

The Church Calendar

The calendar of the Roman Church consists of an arrangement throughout the year of a series of liturgical seasons, commemorations of divine mysteries and commemorations of saints for purposes of worship.

The key to the calendar is the central celebration of the Easter Triduum, commemorating the supreme saving act of Jesus in his death and resurrection to which all other observances and acts of worship are related.

The purposes of this calendar were outlined in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Nos. 102-105) promulgated by the Second Vatican Council.

“Within the cycle of a year ... (the Church) unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, not only from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, but also as reflected in the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of a blessed, hoped-for return of the Lord.

“Recalling thus the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of her Lord’s powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present at all times, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold of them and become filled with saving grace (No. 102).

“In celebrating this annual cycle of Christ’s mysteries, holy Church honors with special love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God” (No. 103).

“The Church has also included in the annual cycle days devoted to the memory of the martyrs and the other saints (who) sing God’s perfect praise in heaven and offer prayers for us. By celebrating the passage of these saints from earth to heaven the Church proclaims the paschal mystery as achieved in the saints who have suffered and been glorified with Christ; she proposes them to the faithful as examples who draw all to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she pleads for God’s favors (No. 104).

“In the various seasons of the year and according to her traditional discipline, the Church completes the formation of the faithful by means of pious practices for soul and body, by instruction, prayer, and works of penance and mercy (No. 105).”

The Roman Calendar

Norms for a revised calendar for the Western Church as decreed by the Second Vatican Council were approved by Paul VI in the *motu proprio Mysterii Paschalis* dated Feb. 14, 1969. The revised calendar was promulgated a month later by a decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and went into effect Jan. 1, 1970, with provisional modifications. Full implementation of all its parts was delayed in 1970 and 1971, pending the completion of work on related liturgical texts. The U.S. bishops ordered the calendar into effect for 1972.

The Seasons

Advent: The liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent, which introduces a season of four weeks or slightly less duration with the theme of expectation of the coming of Christ. During the first two weeks, the final coming of Christ as Lord and Judge at the end of the world is the focus of attention. From Dec. 17 to 24, the emphasis shifts to anticipation of the celebration of his Nativity on the solemnity of Christmas.

Advent has four Sundays. Since the 10th century, the first Sunday has marked the beginning of the liturgical year in the Western Church. In the Middle Ages, a kind of pre-Christmas fast was in vogue during the season.

Christmas Season: The Christmas season begins with the vigil of Christmas and lasts until the Sunday after Jan. 6, inclusive.

The period between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent belongs to the ordinary time of the year. Of variable length, the pre-Lenten phase of this season includes what were formerly called the Sundays after Epiphany and the suppressed Sundays of Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima.

Lent: The penitential season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which occurs between Feb. 4 and Mar. 11, depending on the date of Easter, and lasts until the Mass of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Thursday). It has six Sundays. The sixth Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week and is known as Passion (formerly called Palm) Sunday.

The origin of Lenten observances dates back to the fourth century or earlier.

Easter Triduum: The Easter Triduum begins with evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper and ends with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday.

Easter Season: The Easter season whose theme is resurrection from sin to the life of grace, lasts for 50 days, from Easter to Pentecost. Easter, the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox, occurs between Mar. 22 and Apr. 25. The terminal phase of the Easter season, between the solemnities of the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost, stresses anticipation of the coming and action of the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Time: The season of Ordinary Time begins on Monday (or Tuesday if the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on that Monday) after the Sunday following Jan. 6 and continues until the day before Ash Wednesday, inclusive. It begins again on the Monday after Pentecost and ends on the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent. It consists of 33 or 34 weeks. The last Sunday is celebrated as the Solemnity of Christ the King. The overall purpose of the season is to elaborate the themes of salvation history.

The various liturgical seasons are characterized in part by the scriptural readings and Mass prayers assigned to each of them. During Advent, for exam-

ple, the readings are messianic; during the Easter season, from the Acts of the Apostles, chronicling the Resurrection and the original proclamation of Christ by the Apostles, and from the Gospel of John; during Lent, baptismal and penitential passages. Mass prayers reflect the meaning and purpose of the various seasons.

Commemorations of Saints

The commemorations of saints are celebrated concurrently with the liturgical seasons and feasts of our Lord. Their purpose is to illustrate the paschal mysteries as reflected in the lives of saints, to honor them as heroes of holiness, and to appeal for their intercession.

In line with revised regulations, some former feasts were either abolished or relegated to observance in particular places by local option for one of two reasons: (1) lack of sufficient historical evidence for observance of the feasts; or, (2) lack of universal significance.

The commemoration of a saint, as a general rule, is observed on the day of death (*dies natalis*, day of birth to glory with God in heaven). Exceptions to this rule include the feasts of St. John the Baptist, who is honored on the day of his birth; Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen; and the brother Saints, Cyril and Methodius, who are commemorated in joint feasts. Application of this general rule in the revised calendar resulted in date changes of some observances.

Sundays and Other Holy Days

Sunday is the original Christian feast day and holy day of obligation because of the unusually significant events of salvation history which took place and are commemorated on the first day of the week viz., the Resurrection of Christ, the key event of his life and the fundamental fact of Christianity; and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. The transfer of observance of the Lord's Day from the Sabbath to Sunday was made in apostolic times. The Mass and Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office) of each Sunday reflect the themes and set the tones of the various liturgical seasons.

Holy days of obligation are special occasions on which Catholics who have reached the age of reason are seriously obliged, as on Sundays, to assist at Mass: they are also to refrain from work and involvement with business that impedes participation in divine worship and the enjoyment of appropriate rest and relaxation.

The holy days of obligation observed in the U.S. are: Christmas, the Nativity of Jesus, Dec. 25; Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, Jan. 1; Ascension of the Lord; Assumption of Blessed Mary the Virgin, Aug. 15; All Saints' Day, Nov. 1; Immaculate Conception of Blessed Mary the Virgin, Dec. 8.

The precept to attend Mass is abrogated in the U.S. whenever the Solemnity of Mary, the Assumption, or All Saints falls on a Saturday or Monday (1991 decree of U.S. bishops; approved by Holy See July 4, 1992, and effective Jan. 1, 1993).

In addition to these, there are four other holy days of obligation prescribed in the general law of the Church which are not so observed in the U.S.: Epiphany, Jan. 6; St. Joseph, Mar. 19; Corpus

Christi; Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29. The solemnities of Epiphany and Corpus Christi are transferred to a Sunday in countries where they are not observed as holy days of obligation.

Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials

Categories of observances according to dignity and manner of observance are: solemnities, principal days in the calendar (observance begins with Evening Prayer I of the preceding day; some have their own vigil Mass); feasts (celebrated within the limits of the natural day); obligatory memorials (celebrated throughout the Church); optional memorials (observable by choice).

Fixed observances are those that are regularly celebrated on the same calendar day each year.

Movable observances are those that are not observed on the same calendar day each year. Examples of these are Easter (the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox), Ascension (40 days after Easter), Pentecost (50 days after Easter), Trinity Sunday (first after Pentecost), Christ the King (last Sunday of the liturgical year).

Weekdays, Days of Prayer

Weekdays are those on which no proper feast or vigil is celebrated in the Mass or Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office). On such days, the Mass may be that of the preceding Sunday, which expresses the liturgical spirit of the season, an optional memorial, a votive Mass, or a Mass for the dead. weekdays of Advent and Lent are in a special category of their own.

Days of Prayer: Dioceses, at times to be designated by local bishops, should observe "days or periods of prayer for the fruits of the earth, prayer for human rights and equality, prayer for world justice and peace, and penitential observance outside of Lent." So stated the Instruction on Particular Calendars (No. 331) issued by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship June 24, 1970.

These days are contemporary equivalents of what were formerly called ember and rogation days.

Ember days originated at Rome about the fifth century, probably as Christian replacements for seasonal festivals of agrarian cults. They were observances of penance, thanksgiving, and petition for divine blessing on the various seasons; they also were occasions of special prayer for clergy to be ordained. These days were observed four times a year.

