

Catholic Days of Obligation

Days of Obligation are dates of significance in which Catholics are expected to attend Mass and engage in rest. While there are a total of 10 Days of Obligation in the Roman Catholic Church, The Vatican has given councils of bishops the ability to reduce the number of Days of Obligation their diocese (the geographical area a bishop is assigned to) recognizes or move them to the next Sunday to fit the needs of their communities. The ways that people observe these days, and which days they observe, also varies depending on cultural traditions. This means that additional research should be done on how a Day of Obligation is observed in a geographic area, or if it is observed at all.

During a Day of Obligation, it is expected that Catholics will attend Mass and abstain from performing tasks that would hinder their worship or “suitable relaxation of mind and body” (Code of Canon Law, section 1249) and instead focus on rest, time with family and caring for others, and in reflection and spiritual cultivation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, paragraphs 2184-2186). Since there is a great deal of variation in how a Day of Obligation is celebrated in different parts of the world (if it is celebrated at all), the ways employees may practice a Day of Obligation can vary greatly. For example, in some parts of the world people may wear red to honor the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, while others may decorate special alters, host feasts, or even host parades; yet others still may not do anything to celebrate because the day may not be recognized as a Day of Obligation in their part of the world.

There is geographic and cultural variety in how Days of Obligation are observed. Managers should be aware of Days of Obligation to anticipate potential time-off requests from their employees. Days of Obligation should also be considered to avoid scheduling important meetings with coworkers or clients that may place them in a position of choosing between work and observance.

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Solemnity Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is on **December 8th** and honors the Catholic belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was conceived without sin. This dogma or principle was formally defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854 in the Papal Encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*, in which he walks the reader through the theological belief that Mary was conceived without sin, and the ways this belief has been an underlying part of the Catholic tradition since its founding.

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

This Solemnity is more commonly known as Christmas. To learn more about this holiday, please see our Christmas Fact Sheet.

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, celebrates the role in Catholic dogma that Mary played in humankind’s salvation through being the mother of Jesus. This Solemnity occurs eight days after the Gregorian Calendar’s Christmas on **January 1st**. While Mary has been understood and honored as the Mother of God for centuries, it was only adopted as a churchwide feast day in 1931, and was moved to January 1st in 1974.

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, also known as Three Kings Day, is often recognized and celebrated on **January 6th**. This solemnity celebrates the Kings (also commonly referred to as Magi, Wise Men, and other names) who came to see the baby Jesus and offer him and his parents the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Feast day has been celebrated for over a millennia, with records mentioning the feast as far back as 361 CE.

Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Solemnity of Saint Joseph honors Joseph, the husband of Mary, Mother of God, and the father of the Catholic Church. This Solemnity is celebrated on **March 19th**. While Joseph has been honored by groups within the Catholic Church for millennia, the feast was recognized by Pope Sixtus IV in 1480 and became a Solemnity in 1621 under Pope Gregory XV.

Eastertide: Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord (Easter)

Eastertide is more commonly known as Easter. To learn more about this holiday, please see our Easter Fact Sheet.

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, commonly known as Corpus Christi, is a day in the Catholic Church to honor and celebrate the continued presence of Jesus through the Eucharist. This Solemnity became a Churchwide feast in 1264 when declared by Pope Urban IV. This feast day falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which is not a static day on the Gregorian calendar. This year, The Feast of Corpus Christi is on **June 4th**. However, some parts of the world may transfer these celebrations to the following Sunday rather than the following Thursday.

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

The Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul are celebrated together on **June 29th**. The day celebrates the lives and work of these two saints who are a cornerstone and founders for the Catholic Church.

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on **August 15th**. This day celebrates when Mary's embodied form was taken up into heaven at the end of her life. While this day was celebrated as early as the 400's CE, Pope Pius XII proclaimed Mary's assumption as Dogma in 1950.

Solemnity of All Saints

Solemnity of All Saints, or All Saints' Day, is a commemoration of all the recognized saints of the church. To learn more about this holiday, please see our Season of Spirits Fact Sheet.

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