News 24 November 2026 | English article

Pope Leo XIV Christmas Masses: Midnight Mass Starts at 10pm

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"We praise you, O God"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Pope Leo XIV will celebrate Christmas Eve Mass at 10pm on Thursday 24 December 2026 in St Peter's Basilica, followed by Christmas Day Mass at 10am on Friday 25 December and the Urbi et Orbi blessing from the Central Loggia at noon. The full schedule for the Christmas season was released on Tuesday 24 November by the Vatican's Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff.

There is a weight to this Christmas that last year's did not carry, and everyone in Rome knows why.

Only weeks ago, Pope Leo underwent surgery to remove lung cancer, and he has spent the autumn recovering, travelling, and returning to a full schedule that included a twelve-day tour of South America. When he stands in St Peter's Basilica on New Year's Eve to sing the Te Deum, the ancient hymn of thanksgiving for the blessings of the year, he will be singing it as a man who has walked through a year that nearly took him.

That is not a detail in the schedule. It is the heart of it. The Christmas Eve Mass, known as the Mass during the Night and still called Midnight Mass by most Catholics, will begin at 10pm, as it has for years, even though the name suggests midnight.

It is the most watched Mass of the year, broadcast around the world, and it is the moment when the Church marks the birth of Christ in the dark of the night, with the basilica lit by candles and the choir singing in the dark. The Pope will celebrate it in St Peter's Basilica, and the crowds outside in the square will follow it on the big screens.

On Christmas morning, the Pope will return to the basilica for Mass of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord at 10am. The Christmas Day Mass is a custom Pope Leo revived, one no pope had kept since the time of John Paul II, and its return says something about how this Pope understands Christmas.

It is not a single night, but a whole day of celebration, with the morning Mass as its centre. At noon, he will step onto the Central Loggia, the balcony above the main doors, to give the Urbi et Orbi blessing, to the city and to the world.

Pope Leo Christmas Schedule: Te Deum And New Year Mass

The Solemnity of Mary, the Most Holy Mother of God, will begin with the celebration of First Vespers at 5pm in the evening of 31 December, with the singing of the Te Deum in thanksgiving for the blessings of 2026. The next morning, at 10am, the Holy Father will celebrate Holy Mass for the Solemnity, again in St Peter's Basilica.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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