Rogation days originated in France about the fifth century. They were penitential in character and also occasions of prayer for a bountiful harvest and protection against evil.

Days and Times of Penance

Fridays throughout the year and the season of Lent are penitential times.

Abstinence: Catholics in the U.S., from the age of 14 throughout life, are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday. The law forbids the use of meat, but not of eggs, the products of milk or condiments made of animal fat. Permissible are soup flavored with meat, meat gravy and sauces. The obligation to abstain from meat is not in force on days celebrated as solemnities (e.g., Christmas, Sacred Heart).

Fasting: Catholics in the U.S., from the day after their 18th birthday to the day after their 59th birthday, are also obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The law allows only one full meal a day, but does not prohibit the taking of some food in the morning and evening, observing as far as quantity and quality are concerned approved local custom. The order of meals is optional, i.e., the full meal may be taken in the evening instead of at midday. Also: (1) The combined quantity of food taken at the two lighter meals should not exceed the quantity taken at the full meal; (2) The drinking of ordinary liquids does not break the fast.

Obligation: There is a general obligation to do penance for sins committed and for the remission of punishment resulting from sin. Substantial observance of fasting and abstinence, prescribed for the community of the Church, is a matter of serious obligation; it allows, however, for alternate ways of doing penance (e.g., works of charity, prayer and prayer-related practices, almsgiving).

Readings at Mass

Scriptural readings for Masses on Sundays and holy days are indicated under the appropriate dates in the calendar pages for the year 2012-13. The Year B cycle is prescribed for Sunday Masses in liturgical year 2012, from the start of Advent on Nov. 27, 2011. In Year B, most of the Gospel readings are from the Gospel of Mark. The Year C cycle is prescribed for Sunday Masses in liturgical year 2013.

The Year II cycle is prescribed for 2012, from Nov. 27, 2011. The Year I cycle was prescribed for 2011.

Monthly Prayer Intentions

Intentions chosen and recommended by Pope Benedict XVI to the prayers of the faithful and circulated by the Apostleship of Prayer are given for each month of the calendar. Pope John Paul II expressed his desire that all Catholics make these intentions their own "in the certainty of being united with the Holy Father and praying according to his intentions and desires."

Celebrations in U.S. Particular Calendar

The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, issued in 1969 and published along with the General Roman Calendar for the Universal Church, noted that the calendar consists of the General Roman Calendar used by the entire Church and of particular calendars used in particular churches (nations or dioceses) or in families of religious.

The particular calendar for the U.S. contains the following celebrations. **January:** 4, Elizabeth Ann Seton; 5, John Neumann; 6, André Bessette. **March:** 3, Katharine Drexel. **May:** 10, Damien DeVeuster; 15, Isidore the Farmer. **July:** 1, Bl. Junipero Serra; 4, Independence Day; 14, Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha. **August:** 18, Jane Frances de Chantal. **September:** 9, Peter Claver. **October:** 6, Bl. Marie-Rose Durocher; 19, Isaac Jogues and John de Brébeuf and Companions; 20, Paul of the Cross. **November:** 13, Frances Xavier Cabrini; 18, Rose Philippine Duchesne; 23, Bl. Miguel Agustin Pro; fourth Thursday, Thanksgiving Day. **December:** 9, Juan Diego; 12, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

2012 CALENDAR

January 2012

General: That the victims of natural disasters may receive the spiritual and material comfort they need to rebuild their lives.

Missionary: That the dedication of Christians to peace may bear witness to the name of Christ before all men and women of good will.

1 Sun. Octave of Christmas; Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God; (Nm 6:22-27; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21).

2 Mon. Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzus, bishops and doctors of the Church; memorial.

3 Tues. Christmas Weekday. Most Holy Name of Jesus.

4 Weds. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious; memorial.

5 Thurs. St. John Neumann, bishop; memorial.

6 Fri. Christmas Weekday. St. André Bessette, religious; optional memorial.

7 Sat. Christmas Weekday. St. Raymond of Peñafort, priest; optional memorial.

8 Sun. Epiphany of Our Lord; solemnity. (Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3a,5-6; Mt 2:1-12).

9 Mon. Baptism of the Lord; feast. (Is 42:1-4,6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Mk 1:7-11).

10 Tues. Weekday (First Week in Ordinary Time).

11 Weds. Weekday.

12 Thurs. Weekday.

13 Fri. Weekday. St. Hilary, bishop-doctor; optional memorial.

14 Sat. Weekday. Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday.

15 Sun. Second Sunday in Ordinary Time. (1 Sm 3: 3b-10, 19; 1 Cor 6: 13c-15a, 17-20; Jn 1:35-42.)

16 Mon. Weekday.

17 Tues. St. Anthony, abbot; memorial.

18 Wed. Weekday. Prayer for Christian Unity Wk. begins.

19 Thurs. Weekday.

20 Fri. Weekday. St. Fabian, pope-martyr; St. Sebastian, martyr; optional memorials.

21 Sat. St. Agnes, virgin and martyr; memorial.

22 Sun. Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Jon 3: 1-5, 10; 1 Cor 7: 29-31; Mk 1: 14-20.)

23 Mon. Weekday. DAY OF PENANCE.

24 Tues. St. Francis de Sales, bishop-doctor; memorial.

25 Weds. Conversion of St. Paul, apostle; feast.

26 Thurs. Sts. Timothy and Titus; memorial

27 Fri. Weekday. St. Angela Merici, virgin; optional memorial.

28 Sat. St. Thomas Aquinas, priest-doctor; memorial.

29 Sun. Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Dt 18: 15-20; 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mk 1:21-28.)

30 Mon. Weekday.

31 Tue. St. John Bosco, priest; memorial.

Observances:

The year begins with the Solemnity of the Mother of God, and the papal message for the World Day of Peace, Jan. 1; customary ordination of bishops by the Holy Father in Rome on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Jan. 6. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Jan. 18-25; National Prayer Vigil for Life and March for Life in Washington, DC, in connection with the 1973 Roe vs Wade and Dole vs Bolton pro-abortion decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, Jan. 21-22. The Day of Penance on Jan. 23 is recommended by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for violations committed through acts of abortion.

February 2012

General: That all peoples may have access to water and other resources needed for daily life.

Missionary: That the Lord may sustain the efforts of health workers assisting the sick and elderly in the world's poorest regions.

1 Weds. Weekday.

2 Thurs. Presentation of the Lord, feast (Mal 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2: 22-40).

3 Fri. Weekday. St. Blaise, bishop-martyr; St. Ansgar, bishop; optional memorial.

4 Sat. Weekday.

5 Sun. Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Job 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Cor 9:16-19,22-23; Mk 1:29-39).

6 Mon. St. Paul Miki & companions, martyrs; memorial.

7 Tue. Weekday.

8 Wed. Weekday. St. Jerome Emiliani, priest; Josephine Bakhita, virgin; optional memorial.

9 Thurs. Weekday.

10 Fri. St. Scholastica, virgin; memorial.

11 Sat. Weekday. Our Lady of Lourdes; optional memorial.

12 Sun. Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Lev 13: 1-2,44-46; 1 Cor 10:31-11:1; Mk 1:40-45).

13 Mon. Weekday.

14 Tues. Sts. Cyril, monk, and Methodius, bishop; memorial.

15 Wed. Weekday.

16 Thurs. Weekday.

17 Fri. Weekday. Seven Holy Founders of the Order of Servites; optional memorial.

18 Sat. Weekday.

19 Sun. Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Is 43: 18-19, 21-22, 24b-25; 2 Cor 1:18-22; Mk 2: 1-12.)

20 Mon. Weekday.

21 Tue. Weekday. St. Peter Damian, bishop-doctor; optional memorial.

22 Wed. Ash Wednesday (Jl 2:12-18; 2 Cor 5: 20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6,16-18). Fast and Abstinence.

