

Holy Days of Obligation

In the Catholic Church, the Holy Days of Obligation are the days, other than Sundays, on which the faithful are required to attend Mass. These are indicated below by **HDO**. Please note that there have been some changes to these for this year.

All Saints - Nov 1 HDO

The feast of All Saints, (also known as “All Hallow’s Day” or “Hallowmas”), is the day set aside by the Church to honour all the saints, those who are known and those who are unknown.

The earliest form of All Saints was first celebrated in the 300s, but originally took place on 13 May, as it still does in some Eastern Churches. The Feast first commemorated only the martyrs, but came to include all of the Saints by 741. It was transferred to 1 November in 844 when Pope Gregory III consecrated a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica to All Saints.

All Souls - Nov 2

The feast of All Souls is the day set aside by the Church to remember all those faithful who have died.

From noon on the feast of All Saints till midnight on the feast of All Souls person who has been to confession and Communion can gain a plenary indulgence for the poor souls in Purgatory each time they visits a church or public oratory and recites the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory be to the Father six times.

The idea behind this is that the souls of those who have died, if they are not perfectly cleansed of their sins or fully atoned for past transgression will go to purgatory where until they are cleansed or have atoned fully. They can be helped in this process by the prayers and deeds of the faithful on earth. The feast of All Souls is the day of the year when the faithful are encouraged to remember and pray for their loved ones who may need help in purgatory.

Christ the King – Changeable Date

The feast of the Christ the King always falls on the last Sunday before the start of Advent and marks the end of the liturgical year. The feast proclaims how Jesus Christ is royalty above people, communities, nations, and governments.

The feast reminds us that Christ is God, Christ is our Redeemer, and Christ is Head of the Church. We also learn that Christ's kingdom is for everybody who wants to be with Him, and it's endless. In recent years the feast has also been linked with World Youth Sunday on which the young people of the Church are encouraged to take a more active role in the services.

Advent - Changeable Date

This marks the traditional beginning of the liturgical year. It begins four Sundays prior to Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas with a focus on the expectation for the coming of Jesus. The preparation traditionally takes the form of fasting, cleansing and prayer.

Immaculate Conception - Dec 8

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is generally a Holy Day of Obligation in most countries with Catholicism is predominant, although not a Holy Day of Obligation in England and Wales.

The Feast celebrates the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The Immaculate Conception is a Roman Catholic doctrine which asserts that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was preserved by God from the stain of original sin at the time of her own conception and furthermore lived a life completely free from sin.

Christmas - Dec 25 HDO

Christmas celebrates the Birth of Jesus and is celebrated on 25th December. Historically 25th December was only adopted in the fourth century as a Christian holiday by the Roman Emperor Constantine, to encourage a common religious festival for both the Christians and the Pagans.

In predominantly Christian countries, Christmas has become the most economically significant holiday of the year, and it is also celebrated as a secular holiday in many countries with small Christian populations.

Typically begins with a worship service or a Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve (December 24) and ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after January 6.

"Christmas" is a contraction of "Christ's Mass", derived from the Old English *Cristes mæsse*. It is often abbreviated Xmas, probably because X or Xt have often been used as a contraction for "Christ" ("X" resembles the Greek letter X (Chi), the first letter of "Christ" in Greek (Χριστός [Christos])).

Epiphany - Changeable Date

The Feast of the Epiphany is a Christian feast intended to celebrate the 'shining forth' or revelation of God to mankind in human form, in the person of Jesus. The feast originally included the birth of Jesus; the visit of the three Magi, (Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) who arrived in Bethlehem; and all of Jesus' childhood events, up to his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The feast now commonly ends the Christmas season and focuses on the visit of the Magi.

Baptism of our Lord - Changeable Date

This feast celebrates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan and is celebrated by Mass on the first Sunday after the Epiphany.

Shrove Tuesday - Changeable Date

Shrove Tuesday is the English name for the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, which in turn marks the beginning of Lent. In many Catholic countries this is the last day of Carnival. In some places it is Mardi Gras, French for "Fat Tuesday"; the most famous celebration under this name is New Orleans Mardi Gras.

The origin of the name Shrove lies in the verb "to shrive" which means to absolve people of their sins. It was common in the Middle Ages for "shrovers" (priests) to hear people's confessions at this time, to prepare them for Lent.

Ash Wednesday – Changeable Date

Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent. Masses are traditionally held on this day at which attendees are blessed with ashes by the priest celebrating the Mass. The priest marks the forehead of each participant with black ashes, traditionally in the shape of a cross, leaving a mark that the worshipper traditionally leaves on his or her forehead until sundown, before washing it off. The minister says "Remember, man, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Often these Ash Wednesday ashes are made by burning Palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations and mixing them with olive oil as a fixative. Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and abstinence, and the ashes are considered sacramental.

