



St. Ignatius Catholic Church

Bi-Monthly English Bulletin

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026

THE “BER MONTHS” by Sr. Flor Florece, FI



My cousin, who grew up in the Philippines until the age of twelve before migrating to San Francisco, USA, sent me greetings with Santa Claus saying: **“It’s already September 1. MERRY CHRISTMAS!”** Strange, isn’t it? For Filipinos, September 1 marks the unofficial beginning of the Christmas season. Why? The **“BER months”** have arrived!

The linguistic expression refers to **September**, **October**, **November**, and **December**, the last four months of the calendar year, each ending in “-ber.” For many Filipinos, these four months bring a special change of mood—a growing sense of joy, anticipation, and hope as Christmas draws nearer. This beloved tradition continues to evoke memories of home, family, and the joyful spirit of Christmas, including for those living abroad.

A SEASON OF JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

Each of the BER months brings its own meaning. September marks the beginning of Christmas preparations. October often brings family gatherings, community events, and parish activities. November invites us to remember our departed loved ones through the observances of All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day. Finally, December brings Advent, Christmas celebrations, and the closing of another year.

For Catholics, however, it is important to distinguish this cultural tradition from the Church’s liturgical calendar. The BER months are not one continuous liturgical season; they **can become a meaningful time of preparation, gratitude, community, and joyful anticipation—a journey toward Advent and Christmas.** We are invited to rediscover the spiritual meaning of Christmas and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ (also see page 6).

THE COUNTDOWN IS ON!

We love countdowns, right? The days until Advent and Christmas seem to pass so quickly. But what are we really counting down to? Is it simply the day when we can decorate our homes, exchange gifts, enjoy festive meals, and celebrate with family and friends? Or can this countdown become a daily invitation to prepare our hearts for Jesus?

ADVENT IS COMING

Advent offers us a sacred opportunity to slow down and remember what Christmas truly means. The Son of God entered human history. The Word became flesh. The Saviour came to dwell among us. As the prophet Isaiah foretold: *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.”* (Isaiah 7:14)

THE COUNTDOWN ASKS US A QUESTION

If Christmas is approaching, is your heart ready to receive Christ?

Before decorating your home, prepare your soul.

Before planning the celebration, make time for prayer.

Before thinking about what you will receive, consider what you can give.

Before Christmas arrives, take time to return to God.

Let the coming weeks become a time of spiritual preparation.

Pray more intentionally. Read the Gospel. Pray the Rosary.

Participate in the Sacraments, including the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Forgive someone, reach out to someone who is struggling, and make peace where there is division. Above all, make room in your heart for Jesus.

The greatest gift of Christmas is not something placed beneath a tree.

It is Christ Himself.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

The countdown continues. Let us not allow these days to pass without growing closer to Christ. May the joy of the BER months lead us beyond the excitement of the season and into a deeper encounter with the One whose birth we celebrate. May our homes become places of prayer, our families communities of love, and our parish a welcoming family united in Christ. As we journey through the BER months toward Advent and Christmas, may our hearts be renewed in faith, strengthened in hope, and filled with love. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

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DID YOU KNOW?

St. Ignatius 2026 Christmas Mass Schedule - Part 1

St. Ignatius Church Christmas Mass 2026



✂No reservation is necessary for any of the Masses.

★Christmas Mass for Children and Families
(Sat.) December 19 at 3:00PM Main Church
【Japanese】

★Christmas Eve Mass (Thu.) December 24 *
Main Church
【Japanese】3:00PM/5:00PM/7:00PM
【English】9:00PM
Auditorium, Bld. No. 10, Sophia University
【Vietnamese】5:00PM/7:30PM

★Christmas Mass (Fri.) December 25
Main Church
【Japanese】7:00AM/8:30AM/10:00AM/6:00PM
【English】12:00PM
【Spanish】1:30PM
【Vietnamese】3:00PM
St. Mary's Chapel
【Polish】3:00PM



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THE CATHOLIC FAITH

THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE BEFORE AND AFTER MASS

WHAT IF THE MOST POWERFUL PRAYER YOU OFFER AT MASS IS SILENCE?

Many Catholics arrive at Mass and immediately begin conversations. Others leave the church the moment Mass ends and continue talking as though nothing sacred has just happened. But there is something deeply beautiful about remaining silent before and after Holy Mass.

Silence is not emptiness.

Silence is an opportunity to listen to God.

BEFORE MASS: PREPARE YOUR HEART

The moments before Mass are not merely waiting time. They are preparation.