23 Thurs. Thursday after Ash Wednesday. St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr; optional memorial.

24 Fri. Friday after Ash Wednesday. Abstinence.

25 Sat. Saturday after Ash Wednesday.

26 Sun. First Sunday of Lent (Gen 9:8-15; 1 Pt 3: 18-22; Mk 1:12-15).

27 Mon. Lenten Weekday.

28 Tue. Lenten Weekday

29 Wed. Lenten Weekday

Observances:

The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple is also the traditional day for the blessings of candles that will be used throughout the year and it is World Day for Consecrated Life. Optional memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes (Feb. 11), also the World Day of the Sick, a day of prayer, healing and anointing of those who are ill.

The Lenten Season begins Ash Wednesday (Feb. 22). Ashes are blessed and imposed on foreheads of the faithful to remind them of their obligation to do penance for sins and seek spiritual renewal by means of prayer, fasting, and good works. Also, with patience and confidence in Divine Providence, Catholics are called to endure trials and sufferings of everyday life. And Catholics are reminded of the serious obligation to fast and abstain on those appointed days during Lent.

March 2012

General: That the whole world may recognize the contribution of women to the development of society.

Missionary: That the Holy Spirit may grant perseverance to those who suffer discrimination, persecution, or death for the name of Christ, particularly in Asia.

- 1 Thurs. Lenten Weekday.
- 2 Fri. Lenten Weekday. Abstinence.
- 3 Sat. Lenten Weekday. St. Katherine Drexel, virgin; optional memorial.
- 4 Sun. Second Sunday of Lent (Gn 22:1-2a,9a, 10-13,15-18; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10).
- 5 Mon. Lenten Weekday.
- 6 Tues. Lenten Weekday.
- 7 Weds. Lenten Weekday. Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs; optional memorial.
- 8 Thurs. Lenten Weekday. St. John of God, religious; optional memorial.
- 9 Fri. Lenten Weekday. Abstinence. St. Francis of Rome, religious; optional memorial.
- 10 Sat. Lenten Weekday.
- 11 Sun. Third Sunday of Lent (Ex 20:1-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; Jn 2:13-25).
- 12 Mon. Lenten Weekday.
- 13 Tues. Lenten Weekday.
- 14 Weds. Lenten Weekday.
- 15 Thurs. Lenten Weekday.
- 16 Fri. Lenten Weekday. Abstinence.
- 17 Sat. Lenten Weekday. St. Patrick, bishop; optional memorial.
- 18 Sun. Fourth Sunday of Lent (2 Chr 36:14-16; 19-23; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21).
- 19 Mon. St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary; solemnity (Sam 7:4-5a,12-14a,16; Rom 4:13,16-18,22; Mt 1:16,18-21,24a or Lk 2:41-51a).
- 20 Tues. Lenten Weekday.
- 21 Weds. Lenten Weekday.
- 22 Thurs. Lenten Weekday.
- 23 Fri. Lenten Weekday. Abstinence. St. Turibius, bishop; optional memorial.
- 24 Sat. Lenten Weekday.
- 25 Sun. Fifth Sunday of Lent (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33).
- 26 Mon. Annunciation of the Lord; solemnity (Is 7:10-14,8:10; Heb 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38).
- 27 Tues. Lenten Weekday.
- 28 Weds. Lenten Weekday.
- 29 Thurs. Lenten Weekday.
- 30 Fri. Lenten Weekday. Abstinence
- 31 Sat. Lenten Weekday.

Observances:

The Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of Mary, is observed March 19. The Solemnity of the Annunciation is observed March 25. During the Lenten season these are the only two solemnities observed. It is normative for these two great solemnities to be celebrated during the Lenten season and both solemnities provide wonderful reflection on the divine providence that serves to prepare the faithful for the celebration of our Lord's Paschal Mystery.

April 2012

General: That many young people hear the call of Christ and follow him in the priesthood and religious life.

Missionary: That the risen Christ may be a sign of certain hope for the men and women of the African continent.

- 1 Sun. Palm Sunday of the The Lord's Passion (Mk 11:1-10 or Jn 12:12-16/Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1-15:47).
 - 2 Mon. Monday of Holy Week.
 - 3 Tues. Tuesday of Holy Week.
 - 4 Weds. Wednesday of Holy Week.
 - 5 Thurs. Holy Thursday. Chrism Mass in the Morning. The Easter Triduum begins with evening Mass of the Lord's Supper.
 - 6 Fri. Good Friday. The Lord's Passion. Fast & Abstinence.
 - 7 Sat. Holy Saturday. Easter Vigil.
 - 8 Sun. Easter Sunday: Resurrection of the Lord; solemnity (Acts 10:34a,37-43; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6b-8; Jn 20:1-9 or Mt 28:1-10 or [at afternoon or evening Mass Lk 24:13-15]).
 - 9 Mon. Easter Monday; solemnity.
 - 10 Tue. Easter Tuesday; solemnity.
 - 11 Weds. Easter Wednesday; solemnity.
 - 12 Thurs. Easter Thursday; solemnity.
 - 13 Fri. Easter Friday; solemnity
 - 14 Sat. Easter Saturday; solemnity
 - 15 Sun. Second Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday. (Acts 4:32-35; 1 Jn 5:1-6; Jn 20:19-31).
 - 16 Mon. Easter Weekday.
 - 17 Tues. Easter Weekday.
 - 18 Weds. Easter Weekday.
 - 19 Thurs. Easter Weekday.
 - 20 Fri. Easter Weekday.
 - 21 Sat. Easter Weekday. St. Anselm; optional memorial.
 - 22 Sun. Third Sunday of Easter. (Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 Jn 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48).
 - 23 Mon. Easter Weekday. St. George; St. Adalbert; optional memorials
 - 24 Tues. Easter Weekday. St. Fidelis, priest; optional memorial.
 - 25 Weds. St. Mark, Evangelist, feast.
 - 26 Thurs. Easter Weekday.
 - 27 Fri. Easter Weekday.
 - 28 Sat. Easter Weekday. St. Peter Chanel, priest-martyr; St. Louis Mary de Montfort; optional memorials.
 - 29 Sun. Fourth Sunday of Easter (Acts 4:8-12; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Jn 10:11-18). World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
 - 30 Mon. Easter Weekday. St. Pius V, pope; optional memorial.
- Observances:** Holy Week: Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) begins these most solemn celebrations of the Church Year, the Church blesses and distributes palms commemorating our Lord's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem and the Passion is read for the first time during Holy Week. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week are preparatory days leading to the Sacred Triduum. The Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening. Good Friday commemorates the Passion of Jesus. Holy Saturday evening begins the Easter Vigil which includes the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word recounting salvation history, the Liturgy of Baptism and Christian Initiation. Easter Sunday is the day when the Holy Father delivers the traditional *Urbi et Orbi* address, to the City of Rome and to the World. At the exhortation of Blessed John Paul II, the Second Sunday of Easter is also Divine Mercy Sunday.

May 2012

General: General: That initiatives which defend and uphold the role of the family may be promoted within society.

Missionary: That Mary, Queen of the World and Star of Evangelization, may accompany all missionaries in proclaiming her Son Jesus.

- 1 Tues. Easter Weekday. St. Joseph, the Worker; memorial
- 2 Weds. St. Athanasius, bishop-doctor; memorial.
- 3 Thurs. Sts. Philip and James, apostles; feast.
- 4 Fri. Easter Weekday.
- 5 Sat. Easter Weekday.
- 6 Sun. Fifth Sunday of Easter (Acts 9:26-31; 1 Jn 3:18-24; Jn 15:1-8).
- 7 Mon. Easter Weekday.
- 8 Tues. Easter Weekday.
- 9 Weds. Easter Weekday.
- 10 Thurs. Easter Weekday. St. Damien Joseph deVeuster of Molokai, priest; optional memorial.
- 11 Fri. Easter Weekday.
- 12 Sat. Easter Weekday. Sts. Nereus and Achilleus, martyrs; St. Pancras, martyr; optional memorials.
- 13 Sun. Sixth Sunday of Easter (Acts 10:25-26,34-35, 44-48; 1 Jn 4:7-10; Jn 15:9-17).
- 14 Mon. St. Matthias, apostle; feast.
- 15 Tues. Easter Weekday. St. Isidore the Farmer; optional memorial.
- 16 Weds. Easter Weekday.
- 17 Thurs. Ascension of our Lord; solemnity. Holy Day of Obligation (Acts 1:1-11; Eph 4:1-13; Mk 16:15-20).
- 18 Fri. Easter Weekday. St. John I, pope and martyr; optional memorial.
- 19 Sat. Easter Weekday.
- 20 Sun. Seventh Sunday of Easter (Acts 1:15-17,20a,20c-26; 1 Jn 4:11-16; Jn 17:11b-19).
- 21 Mon. Easter Weekday. St. Christopher Magallanes and companions, martyrs; optional memorial.
- 22 Tues. Easter Weekday. St. Rita of Cascia, religious; optional memorial.
- 23 Weds. Easter Weekday.
- 24 Thurs. Easter Weekday.
- 25 Fri. Easter Weekday. St. Bede; St. Gregory VII; St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi; optional memorials.
- 26 Sat. Philip Neri, priest; memorial
- 27 Sun. Pentecost; solemnity (Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor 12:3b-7,12-13; or Gal 5:16-25; Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15: 26-27; 16:12-15).
- 28 Mon. Weekday.
- 29 Tues. Weekday.
- 30 Weds. Weekday.
- 31 Thurs. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; feast.

