

Liturgical Calendar Notes

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The Easter Vigil

The first Mass of Easter, the Easter Vigil, falls between nightfall of Holy Saturday and daybreak of Easter Sunday. The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, no 21, states:

The Easter Vigil, during the holy night when Christ rose from the dead, ranks as the “mother of all vigils.” Keeping watch, the Church awaits Christ’s resurrection and celebrates it in the sacraments. Accordingly, the entire celebration of this vigil should take place at night, that is, it should either begin after nightfall or end before the dawn of Sunday.

Individual parishes can check the following website to determine nightfall in their area: http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.html On this website, nightfall is listed as “End civil twilight.”

Holy Days of Obligation

On December 13, 1991 the members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America made the following general decree concerning holy days of obligation for Latin rite Catholics:

In addition to Sunday, the days to be observed as holy days of obligation in the Latin Rite dioceses of the United States of America, in conformity with canon 1246, are as follows:

- January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
- Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, the solemnity of the Ascension (*observed on the 7th Sunday of Easter in Kentucky Dioceses*)
- August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- November 1, the solemnity of All Saints
- December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
- December 25, the solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Whenever January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, or August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption, or November 1, the solemnity of All Saints, falls on a Saturday or on a Monday, the precept to attend Mass is abrogated.

January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

This feast, closely connected to the feast of Christmas, is the most important and oldest of the major feasts of Mary. Mary's Divine Maternity became a universal feast in 1931. Liturgical reform initiated by Vatican II placed it on January 1 in 1969. Prior to this, this feast celebrated on January 1 was the circumcision of Jesus.

As a conference, the U.S. bishops decided, with Vatican approval given July 4, 1992, that when the solemnities of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1), the Assumption (August 15) or All Saints (November 1) fall on a Saturday or Monday, it is not an obligation to attend Mass for these feasts.

Although the obligation to attend when these three holy days fall on a Saturday or Monday is abolished, parishes are to continue to observe these Holy Days by scheduling one or more Masses at a convenient time so that people who wish to participate are able to do so.

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, the solemnity of the Ascension

This feast is celebrated the fortieth day after Easter Sunday and commemorates the elevation of Jesus into heaven by his own power in the presence of his disciples. It is narrated in Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, and in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

In 2000, the Catholic bishops of Kentucky transferred the Feast of the Ascension to the seventh Sunday of Easter, one week before Pentecost Sunday. The Vatican, at the request of the bishops of the United States, granted permission for the date change, giving ecclesiastical provinces in the United States the authority to make the transfer. Observing the Ascension on the seventh Sunday of Easter allows for heightened celebration and an increased opportunity to educate people about the meaning of the feast.

August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This is the principal feast of Mary. It has a double purpose: first, the happy departure of Mary from this life and second, the assumption of her body into heaven.

Little for certain is known about the day, year and manner of Mary's death. The dates assigned for it vary between three and fifteen years after Jesus' Ascension.

November 1, the solemnity of All Saints

This feast honors all the saints, known and unknown.

This feast was first celebrated on May 13, 610, when Pope Boniface IV proclaimed the day Feast of All Holy Martyrs in Rome. The intent was to honor all martyrs who were not included in local records. In 835, Pope Gregory IV changed the date and name to November 1 and Feast of All Saints. A fall date allowed people to celebrate with food from the fall harvest.

December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

The Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the belief that God preserved Mary from any inclination to sin, the inheritance of original sin passed on to all mankind from Adam and Eve.

The feast of the Conception of Mary appeared in the Roman calendar in 1476. After the dogmatic definition by Pope Pius IX in 1854, it became the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

December 25, the solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

This feast, one of the two major feasts of the liturgical year, celebrates the birth of Jesus.

Special Celebrations for Dioceses and Parishes

Feast of the Dedication of the Cathedral

In addition to celebrations in the General Roman Calendar, dioceses and parishes have their own proper celebrations. The patron saint of a parish should be celebrated as a solemnity in that parish and, if it falls in Ordinary Time, may be transferred to the nearest Sunday. The anniversary of the dedication of a parish should also be celebrated as a solemnity in that parish. The anniversary of the dedication of its cathedral in a given diocese is observed as a feast day by all parishes in that diocese (it is observed as a solemnity by the Cathedral parish). (The anniversary of the dedication of St. Stephen Cathedral is **September 6**. This date should be celebrated as a feast in all parishes of the Diocese of Owensboro.)

Rogation Days

The traditional Major Rogation Day is April 25. Parishes are encouraged to observe this date (or as an alternative, the Feast of St. Isidore on May 15) as a day to pray for the Spring planting. One possibility for this would be to bless the seeds, or to send home contains of holy water that farmers/gardeners can use to bless their seeds at home. A sample prayer service follows on the next page:

Rogation Day Prayer Service

Pastor: Today we seek God's blessing on these seeds and the crops they will produce. Christ reminds that, unless the seed is planted in the earth and dies, it will not yield fruit. As these seeds grow and are cared for, may they be signs of the new life that comes from God.

Scripture Readings:

any number of the following may be used:

- **Genesis 1:27-31** "Creation"
- **Isaiah 55:10-13** "God gives seed to the one who sows."
- **1 Corinthians 15:35-39** "The seed you sow does not germinate unless it dies."
- **2 Corinthians 9:6-10** "God will increase the harvest."
- **Matthew 13:31-32** "Parable of the mustard seed."
- **Mark 4:26-29** "The seed and the kingdom of God."
- **Luke 12:16-21** "Be rich in what matters to God."
- **John 12:23-25** "Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies....."

Then one of the following Psalms may be used:

- **Psalm 126**
- **Psalm 65: 1-2, 9-10, 11-12, 13**

Prayer of Blessing:

A small, token amount of seed can be held in a glass container during the blessing.

Pastor:

Lord of the harvest, You placed the gifts of creation in our hands and called us to till the earth and make it fruitful.

We ask your blessing as we prepare to place these seeds (seedlings) in the earth. May the care we show these seeds (seedlings) remind us of your tender love for your people.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

or

Eternal Father, maker of heaven and earth, we bless you and give you glory.

Bless (+) this seed, and make it fruitful.

*Look upon our work this season,
and grant that the seeds we plant*

*will produce plentiful crops,
providing food and work for many.*

In your love, give us favorable weather

throughout this growing season. Make us truly grateful for all our gifts and willing to share our goods and talents with others, especially those without adequate food.

All praise and glory are yours, almighty Father

through you Son, Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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