When you enter the church, you are entering a sacred space where the Eucharistic Lord is present in the tabernacle.

Instead of immediately talking with friends, scrolling through your phone, or discussing ordinary matters, take a few moments to become recollected.

Kneel or sit quietly.

Make the Sign of the Cross.

Ask God to remove distractions from your heart.

Examine your conscience.

Thank him for allowing you to be present.

You can simply pray:

"Lord Jesus, I am here. Help me to worship you with my whole heart."

That short prayer can completely change the way you participate in Mass.

SILENCE HELPS US RECOGNIZE WHOSE PRESENCE WE ARE ENTERING

Imagine being invited to meet someone you deeply love and respect.

You would probably prepare yourself before the meeting.

The Mass is infinitely greater.

We are not simply attending another gathering.

We are coming before God.

The Church therefore encourages moments of sacred silence so that the faithful may prepare themselves for the mysteries they are about to celebrate.

Silence disposes the heart to prayer.

DURING MASS: LEARN TO LISTEN

Silence is not only important before Mass.

There are also moments of silence within the celebration itself.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal teaches that sacred silence is part of the celebration and that its purpose depends on the moment of the Mass.

There is silence during moments of recollection, after the readings and the homily, and especially after Holy Communion.

These moments allow us to reflect on what we have heard and what we have received.

God does not always speak through noise.

Sometimes he speaks in the silence of a heart that has finally become still.

AFTER HOLY COMMUNION: DON'T RUSH AWAY

This is particularly important.

You have just received Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

The King of Heaven has come to you.

Why immediately begin chatting?

Why rush to check your phone?

Why leave without giving him even a few moments of thanksgiving?

Remain quietly with Jesus.

Thank him.

Tell him what is in your heart.

Ask him for the grace you need.

You do not need complicated words.

Sometimes simply saying: "Jesus, thank you for coming to me" is a beautiful prayer.



AFTER MASS: LET THE GRACE SINK IN

When the final blessing is given, the Mass has ended, but your relationship with Christ has not.

If circumstances permit, remaining for a few moments of personal thanksgiving can be spiritually fruitful.

Think about what you have just celebrated.

Think about the Scripture you heard.

Think about the homily.

Think about receiving Christ in Holy Communion.

Ask yourself: "What is Jesus asking me to change?"

"What grace am I taking home?"

"How will I live differently because I have encountered Christ?"

This turns Mass from something we merely attend into something that transforms our lives.

THE DEEPER TRUTH

Silence before Mass prepares us to encounter Christ.

Silence after Communion helps us remain with Christ.

Silence after Mass allows the grace of the celebration to settle deeply within us.

Of course, the church is also a place of fellowship, and there are appropriate moments for greeting one another and speaking with friends. But we should distinguish between fellowship and unnecessary noise, especially when others are praying. A Catholic church is not simply a meeting hall. It is a place of worship.

So the next time you enter church, try something different.

Arrive a little earlier.

Put away your phone.

Say less. Pray more.

And after Mass, resist the temptation to rush immediately into ordinary conversation.

Give Jesus a few moments of your undivided attention.

You may discover that the silence you once considered uncomfortable becomes one of the most beautiful parts of your prayer.

SAY THIS TODAY

"Lord Jesus, teach me to become silent enough to hear you, humble enough to receive you, and faithful enough to carry you with me when I leave the church. Amen."

[Source: Ignatius Catholicum](#)

ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

"The main building of St. Ignatius church is built on 12 pillars. These 12 pillars represent the 12 disciples of Jesus, whom Jesus chose from various social and cultural backgrounds. In the same way, our St. Ignatius community is also made up of communities with various backgrounds and languages. Each community is important just as each pillar is important for the church building. Just as each pillar adds to its aesthetic beauty and structural strength, each community in St. Ignatius adds beauty and strength to our parish."

(Excerpt from the Homily of Fr. Bony James, SJ, during FAMILY DAY MASS)

Sharing Life, Faith and Mission in the "BER" Months

SEPTEMBER

English Sunday School Opening (September 6)

Around 50 children and their parents attended the Sunday School orientation. This year, we adopted the parish theme, *"Journeying Together as One Community towards Jesus."* Here are some photos from that day!



General Orientation – English Sunday School Group



Parents' Orientation – Sunday School
Teens' Group

Blood Donation Drive (September 20)

Held at St. Joseph Hall and conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Red Cross Blood Center, the drive had 114 participants: 66% Vietnamese, 29% Japanese, and 5% others. Interestingly, women outnumbered men among the donors! Donated blood is processed into blood products that help treat patients with cancer, leukemia, and other illnesses, as well as those injured in accidents. Heartfelt thanks to all our donors for their generosity!