Observances: The month of May begins with the celebration of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1 reminding society of the dignity of work dedicated to the honor and glory of God. The feast of Sts. Philip and James, May 3. The Solemnity of the Ascension celebrated May 17 (transferred to Sunday in some dioceses) is a Holy Day of Obligation. The Easter Season is complete with the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost. Also, St. Athanasius, May 2; St. Damien, the Leper priest, May 10. St. Matthias, May 14; St. Isidore, May 15; St. Rita of Cascia, a cloistered Augustinian Nun, May 22; St. Philip Neri, May 26.

May is traditionally dedicated to our Blessed Mother. Marian devotions include the recitation of the Rosary and the Litany of Loretto, Marian processions, the crowning of Mary and the celebration of votive Masses (especially on Saturdays). May concludes with the celebration of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 31.

June 2012

General: That believers may recognize in the Eucharist the living presence of the Risen One who accompanies them in daily life.

Missionary: That Christians in Europe may rediscover their true identity and participate with greater enthusiasm in the proclamation of the Gospel.

- 1 Fri. St. Justin, martyr; memorial.
- 2 Sat. Weekday. Sts. Marcellinus and Peter, martyrs; optional memorial.
- 3 Sun. Most Holy Trinity; solemnity (Dt 4:32-34, 39-40; Rom 8:4-17; Mt 28:16-20).
- 4 Mon. Ninth Week in Ordinary Time.
- 5 Tues. St. Boniface, bishop and martyr; memorial.
- 6 Weds. Weekday. St. Norbert; optional memorial.
- 7 Thurs. Weekday.
- 8 Fri. Weekday.
- 9 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady; St. Ephrem, deacon and doctor; optional memorials.
- 10 Sun. The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi); solemnity (Ex 24:3-8; Heb 9:11-15; Mk 14:12-16,22-26).
- 11 Mon. St. Barnabas, apostle; memorial.
- 12 Tues. Tenth Week of Ordinary Time. Weekday.
- 13 Weds. St. Anthony of Padua, priest-doctor; memorial.
- 14 Thurs. Weekday.
- 15 Fri. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; solemnity (Hos 11:1,3-4,8c-9; Eph 3:8-12,14-19; Jn 19:31-37).
- 16 Sat. Immaculate Heart of Mary; memorial
- 17 Sun. Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Ez 17:22-24; 2 Cor 5:6-10; Mk 4:26-34).
- 18 Mon. Weekday.
- 19 Tues. Weekday. St. Romuald, abbot; optional memorial.
- 20 Weds. Weekday.
- 21 Thurs. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious; memorial.
- 22 Fri. Weekday. St. Paulinus of Nola, bishop; St. John Fisher, bishop and martyr; St. Thomas More, martyr; optional memorials.
- 23 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 24 Sun. Nativity of St. John the Baptist; solemnity. (Is 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Lk 1:57-66,80).
- 25 Mon. Weekday. Twelfth Week of Ordinary Time.
- 26 Tues. Weekday.
- 27 Weds. Weekday. St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop and doctor; optional memorial.
- 28 Thurs. St. Irenaeus, bishop-martyr; memorial.
- 29 Fri. Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles; solemnity (Acts 12:1-11; Tm 4:6-8,17-18; Mt 16:13-19).
- 30 Sat. Weekday. First Martyrs of the Church of Rome; optional memorial.

Observances:

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity is celebrated June 3. This great feast of the Triune God is followed by the Feast the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) celebrated June 10. It is tradition in the Church to gather for a Corpus Christi procession to venerate the Body of Christ at special altars prepared near the Cathedral or parish church. The procession concludes with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

This month is also the celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus June 15 followed by the celebration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary June 16. The Feast of the Birth of John the Baptist is celebrated June 24 followed by the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul June 29.

July 2012

General: That everyone may have work in safe and secure conditions.

Missionary: That Christian volunteers in mission territories may witness to the love of Christ.

- 1 Sun. Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Wis 1: 13-15; 2:23-24; 2 Cor 8:7,9,13-15; Mk 5:21-43).
- 2 Mon. Weekday.
- 3 Tues. St. Thomas, apostle; feast.
- 4 Weds. Weekday. St. Elizabeth of Portugal; optional memorial. Proper Mass for Independence Day.
- 5 Thurs. Weekday. St. Anthony Maria Zaccaria, priest; optional memorial.
- 6 Fri. Weekday. St. Maria Goretti, virgin and martyr; optional memorial.
- 7 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 8 Sun. Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Ez 2: 2-5; 2 Cor 12:7-10; Mk 6:1-6).
- 9 Mon. Weekday. Sts. Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions, martyrs; optional memorial.
- 10 Tues. Weekday.
- 11 Weds. St. Benedict, abbot; memorial.
- 12 Thurs. Weekday.
- 13 Fri. Weekday. St. Henry; optional memorial.
- 14 Sat. Bl. Kateri Tekawitha, virgin; memorial.
- 15 Sun. Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Am 7: 12-15; Eph 1:3-14; Mk 6: 7-13).
- 16 Mon. Weekday. Our Lady of Mount Carmel; optional memorial.
- 17 Tues. Weekday.
- 18 Weds. Weekday. St. Camillus de Lellis, priest; optional memorial.
- 19 Thurs. Weekday.
- 20 Fri. Weekday. St. Apollinaris, bishop and martyr; optional memorial.
- 21 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady; St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest-doctor; optional memorial.
- 22 Sun. Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Jer 1 23:1-6; Eph 2:13-18; Mk 6:30-34).
- 23 Mon. Weekday. St. Bridget of Sweden, religious; optional memorial.
- 24 Tues. St. Sharbel Makhluf; optional memorial.
- 25 Weds. St. James, apostle and martyr; feast.
- 26 Thurs. Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary; memorial.
- 27 Fri. Weekday.
- 28 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 29 Sun. Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (2 Kgs 4:42-44; Eph 4:1-6; Jn 6:1-15).
- 30 Mon. St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop and doctor; optional memorial.
- 31 Tues. St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest; memorial.

Observances:

St. Thomas the apostles is observed July 3; St. Maria Goretti, July 6; St. Benedict, the founder of western monasticism and patron saint of Europe, July 11; Bl. Kateri Tekawitha, July 14; St. James the Apostle, July 25; Sts. Joachim and Anne, July 26. The month of July ends with the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest and founder of the Society of Jesus, July 31.
Independence Day, July 4, is observed with a special Mass for celebration in the United States.

August 2012

General: That prisoners may be treated with justice and respect for their human dignity.