Lent – Changeable Date

Lent covers the forty days before Easter not including Sundays, starting with Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter Saturday and is the period of preparation for the events of Holy Week and Easter.

Traditionally during this period, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are permitted to consume only one full meal, which many be supplemented by two smaller meals, which together should not equal the full meal. This is practiced every day of Lent until noon on Holy Saturday. Nowadays some people give up something they enjoy doing a lot, and often to give the time or money spent doing that thing to charitable purposes or organisations.

Annunciation - Mar 25

The Annunciation to Mary, mother of Jesus, is the pronouncement by the archangel Gabriel that she would conceive a child to be born the Son of God. The Christian churches celebrate this feast on 25th March, which is nine months before the feast of the Nativity of Jesus, or Christmas.

Palm Sunday - Changeable Date

Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Easter, and is a celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in the days before his execution.

In ancient times, the palm branch was a symbol of triumph and victory. It was also a custom in all lands to cover, in some way, the path of someone thought worthy of the highest honour. Consequently, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd greeted him by waving palm leaves, and carpeting his path with them, thereby giving the day its name.

On Palm Sunday palm leaves (or in colder climates some kind of substitutes) are blessed outside the church building and a procession enters, singing, re-enacting the entry into Jerusalem. These palms are saved in many churches to be burned later as the source of ashes used in Ash Wednesday services.

Maundy Thursday - Changeable Date

In the Christian calendar, Holy Thursday (also called Maundy Thursday) is the Thursday before Easter, the day on which the Last Supper occurred.

The word *Maundy*, context, derives from Latin *mandatum novum do vobis* "a new commandment I give unto you" Love one another as I have loved you", words spoken by Jesus to the Apostles after washing their feet in preparation for the Last Supper.

Catholic celebrations of the feast focus on Mass, during which there is a washing of feet by the Priest, as well as Mass ending with an Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as a reminder that it was at the Last Supper that Jesus instituted the Eucharist or Holy Communion.

Good Friday - Changeable Date

Good Friday is celebrated on the Friday before Easter, it commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus at Calvary. Many Christian churches view Christ's crucifixion as a voluntary and victorious act, and one by which, along with his resurrection on the third day, death itself was conquered.

Catholics treat this day as a fast day. Catholics also refrain from more than one normal meal, though they may add up to two small meals as required for good health.

This day is also the only day that the Mass is not celebrated in those churches. Catholics, however, can still receive the Eucharist consecrated the previous day at the Holy Thursday Mass.

Catholic Good Friday services include readings from Scripture, including a reading of the Passion account from the Gospel of John which is often read dramatically, with the priest, one or more readers, and the congregation all taking part. A crucifix is presented, with the people given an opportunity to venerate it. The services also include a long series of formal intercessions known as the Good Friday Prayer.

Easter - Changeable Date

Easter is the most important religious holiday of the Christian liturgical year, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead after his death by crucifixion, which Christians believe happened at about this time of year around AD 30-33. Easter can also refer to the season of the church year, lasting for fifty days, which follows this holiday and ends around Pentecost.

Roman Catholic celebration begins on the night of Holy Saturday with the Paschal Vigil. This, the most important liturgy of the year, begins in total darkness with the blessing of the Easter fire, the lighting of the large Paschal candle (symbolic of the Risen Christ) and the chanting of the Exsultet or Easter Proclamation. After this service of light, a number of readings from the Old Testament are read; these tell the stories of creation, the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the foretold coming of the Messiah. This part of the service climaxes with the singing of the Alleluia and the proclamation of the gospel of the resurrection. A sermon may be preached after the gospel. Then the focus moves from the lectern to the font. Anciently, Easter was considered the most perfect time to receive baptism, and this practice is being revived in some circles. Whether there are baptisms at this point or not, it is traditional for the congregation to renew the vows of their baptismal faith. This act is often sealed by the sprinkling of the congregation with holy water from the font. The Easter Vigil concludes with the celebration of the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

Additional celebrations are usually offered on Easter Sunday itself. Some churches prefer to keep this vigil very early on the Sunday morning instead of the Saturday night to reflect the gospel account of the women coming to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. Some churches read the Old Testament lessons before the procession of the Paschal candle, and then read the gospel immediately after the Exsultet.

Ascension - Changeable Date

The Ascension is one of the great feasts in the Christian liturgical calendar, and commemorates the bodily Ascension of Jesus into Heaven forty days after his resurrection from the dead. The event is recorded in the New Testament in Acts 1:

Pentecost – Changeable Date

Pentecost is the Christian festival that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, fifty days after the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter, and ten days after the Ascension. It is also known in English, especially in Britain, as Whitsun (Whitsunday), because of the white robes traditionally worn this day by those newly baptized on the previous Easter.