EMHC Formation Session

Formation Course for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) (Sept. 20)

Four candidates from India, the Philippines, and Thailand have begun their formation alongside current EMHCs. The team of formators consists of Fr. Bony James, SJ, Sr. Flor Floreice, FI, and Adelfa Armentia, TA. Held every two years, this year's course theme is "Called to Serve Christ and His People: Renewing our Faith, Reverence and Ministry in the Eucharist." The new candidates are expected to be commissioned during the Easter season of 2027.

Myanmar International Mass (Sept. 20)

St. Ignatius continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar in their struggle for peace and justice. An exhibit in the church foyer highlighted their plight, while prayer pamphlets invited the faithful to pray for the country. Father Leo Schumacher of Tsukiji Parish presided, joined by two Myanmar priests. He recalled how, in 1997, then-Archbishop



Myanmar International Mass

Seiichi Shirayanagi entrusted him with the pastoral care of Myanmar. Since then, Tsukiji Church has embraced Myanmar as its "sister church." Many Myanmar nationals come to St. Ignatius and actively participate in our events.

Jesuit Ordination (September 12)

The Japanese Province of the Society of Jesus welcomed a new priest, Fr. Nithin Lisbon Coelho, SJ, missionary to Japan from Karnataka, India.

Cardinal Archbishop Tarcisius Kikuchi ordained him at St. Ignatius Church, surrounded by family members, formators, and fellow Jesuits who gathered to share in this joyful occasion. We warmly welcome Fr. Nithin to our St. Ignatius community!



Fr. Nithin Ordination

Donation Drives: Sharing Hope Beyond Our Borders (Sept. & Oct.)

Our massgoers once again showed remarkable generosity in response to devastating earthquakes. The Indonesia Earthquake Relief Collection (September 26-27) raised ¥774,000, channeled through the Sisters of the Sacred Heart to assist residents of Flores Island.

The Nepal Earthquake Relief Collection (October 10-11) raised ¥742,233, which was sent through Caritas Nepal.

Even amid successive appeals for help, our parishioners continue to be "cheerful givers." Thank you for reaching beyond our borders to bring hope and support to our brothers and sisters in need!

ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

Sharing Life, Faith and Mission in the "BER" Months

OCTOBER

Tokyo Youth Day (October 3)

SIIYM (St. Ignatius International Youth Ministry) participants joined young people from various language groups, including Indonesian, Myanmar, and Vietnamese communities, for the Tokyo Youth Day. After a talk by Auxiliary Bishop Andrea Lembo at Kanda Church, they walked to Tokyo Cathedral for Mass and served as choir members. In preparation for the World Youth Day in South Korea next year, a Korean bishop and several Korean priests joined the celebration.



Tokyo Youth Day @ St. Mary's Cathedral

Living Rosary (October 18)

With the theme "Journeying as One Community towards Jesus," this year's Living Rosary beautifully expressed our parish's journey of faith and unity. Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Way, Patroness of the Society of Jesus, the celebration began with a procession led by Fr. Saturnino Ochoa, SJ, carrying her image. The hymn "Santa Maria del Camino" was sung in Spanish, English, Japanese, and Portuguese, while the Rosary was prayed in these four languages, as well as in Burmese and Tagalog. What a beautiful way to celebrate the Month of the Rosary and experience synodality as we journey together in prayer as one community towards Jesus!



Living Rosary at the Church Lawn

All Saints' Day

Just as we have been doing for several years, Sunday School children dressed as their favorite saints and carried images of saints in procession during Mass, offering a joyful Christian alternative to Halloween. This year, the Angels' Group also joined the celebration.



Family Day – Children's Activity



Family Day – Reading Session



Family Day – Vietnamese Group



Family Day – Spanish Group

Family Day (October 4)

It was the first joint Family Day celebration among the parish's language groups. The goal was to build connections among families from various language groups and to foster friendships among children and teens from different Sunday Schools (Japanese, English, Vietnamese, Spanish, etc.). About 75 children participated, not counting their families. The fun day consisted of performances, games, and a reading activity for the smaller ones. It culminated in a Mass where the celebrants delivered their homilies in their own language.

Church Festival (October 25)

It was a joyful day of faith, friendship, and fellowship! The celebration began with an International Mass, bringing us together as one family in Christ. The Food Court offered a delicious variety of dishes from various countries, while the afternoon Program delighted everyone with music, dance, and cultural performances that reflected the richness and diversity of our parish community. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Parish Council, the coordinators of the various language groups, and all the volunteers who generously shared their time, talents, and energy to make this celebration a success.