Missionary: That young people, called to follow Christ, may be willing to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

- 1 Weds. St. Alphonsus Ligouri, bishop-doctor; memorial.
- 2 Thurs. Weekday. St. Eusebius of Vercelli, bishop and St. Peter Julian Eymard, priest; optional memorials.
- 3 Fri. Weekday.
- 4 Sat. St. John Mary Vianney, priest; memorial.
- 5 Sun. Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Ex 16:2-4, 12-15; Eph 4:17,20-24; John 6:24-35).
- 6 Mon. Transfiguration of the Lord; feast.
- 7 Tues. Weekday. St. Cajetan, priest; St. Sixtus and Companions, martyrs; optional memorials.
- 8 Weds. St. Dominic, priest; memorial.
- 9 Thurs. Weekday. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, virgin and martyr; optional memorial.
- 10 Fri. St. Lawrence, deacon-martyr; feast.
- 11 Sat. St. Clare, virgin; memorial.
- 12 Sun. Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (1 Kgs 19: 4-8; Eph 4:30-5:2; Jn 6:41-51).
- 13 Mon. Weekday. St. Pontian, pope and martyr; St. Hippolytus, priest and martyr; optional memorials.
- 14 Tues. St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest and martyr; memorial.
- 15 Weds. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; solemnity. (Rv 11:19a,12:1-6a,10ab; 1 Cor 15:20-27; Lk 1:39-56).
- 16 Thurs. Weekday. St. Stephen of Hungary; optional memorial.
- 17 Fri. Weekday.
- 18 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 19 Sun. Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Prv 9:1-6; Eph 5:15-20; Jn 6:51-58).
- 20 Mon. St. Bernard, abbot-doctor; memorial.
- 21 Tues. St. Pius X, pope; memorial.
- 22 Weds. Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary; memorial.
- 23 Thurs. Weekday. St. Rose of Lima, virgin; optional memorial.
- 24 Fri. St. Bartholomew, apostle; feast.
- 25 Sat. Weekday. St. Louis of France and St. Joseph Calasanz, priest; optional memorials.
- 26 Sun. Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time (Jos 24: 1-2a,15-17,18b; Eph 5:21-32; Jn 6:60-69).
- 27 Mon. St. Monica; memorial.
- 28 Tues. St. Augustine, bishop and doctor; memorial.
- 29 Weds. Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist; memorial.
- 30 Thurs. Weekday.
- 31 Fri. Weekday.

Observances:

St. Alphonsus Liguori, doctor of the Church and moral theologian, Aug. 1; St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests, Aug. 4; The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, Aug. 6; St. Dominic, founder of the Dominicans, Aug. 8; St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Aug. 9. St. Clare, foundress of the Poor Clares, Aug. 11; St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, Aug. 14. The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Aug. 15; The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Aug. 22. St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, Aug. 27; St. Augustine, Aug. 28 and the Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, Aug. 29.

September 2012

General: That politicians may always act with honesty, integrity, and love for the truth.

Missionary: That Christian communities may have a growing willingness to send missionaries, priests, and lay people, along with concrete resources, to the poorest Churches.

- 1 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 2 Sun. Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Dt 4: 1-2, 6-8; Jas 1: 17-18; 21b-22, 27; Mk 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23.)
- 3 Mon. St. Gregory the Great; memorial [Labor Day. Special Mass for the Blessings of Human Labor.]
- 4 Tues. Weekday.
- 5 Weds. Weekday.
- 6 Thurs. Weekday.
- 7 Fri. Weekday.
- 8 Sat. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; feast.
- 9 Sun. Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Is 35:4-7a; Jas 2:1-5; Mk 7:31-37).
- 10 Mon. Weekday.
- 11 Tues. Weekday.
- 12 Weds. Weekday. Holy Name of Mary; optional memorial.
- 13 Thurs. St. John Chrysostom, bishop-doctor; memorial.
- 14 Fri. Exaltation of the Holy Cross; feast.
- 15 Sat. Our Lady of Sorrows; memorial.
- 16 Sun. Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Is 50: 5-9a; Jas 2:14-18; Mk 8:27-35).
- 17 Mon. Weekday. St. Robert Bellarmine, bishop and doctor; optional memorial.
- 18 Tues. Weekday.
- 19 Weds. Weekday. St. Januarius, bishop-martyr; optional memorial
- 20 Thurs. St. Andrew Kim Taegon, priest-martyr, Paul Chong Hasang, martyr, and Companions, martyrs; memorial.
- 21 Fri. St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist; feast.
- 22 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 23 Sun. Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wis 2:12, 17-20; Jas 3:16-4:3; Mk 9:30-37).
- 24 Mon. Weekday.
- 25 Tues. Weekday.
- 26 Weds. Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs; optional memorial.
- 27 Thurs. St. Vincent de Paul, priest; memorial.
- 28 Fri. St. Lawrence Ruiz and companions; martyrs. St. Wenceslaus, martyr; optional memorials.
- 29 Sat. Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, archangels; feast.
- 30 Sun. Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Nm 11:25-29; Jas 5:1-6; Mk 9:38-43;45,47-48).

Observances:

The month begins with St. Gregory the Great, Sept. 3; The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sept. 8; St. John Chrysostom, doctor of the Church, Sept. 13; Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Sept. 14; Our Lady of Sorrows, Sept. 15; St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist Sept. 21; St. Vincent de Paul, founder of the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, Sept. 27; Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, archangels, Sept. 29, and St. Jerome, Sept. 30.

Labor Day is celebrated Sept. 3 with a special Mass for the blessing of human labor.

October 2012

General: That the New Evangelization may progress in the oldest Christian countries.

Missionary: That the celebration of World Mission Day may result in a renewed commitment to evangelization.

- 1 Mon. St. Therese of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor; memorial.
- 2 Tues. The Guardian Angels; memorial.
- 3 Weds. Weekday.
- 4 Thurs. St. Francis of Assisi, religious; memorial.
- 5 Fri. Weekday. First Friday.
- 6 Sat. Weekday. St. Bruno, priest and Bl. Marie Rose Durocher, virgin; optional memorials.
- 7 Sun. Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Gn 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16).
- 8 Mon. Weekday.
- 9 Tues. Weekday. St. Denis and Companions, martyrs; St. John Leonardi, priest; optional memorials.
- 10 Weds. Weekday.
- 11 Thurs. Weekday.
- 12 Fri. Weekday.
- 13 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 14 Sun. Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wis 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30).
- 15 Mon. St. Theresa of Jesus, virgin and doctor; memorial.
- 16 Tues. Weekday. St. Hedwig, religious; St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin; optional memorials.
- 17 Weds. St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop-martyr; memorial.
- 18 Thurs. St. Luke, evangelist; feast.
- 19 Fri. St. John de Brebeuf, St. Isaac Jogues and companions, martyrs; memorial.
- 20 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady. St. Paul of the Cross; optional memorial.
- 21 Sun. Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:35-45).
- 22 Mon. Weekday.
- 23 Tues. Weekday. St. John of Capistrano, priest; optional memorial
- 24 Weds. Weekday. St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop; optional memorial.
- 25 Thurs. Weekday.
- 26 Fri. Weekday.
- 27 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady.
- 28 Sun. Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Jer 31:7-9; Heb 5:1-6; Mk 10:46-52).
- 29 Mon. Weekday.
- 30 Tues. Weekday.
- 31 Wed. Weekday.

Observances:

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, doctor of the Church, Oct.1; St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order, Oct. 4; St. Teresa of Jesus, doctor of the Church, reformer of the Carmelite Order, Oct. 15; St. Ignatius of Antioch, Oct. 17; St. Luke, evangelist, Oct. 18. The North American Martyrs, Oct. 19. St. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Congregation of the Passion, Oct. 20.

Respect Life Sunday is celebrated this month calling the nation to a deeper respect for all human life from natural conception to natural death. Mission Sunday is observed during the month with appeals for prayer and financial support for persons and projects involved in the ministry of evangelization at home and abroad. Vocation Awareness Sunday is also celebrated this month calling to mind the various vocations in the life of the Church with particular attention to priestly and religious vocations.

November 2012

General: That Bishops, priests, and all ministers of the Gospel may bear the courageous witness of fidelity to the crucified and risen Lord.

Missionary: That the pilgrim Church on earth may shine as a light to the nations.

