave of Christmas, or the 12 days of Christmas, or carry the season right to the Presentation in February, we wish you a holy and happy Christmas season!