Living Rosary joined by 5 Language Groups



NOVEMBER

SPECIAL FEATURE

LET US NOT SKIP ADVENT!

by Sr. Flor Florece, F.I.

As the year draws to a close, Japan's streets begin to sparkle with Christmas illuminations. Shopping malls display Christmas trees, shops offer special sales, and Christmas songs fill the air. Even before December arrives, the Christmas spirit seems to be everywhere!

For many, Christmas means shopping and exchanging gifts, enjoying festive meals, and gathering with family and friends. For migrants living in Japan, it may also be a time of longing for loved ones back home and missing familiar family traditions.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying these celebrations. However, as Catholics, we are invited to look beyond the commercial excitement and rediscover the deeper meaning of Christmas. One way to do this is to understand and follow the Liturgical Calendar of the Catholic Church.

What Is the Liturgical Calendar?

The Liturgical Calendar guides us through the life of Jesus Christ throughout the year. Each season (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time) has its own spiritual meaning and invites us to deepen our relationship with Christ; it helps us remember God's saving love; it is a continuing journey towards him and an invitation to grow in faith. This year, Advent begins on November 29 and ends on December 24, Christmas Eve. Christmas season begins on December 25 and ends on January 10.

Advent Comes Before Christmas

The word Advent comes from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival." During Advent, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. We also renew our hope in Christ, who comes into our lives today and will come again in glory. Advent is a season of hope, prayer, conversion, and joyful expectation. It is not simply a countdown to Christmas Day.



Christmas illumination



Lighting of Advent Candle

of daily life. Instead of preparing only our homes and celebrations, we are called to prepare our hearts for Jesus.

For migrants living far from their homeland, Advent can be especially meaningful. Some cannot return home for Christmas. Others face loneliness, financial difficulties, demanding work schedules, or the challenges of living in a different language and culture.

Advent reminds us that God comes to meet us wherever we are. Jesus was born in humble circumstances, bringing hope to people in every situation. We do not have to wait until our lives are perfect to welcome him.

As a parish community, we can make Advent a time of drawing closer to one another. A simple greeting, an invitation to a parish activity, a visit to someone alone, or a prayer for loved ones far away can become an expression of Christ's love.

Let Us Prepare for Christ

The Advent wreath, with its candles gradually lighted each Sunday, reminds us that we are journeying toward the celebration of Christ's birth. Each candle invites us to renew our hope and prepare our hearts.

This year, let us not be so busy preparing for Christmas that we forget to prepare for Christ. Let us journey through Advent with hope, so that when Christmas arrives, we may welcome Jesus not only into our homes but also into our hearts and our community.

What to look forward to...

International Mass (Indonesian Group, November 15)
SIITYM Retreat (November 21-23)
Christmas Bazaar (November 29)
Novena to St. Francis Xavier (November 24 - December 2)
Feast of St. Francis Xavier (December 3)

Installation of Young Couples' Group (December 6) during Family Mass
Distribution of the Christmas Supplementary Issue of the English Bulletin (December 20)
JdBEC End-of-Year Retreat (December 31)

St. Ignatius 2026 Christmas Mass Schedule - Part 2

Christmas Mass

✠ We are delighted to celebrate the birth of our Lord with you once again this year.
Please find this year's Christmas Mass schedule below.

【Mass Schedule】

(Sat.) December 19 Christmas Mass for Children and Families

- 3:00PM ~

(Thu.) December 24 Christmas Eve Mass

- 3:00PM ~ (Ticket Distribution Time 2:00PM)(Thu.)
- 5:00PM ~ (Ticket Distribution Time 4:00PM)
- 7:00PM ~ Candlelight Service (Ticket Distribution 6:00PM)
✧ Livestream available
- 9:00PM ~ (English) (Ticket Distribution Time 7:15PM)

(Fri.) December 25 Christmas Mass

- 7:00AM ~
- 8:30AM ~
- 10:00AM ~
- 12:00PM ~ (English)
- 1:30PM ~ (Spanish)
- 3:00PM ~ (Vietnamese)
- 6:00PM ~

♪ Carolling ♪
12/24 5:00PM ~ Before and
after each Mass
12/25 12:00PM ~ After
English Mass

(Fri.) December 25
St. Mary's Chapel
3:00PM ~ (Polish)

(Fri.) December 25

Auditorium, Bld. No. 10, Sophia
University

【Vietnamese】5:00PM/7:30PM



【Entry and Capacity】

No reservation is necessary for any of the Masses.