- 1 Thurs. All Saints; solemnity (Rv 7:2-4,9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Mt 5:1-12a). Holy Day of Obligation.
- 2 Fri. Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. All Souls Day.
- 3 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady. St. Martin de Porres, religious; optional memorial.
- 4 Sun. Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (Dt 6:2-6; Heb 7:23-28; Mk 12:28b-34).
- 5 Mon. Weekday.
- 6 Tues. Weekday.
- 7 Weds. Weekday.
- 8 Thurs. Weekday.
- 9 Fri. Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome; feast
- 10 Sat. St. Leo the Great, pope-doctor; memorial.
- 11 Sun. Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (1 Kgs 17:10-16; Heb 9:24-28; Mk 12:38-44).
- 12 Mon. St. Josaphat, martyr; memorial.
- 13 Tues. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin; memorial.
- 14 Weds. Weekday.
- 15 Thurs. Weekday. St. Albert the Great, bishop-doctor; optional memorial.
- 16 Fri. Weekday. St. Margaret of Scotland, virgin; St. Gertrude, virgin; optional memorials.
- 17 Sat. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious; memorial.
- 18 Sun. Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Dn 12:1-3; Heb 10:11-14,18; Mk 13:24-32).
- 19 Mon. Weekday.
- 20 Tues. Weekday.
- 21 Weds. Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; memorial.
- 22 Thurs. St. Cecilia, virgin-martyr; memorial. Thanksgiving Day, proper Mass.
- 23 Fri. Weekday. St. Clement I, pope-martyr; St. Columban, abbot; Bl. Miguel Agustin Pro, priest-martyr; optional memorials.
- 24 Sat. St. Andrew Dung-Lac, priest-martyr and companions, martyrs; memorials.
- 25 Sun. Our Lord Jesus Christ the King; solemnity (Dn 7:13-14; Rv 1:5-8; Jn 18:33b-37).
- 26 Mon. Weekday. (Last week in Ordinary Time)
- 27 Tues. Weekday.
- 28 Weds. Weekday.
- 29 Thurs. Weekday.
- 30 Fri. St. Andrew, apostle and martyr; feast.

Observances:

All Saints Day, Nov. 1; All Souls Day, Nov. 2; St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, foundress, first U.S. citizen-saint, Nov. 13; St. Albert the Great, doctor of the Church, Nov. 15; St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Nov. 17. Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Nov. 21; St. Cecilia, Nov. 22. Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22; St. Andrew Dung-Lac and companions, the Korean Martyrs, Nov. 24. Christ the King, Nov. 25; The Feast of St. Andrew, Nov. 30.

The month of November is devoted to praying for the dead. The faithful are encouraged to make visits to cemeteries, to offer prayers for the dead and to recite the Office of the Dead for all the holy souls in purgatory. The annual fall meeting of the bishops of the U. S. takes place this month in Washington, DC.

December 2012

General: That migrants throughout the world may be welcomed with generosity and authentic love, especially by Christian communities.

Missionary: That Christ may reveal himself to all humanity with the light that shines forth from Bethlehem and is reflected in the face of his Church.

- 1 Sat. Weekday. Mass of Our Lady
 - 2 Sun. First Sunday of Advent (Jer 33:14-16; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2; Lk 21:25-28,34-36).
 - 3 Mon. St. Francis Xavier; priest; memorial.
 - 4 Tues. Advent Weekday. St. John Damascene, priest-doctor; optional memorial.
 - 5 Weds. Advent Weekday.
 - 6 Thurs. Advent Weekday. St. Nicholas, bishop; optional memorial.
 - 7 Fri. St. Ambrose, bishop and doctor; memorial.
 - 8 Sat. Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; solemnity (Gn 3:9-15,20; Eph 1:3-6,11-12; Lk 1:26-38). Holy Day of Obligation.
 - 9 Sun. Second Sunday of Advent (Bar 5:1-9; Phil 1:4-6,8-11; Lk 3:1-6).
 - 10 Mon. Advent Weekday.
 - 11 Tues. Advent Weekday. St. Damasus I, pope; optional memorial.
 - 12 Weds. Our Lady of Guadalupe; feast.
 - 13 Thurs. St. Lucy, virgin-martyr; memorial.
 - 14 Fri. St. John of the Cross, memorial.
 - 15 Sat. Advent Weekday.
 - 16 Sun. Third Sunday of Advent (Zep 3:14-18a; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18).
 - 17 Mon. Late Advent Weekday.
 - 18 Tues. Late Advent Weekday.
 - 19 Weds. Late Advent Weekday.
 - 20 Thurs. Late Advent Weekday.
 - 21 Fri. Late Advent Weekday. St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor; optional memorial.
 - 22 Sat. Late Advent Weekday.
 - 23 Sun. Fourth Sunday of Advent (Mic 5:1-4a; Heb10:5-10; Lk 1:39-45).
 - 24 Mon. Advent Weekday.
 - 25 Tues. Nativity of the Lord, Christmas; solemnity. Holy Day of Obligation. (Vigil Mass – Is 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17,22-25; Mt 1:1-25 or 1: 18-25. Midnight Mass – Is 9:1-6; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14. Mass at Dawn – Is 62:11-12; Ti 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20. Mass during the day – Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5,9-14).
 - 26 Weds. St. Stephen, first martyr; feast.
 - 27 Thurs. St. John, apostle-evangelist; feast.
 - 28 Fri. Holy Innocents; feast.
 - 29 Sat. Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas. St. Thomas Becket, bishop-martyr; optional memorial.
 - 30 Sun. Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Sir 3:2-7,12-14; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:22-40).
 - 31 Mon. Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas. St. Sylvester I; optional memorial.
- Observances:** The beginning of the Church Year, the first Sunday of Advent, Dec. 2; Sts. John of Damascus, Ambrose, John of the Cross, Peter Canisius, doctors of the Church; Immaculate Conception, Dec. 8; Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 12; Birth of our Lord, Dec. 25; St. Stephen, proto-martyr, Dec. 26; St. John, apostle-evangelist, Dec. 27; Holy Innocents, Dec. 28; Holy Family, Dec. 30.

HOLY DAYS AND OTHER OBSERVANCES

The following list includes the six holy days of obligation observed in the U.S. and additional observances of devotional and historical significance. The dignity or rank of observances is indicated by the terms: solemnity (highest in rank); feast; memorial (for universal observance); optional memorial (for celebration by choice).

All Saints, Nov. 1, Holy Day of Obligation, solemnity. Commemorates all the blessed in heaven, and is intended particularly to honor the blessed who have no special feasts. The background of the feast dates to the fourth century when groups of martyrs, and later other saints, were honored on a common day in various places. In 609 or 610, the Pantheon, a pagan temple at Rome, was consecrated as a Christian church for the honor of Our Lady and the martyrs (later all saints). In 835, Gregory IV fixed Nov. 1 as the date of observance.

All Souls, Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, Nov. 2. The dead were prayed for from the earliest days of Christianity. By the sixth century it was customary in Benedictine monasteries to hold a commemoration of deceased members of the order at Pentecost. A common commemoration of all the faithful departed on the day after All Saints was instituted in 998 by St. Odilo, of the Abbey of Cluny, and an observance of this kind was accepted in Rome in the 14th century.

Annunciation of the Lord (formerly, Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Mar. 25, solemnity. A feast of the Incarnation which commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she was to become the Mother of Christ (Lk 1:26-38), and the miraculous conception of Christ by her. The feast was instituted about 430 in the East. The Roman observance dates from the seventh century, when celebration was said to be universal.

Ascension of the Lord, movable observance held 40 days after Easter, holy day of obligation, solemnity. Commemorates the Ascension of Christ into heaven 40 days after his Resurrection from the dead (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:2). The feast recalls the completion of Christ's mission on earth for the salvation of all people and his entry into heaven with glorified human nature. The Ascension is a pledge of the final glorification of all who achieve salvation. Documentary evidence of the feast dates from early in the fifth century, but it was observed long before that time in connection with Pentecost and Easter.

Ash Wednesday, movable observance, six and one-half weeks before Easter. It was set as the first day of Lent by Pope St. Gregory the Great (590-604) with the extension of an earlier and shorter penitential season to a total period including 40 weekdays of fasting before Easter. It is a day of fast and abstinence. Ashes, symbolic of penance, are blessed and distributed among the faithful during the day. They are used to mark the forehead with the Sign of the Cross, with the reminder: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you will return," or "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel."