Trinity Sunday - Changeable Date

Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost. Trinity Sunday celebrates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the three persons of God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday also represents the beginning of the Church part of the liturgical year, continuing until Advent, where green vestments are worn by Roman Catholic celebrants.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council it also marked the end of a three week period of the year when Weddings were not allowed to happen, the only such time in the Church Calendar.

Corpus Christi - June 10

Corpus Christi (Latin: Body of Christ) in Catholicism is a religious feast celebrated by Roman Catholics on the eighth Thursday after Easter, i.e. 53 days after Easter, to commemorate the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The day of Corpus Christi is a national holiday in some Catholic countries.

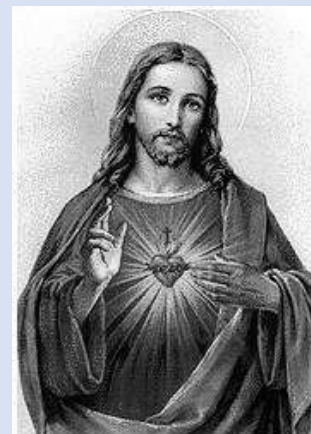
Initially, the institution of the Eucharist was celebrated on Holy Thursday. However, this always takes place during Holy Week, a time of sadness for Christians during which meditation is aimed principally at the passion and suffering of Christ, thus it was moved to the current location.

Sacred Heart of Jesus - Changeable Date

The Feast of the Sacred Heart falls 19 days after Pentecost, on a Friday. The Mass celebrated on this day is essentially a restatement of Good Friday, but a regular Mass is conducted when this is not done on Good Friday itself. In addition, white vestments are worn for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, in contrast to the red vestments pressed into service on Good Friday.

The Sacred Heart is a devotional name used by some Roman Catholics to refer to the physical Heart of Jesus as a symbol of Divine Love. The Sacred Heart in focusing on Christ's heart metaphorically emotional and moral life of Jesus and especially his love for also stresses the central Catholic concept of loving Jesus.

In the image, Christ's heart is shown containing wounds to which pointing, including a crown of thorns. This "wounded heart" is symbolize Christ's hurt at the rejection of his message by humanity.



Catholics to Devotion to focuses on the humanity. It

Jesus is meant to In including

the "crown of thorns", it alludes to the manner of his death, which is further highlighted by the inclusion of crucifixion wounds on Christ's hands. Thus the Christ of the image is of a post-resurrection Jesus speaking to humanity, not the pre-crucifixion Jesus of the Gospels.

St Peter and St Paul - June 29 HDO

The Feast of St Peter and St Paul is set aside to commemorate the contributions of St Peter and St Paul to Christianity, and is celebrated on 29th June each year.

Saint Peter, also known as Simon Peter, Cephas - original name Simon or Simeon (Acts 15:14)—was one of the twelve original disciples or apostles of Jesus whose life was prominently featured in the New Testament Gospels. A Galilean fisherman, he was called into service by Jesus with his brother Andrew. Peter was one of the few disciples marked exclusively for a special leadership role by Jesus (Matt. 16:18; John 21:15-16), a post that he indeed held for much of the early Church. He is considered a saint and the first Pope in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Liturgy of the Hours records 29th June AD 69 as his date of death. He is believed to have been sentenced to death by crucifixion by the Roman Empire. According to tradition, Saint Peter is buried in the grottoes underneath the Basilica of Saint Peter in Vatican City. He is often depicted in art as holding the keys to the gates of heaven, as prescribed in the Gospel of Matthew.

Paul of Tarsus (originally Saul of Tarsus or Paulus), also known as Saint Paul the Apostle, (ce. 3–67) is widely considered to be central to the early development and adoption of Christianity. Many Christians view him as an important interpreter of the teachings of Jesus. Paul is described in the New Testament as a Hellenized Jew and Roman citizen from Tarsus (present-day Turkey), and as a great persecutor of Christians prior to his conversion to the religion. He made the first great efforts through his Epistles to Gentile communities to show that the God of Abraham is for all people, rather than for Jews only.

Assumption - Aug 15 HDO

According to Roman Catholic theology and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, the body and soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Mary, the mother of Jesus) was taken into Heaven after the end of her earthly life. Mary's passage into heaven is called Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Roman Catholics.

The Assumption is important to many Catholics as the Virgin Mary's heavenly birthday (the day that Mary was received into heaven). Her acceptance into the glory of heaven is seen by them as the symbol of the promise made by Jesus to all enduring Christians that they too will be received into paradise. The Feast of the Assumption is a Public Holiday in many countries, including France, Italy, and Spain. In many places, religious parades, and popular festivals are held to celebrate this day.