However, numbered tickets will be distributed on December 24 for both the Japanese and English Christmas Eve Masses.

Tickets are expected to be distributed starting one hour before the Japanese Mass and one hour and 45 minutes before the English Mass.

1. Main Church — Capacity: 900

Please note that a seat may not be available for everyone.)

1. St. Mary's Chapel — Capacity: 180

Mass will be livestreamed; Holy Communion will be available.

2. St. Joseph Hall (English Mass only) — Capacity: 200

Mass will be livestreamed; Holy Communion will be available.

✧ Once a venue reaches capacity, you may attend Mass in front of the Main Church .

Thank you for your understanding.

【Advance Registration for Elderly People and Those Requiring Mobility or Seating Assistance】

Advance registration is available for the **3:00PM. and 5:00PM. Masses on December 24** for people aged **80 or over**, wheelchair users, and anyone who needs assistance with mobility or seating.

- Anyone requiring assistance may register **one companion** at the same time.
- Registered attendees will be seated in a designated area. **Specific seats cannot be reserved.**

⇒⇒ **Advance registration will be open from Tuesday, December 1, through Sunday, December 13.** Please fill out a form available beside the parish office and place it in the designated box. Forms may also be submitted by someone on your behalf. Registration is not on a first-come, first-served basis.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Schedule of Masses & Confessions

WEEKDAYS: All in Japanese, Main Church

7:00 AM	Weekday Masses
12:00 NN / 6:00 PM	Weekday Masses
12:00 NN	Saturday Mass
6:00 PM	Anticipated Sunday Mass

SUNDAYS:

Main Church

7:00 AM / 8:30 AM / 10:00 AM / 6:00 PM	Japanese Mass
12:00 NN English Mass	1:30 PM Spanish Mass
3:00 PM Vietnamese Mass	

Masses at Our Lady's Chapel

1 st Sunday 1 :30 PM (Portuguese)	4:00 PM (Polish)
2 nd and 4 th Sunday: 4:30 PM (Indonesian)	

ANTICIPATED SUNDAY MASSES (SATURDAYS)

5:30 PM – English (St. Mary's Chapel)
6:00 PM – Japanese (Main Church)

CONFESSION

Weekday/Saturday	17:30 – 18:30
Sunday: Japanese	9:30 – 10:30 and 17:30 – 18:30
English	11:30 – 12:30
Spanish	13:00 – 14:00

Staff of St. Ignatius Church

Pastor: Fr. Toshiaki Koso S.J.

Associate and Support Priest:

Fr. Saturnino Ochoa S.J.
Fr. Bony James S.J.
Fr. Nguyễn Văn The S.J.
Fr. Joseph Nguyễn Thanh Nhã, SJ

Fr. Kiyoshi Shibata S.J.
Fr. Javier Garralda S.J.
Fr. Etsuo Sekine S.J.
Fr. Sozo Tsukurimichi SJ
Sch. Antonio Soares S.J.

Centro Loyola:

Sr. Catalina Padilla Bautista, M.C.

Vietnamese Center:

Sr. Rosanna Ngoc Tuyen D.H.M

John de Britto English Center:

Fr. Bony James S.J.
Sr. Flor Florece F.I.
Jessie Buendia NDV

Director
Coordinator
Coordinator

POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

November: For the proper use of wealth

Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that, not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service of the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

December: For single-parent families

Let us pray for families experiencing the absence of a mother or father, that they may find support and accompaniment in the Church, and help and strength in the faith during difficult times.

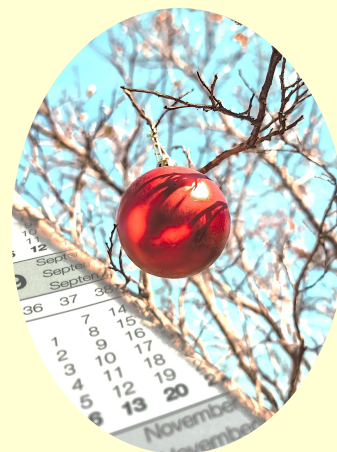
ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH
WEBSITE & FACEBOOK PAGE



Come, Lord Jesus!

*Christmas is not simply
something we celebrate.*

*It is Someone
we welcome.*



Thank you!

To all those who
made this bi-monthly
Bulletin possible, our
deepest gratitude
and appreciation.
God bless!!!