Assumption, Aug. 15, holy day of obligation, solemnity. Commemorates the taking into heaven of Mary, soul and body, at the end of her life on earth, a truth of faith that was proclaimed a dogma by Pius XII on Nov. 1, 1950. One of the oldest and most solemn feasts of Mary, it

has a history dating back to at least the seventh century when its celebration was already established at Jerusalem and Rome.

Baptism of the Lord, movable, usually celebrated on the Sunday after January 6, feast. Recalls the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist (Mk 1:9-11), an event associated with the liturgy of the Epiphany. This baptism was the occasion for Christ's manifestation of himself at the beginning of his public life.

Birth of Mary, Sept. 8, feast. This is a very old feast which originated in the East and found place in the Roman liturgy in the seventh century.

Candlemas Day, Feb. 2. See **Presentation of the Lord**.

Chair of Peter, Feb. 22, feast. The feast, which has been in the Roman calendar since 336, is a liturgical expression of belief in the episcopacy and hierarchy of the Church.

Christmas, Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Dec. 25, holy day of obligation, solemnity. Commemorates the birth of Christ (Lk 2:1-20). This event was originally commemorated in the East on the feast of Epiphany or Theophany. The Christmas feast itself originated in the West; by 354 it was certainly kept on Dec. 25. This date may have been set for the observance to offset pagan ceremonies held at about the same time to commemorate the birth of the sun at the winter solstice. There are texts for three Christmas Masses at midnight, dawn, and during the day.

Christ the King, movable, celebrated on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, solemnity. Commemorates the royal prerogatives of Christ and is equivalent to a declaration of his rights to the homage, service and fidelity of all people in all phases of individual and social life. Pius XI instituted the feast Dec. 11, 1925.

Conversion of St. Paul, Jan. 25, feast. An observance mentioned in some calendars from the 8th and 9th centuries. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) ordered its observance with great solemnity.

Corpus Christi (The Body and Blood of Christ), movable, celebrated on the Thursday (or Sunday, as in the U.S.) following Trinity Sunday, solemnity. Commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist (Mt 26:26-28). The feast originated at Liège in 1246 and was extended throughout the Church in the West by Urban IV in 1264. St. Thomas Aquinas composed the Liturgy of the Hours for the feast.

Cross, The Holy, Sept. 14, feast. Commemorates the finding of the Cross on which Christ was crucified, in 326 through the efforts of St. Helena, mother of Constantine; the consecration of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre nearly 10 years later; and the recovery in 628 or 629 by Emperor Heraclius of a major portion of the cross which had been removed by the Persians from its place of veneration at Jerusalem. The feast originated in Jerusalem and spread through the East before being adopted in the West. General adoption followed the building at Rome of the Basilica of the Holy Cross "in Jerusalem," so called because it was the place of enshrinement of a major portion of the cross of crucifixion.

Dedication of St. John Lateran, Nov. 9, feast. Commemorates the first public consecration of a church, that of the Basilica of the Most Holy Savior by Pope St. Sylvester about 324. The church, as well as the Lateran Palace, was the gift of Emperor Constantine. Since the 12th century it has been known as St. John Lateran, in honor of John the Baptist after whom the adjoining

baptistery was named. It was rebuilt by Innocent X (1644-55), reconsecrated by Benedict XIII in 1726, and enlarged by Leo XIII (1878-1903). This basilica is regarded as the church of highest dignity in Rome and throughout the Roman rite.

Dedication of St. Mary Major, Aug. 5, optional memorial. Commemorates the rebuilding and dedication by Pope Sixtus III (432-40) of a church in honor of Blessed Mary the Virgin. This is the Basilica of St. Mary Major on the Esquiline Hill in Rome. An earlier building was erected during the pontificate of Liberius (352-66); according to legend, it was located on a site covered by a miraculous fall of snow seen by a nobleman favored with a vision of Mary.

Easter, movable celebration held on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox (between Mar. 22 and Apr. 25), solemnity with an octave. Commemorates the Resurrection of Christ from the dead (Mk 16:1-7). The observance of this mystery, kept since the first days of the Church, extends throughout the Easter season which lasts until the feast of Pentecost, a period of 50 days. Every Sunday in the year is regarded as a "little" Easter. The date of Easter determines the dates of movable feasts, such as Ascension and Pentecost, and the number of weeks before Lent and after Pentecost.

Easter Vigil, called by St. Augustine the "Mother of All Vigils," the night before Easter. Ceremonies are all related to the Resurrection and renewal-in-grace theme of Easter: blessing of the new fire, procession with the Easter Candle, singing of the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*), Liturgy of the Word with at least three Old Testament readings, the Litany of Saints, blessing of water, baptism of converts and infants, renewal of baptismal promises, Liturgy of the Eucharist. The vigil ceremonies are held after nightfall on Saturday.

Epiphany of the Lord, Jan. 6 or (in the U.S.) a Sunday between Jan. 2 and 8, solemnity. Commemorates the manifestations of the divinity of Christ. It is one of the oldest Christian feasts, with an Eastern origin traceable to the beginning of the third century and antedating the Western feast of Christmas. Originally, it commemorated the manifestations of Christ's divinity — or Theophany — in his birth, the homage of the Magi, and baptism by John the Baptist. Later, the first two of these commemorations were transferred to Christmas when the Eastern Church adopted that feast between 380 and 430. The central feature of the Eastern observance now is the manifestation or declaration of Christ's divinity in his baptism and at the beginning of his public life. The Epiphany was adopted by the Western Church during the same period in which the Eastern Church accepted Christmas. In the Roman rite, commemoration is made in the Mass of the homage of the wise men from the East (Mt 2:1-12).

Good Friday, the Friday before Easter, the second day of the Easter Triduum. Liturgical elements of the observance are commemoration of the Passion and Death of Christ in the reading of the Passion (according to John), special prayers for the Church and people of all ranks, the veneration of the Cross, and a Communion service. The celebration takes place in the afternoon, preferably at 3:00 p.m.

Guardian Angels, Oct. 2, memorial. Commemorates the angels who protect people from spiritual and physical dangers and assist them in doing good. A feast in their honor celebrated in Spain in the 16th century was placed

in the Roman calendar in 1615 and Oct. 2 was set as the date of observance. Earlier, guardian angels were honored liturgically in conjunction with the feast of St. Michael.

Holy Family, movable observance on the Sunday after Christmas, feast. Commemorates the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph as the model of domestic society, holiness and virtue. The devotional background of the feast was very strong in the 17th century. In the 18th century, in prayers composed for a special Mass, a Canadian bishop likened the Christian family to the Holy Family. Leo XIII consecrated families to the Holy Family. In 1921, Benedict XV extended the Divine Office and Mass of the feast to the whole Church.

Holy Innocents, Dec. 28, feast. Commemorates the infants who suffered death at the hands of Herod's soldiers seeking to kill the child Jesus (Mt 2:13-18). A feast in their honor has been observed since the fifth century.

Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. The Sacrifice of the Mass is not celebrated, and Holy Communion may be given only as Viaticum. If possible the Easter fast should be observed until the Easter Vigil.

Holy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter. Commemorates the institution of the sacraments of the Eucharist and holy orders, and the washing of the feet of the Apostles by Jesus at the Last Supper. The Mass of the Lord's Supper in the evening marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum. Following the Mass, there is a procession of the Blessed Sacrament to a place of reposition for adoration by the faithful. Usually at an earlier Mass of Christ, bishops bless oils (of catechumens, chrism, the sick) for use during the year. (For pastoral reasons, diocesan bishops may permit additional Masses, but these should not overshadow the principal Mass of the Lord's Supper.)

Immaculate Conception, Dec. 8, holy day of obligation, solemnity. Commemorates the fact that Mary, in view of her calling to be the Mother of Christ and in virtue of his merits, was preserved from the first moment of her conception from original sin and was filled with grace from the very beginning of her life. She was the only person so preserved from original sin. The present form of the feast dates from Dec. 8, 1854, when Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. An earlier feast of the Conception, which testified to long-existing belief in this truth, was observed in the East by the eighth century, in Ireland in the ninth, and subsequently in European countries. In 1846, Mary was proclaimed patroness of the U.S. under this title.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saturday following the second Sunday after Pentecost, memorial. On May 4, 1944, Pius XII ordered this feast observed throughout the Church in order to obtain Mary's intercession for "peace among nations, freedom for the Church, the conversion of sinners, the love of purity and the practice of virtue." Two years earlier, he consecrated the entire human race to Mary under this title. Devotion to Mary under the title of her Most Pure Heart originated during the Middle Ages. It was given great impetus in the 17th century by the preaching of St. John Eudes, who was the first to celebrate a Mass and Divine Office of Mary under this title. A feast, celebrated in various places and on different dates, was authorized in 1799.

Joachim and Ann, July 26, memorial. Commemorates

the parents of Mary. A joint feast, celebrated Sept. 9, originated in the East near the end of the sixth century. Devotion to Ann, introduced in the eighth century at Rome, became widespread in Europe in the 14th century; her feast was extended throughout the Latin Church in 1584. A feast of Joachim was introduced in the West in the 15th century.

John the Baptist, Birth of, June 24, solemnity. The precursor of Christ, whose cousin he was, was commemorated universally in the liturgy by the fourth century. He is the only saint, except the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose birthday is observed as a feast. Another feast, on Aug. 29, commemorates his passion and death at the order of Herod (Mk 6:14-29).

Joseph, Mar. 19, solemnity. Joseph is honored as the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patron and protector of the universal Church and workman. Devotion to him already existed in the eighth century in the East, and in the 11th in the West. Various feasts were celebrated before the 15th century when Mar. 19 was fixed for his commemoration; this feast was extended to the whole Church in 1621 by Gregory XV. In 1955, Pius XII instituted the feast of St. Joseph the Workman for observance May 1; this feast, which may be celebrated by local option, supplanted the Solemnity or Patronage of St. Joseph formerly observed on the third Wednesday after Easter. St. Joseph was proclaimed protector and patron of the universal Church in 1870 by Pius IX.

Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels, Sept. 29, feast. A feast bearing the title of Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel formerly commemorated on this date the consecration in 530 of a church near Rome in honor of Michael, the first angel given a liturgical feast. For a while, this feast was combined with a commemoration of the Guardian Angels. The separate feasts of Gabriel (Mar. 24) and Raphael (Oct. 24) were suppressed by the calendar in effect since 1970 and this joint feast of the three archangels was instituted.

Octave of Christmas, Jan. 1. See **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 12, feast (in the U.S.). Commemorates under this title the appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1531 to an Indian, Juan Diego, on Tepeyac hill outside Mexico City (see Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The celebration, observed as a memorial in the U.S., was raised to the rank of feast at the request of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Approval was granted in a decree dated Jan. 8, 1988.

Our Lady of Sorrows, Sept. 15, memorial. Recalls the sorrows experienced by Mary in her association with Christ: the prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2:34-35), the flight into Egypt (Mt 2:13-21), the three-day separation from Jesus (Lk 2:41-50), and four incidents connected with the Passion — her meeting with Christ on the way to Calvary, the crucifixion, the removal of Christ's body from the cross, and his burial (Mt 27:31-61; Mk 15:20-47; Lk 23:26-56; Jn 19:17-42). A Mass and Divine Office of the feast were celebrated by the Servites, especially, in the 17th century, and in 1814 Pius VII extended the observance to the whole Church.

Our Lady of the Rosary, Oct. 7, memorial. Commemorates the Virgin Mary through recall of the mysteries of the Rosary which recapitulate events in her life and the life of Christ. The feast was instituted in 1573

to commemorate a Christian victory by the Holy Alliance over the invading fleet of the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, and was extended throughout the Church by Clement XI in 1716.

Passion Sunday (formerly called Palm Sunday), the Sunday before Easter. Marks the start of Holy Week by recalling the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of his life (Mt 21:1-9). A procession and other ceremonies commemorating this event were held in Jerusalem from very early Christian times and were adopted in Rome by the ninth century, when the blessing of palm for the occasion was introduced. Full liturgical observance includes the blessing of palm and a procession before the principal Mass of the day. The Passion, by Matthew, Mark or Luke, is read during the Mass.

Pentecost, also called Whitsunday, movable celebration held 50 days after Easter, solemnity. Commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the preaching of Peter and the other Apostles to Jews in Jerusalem, the baptism and aggregation of some 3,000 persons to the Christian community (Acts 2:1-41). It is regarded as the birthday of the Catholic Church. The original observance of the feast antedated the earliest extant documentary evidence from the third century.

Peter and Paul, June 29, solemnity. Commemorates the martyrdoms of Peter by crucifixion and Paul by beheading during the Neronian persecution. This joint commemoration of the chief Apostles dates at least from 258 at Rome.

Presentation of the Lord (formerly called Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also Candlemas), Feb. 2, feast. Commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple — according to prescriptions of Mosaic Law (Lv 12:2-8; Ex 13:2; Lk 2:22-32) — and the purification of Mary 40 days after his birth. In the East, where the feast antedated fourth century testimony regarding its existence, it was observed primarily as a feast of Our Lord; in the West, where it was adopted later, it was regarded more as a feast of Mary until the calendar in effect since 1970. Its date was set for Feb. 2 after the celebration of Christmas was fixed for Dec. 25, late in the fourth century. The blessing of candles, probably in commemoration of Christ who was the Light to enlighten the Gentiles, became common about the 11th century and gave the feast the secondary name of Candlemas.

Queenship of Mary, Aug. 22, memorial. Commemorates the high dignity of Mary as Queen of heaven, angels and men. Universal observance of the memorial was ordered by Pius XII in the encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Oct. 11, 1954, near the close of a Marian Year observed in connection with the centenary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and four years after the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption. The original date of the memorial was May 31.

Resurrection. See **Easter**.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, movable observance held on the Friday after the second Sunday after Pentecost (Corpus Christi, in the U.S.), solemnity. The object of the devotion is the divine Person of Christ, whose heart is the symbol of his love for all people — for whom he accomplished the work of Redemption. The Mass and Office now used on the feast were prescribed by Pius XI in 1929. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was introduced into the liturgy in the 17th century through the efforts of St. John Eudes

who composed an Office and Mass for the feast. It was furthered as the result of the revelations of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque after 1675 and by the work of St. Claude de la Colombière, S.J. In 1765, Clement XIII approved a Mass and Office for the feast, and in 1856 Pius IX extended the observance throughout the Roman rite.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, Jan. 1, holy day of obligation, solemnity. The calendar in effect since 1970, in accord with Eastern tradition, reinstated the Marian character of this commemoration on the octave day of Christmas. The former feast of the Circumcision, dating at least from the first half of the sixth century, marked the initiation of Jesus (Lk 2:21) in Judaism and by analogy focused attention on the initiation of persons in the Christian religion and their incorporation in Christ through baptism. The feast of the Solemnity supplants the former feast of the Maternity of Mary observed on Oct. 11.

Transfiguration of the Lord, Aug. 6, feast. Commemorates the revelation of his divinity by Christ to Peter, James and John on Mt. Tabor (Mt 17:1-9). The feast, which is very old, was extended throughout the universal Church in 1457 by Callistus III.

Trinity, The Holy, movable observance held on the Sunday after Pentecost, solemnity. Commemorates the most sublime mystery of the Christian faith, i.e., that there are Three Divine Persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — in one God (Mt 28:18-20). A votive Mass of the Most Holy Trinity dates from the seventh century; an Office was composed in the 10th century; in 1334, John XXII extended the feast to the universal Church.

Visitation, May 31, feast. Commemorates Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation and before the birth of John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ (Lk 1:39-47). The feast had a medieval origin and was observed in the Franciscan Order before being extended throughout the Church by Urban VI in 1389. It is one of the feasts of the Incarnation and is notable for its recall of the Magnificat, one of the few New Testament canticles, which acknowledges the unique gifts of God to Mary because of her role in the redemptive work of Christ. The canticle is recited at Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.