



The Old Testament, beginning with the Lord's resting on the seventh day, through the law of Moses, and in subsequent Jewish tradition, is keen sanctifying—that is, making holy—the passage of time. That is accomplished day to day with prayer in the morning and the evening, week to week with the Sabbath, month to month with the phases of the moon, season to season with planting and harvest, year to year with the New Year, and from age to age with Jubilee years and the commemoration of past events, the greatest of which was the Passover.

The old ceremonies and calendar of the Law of Moses and the Jewish tradition no longer bind believers in the fullness of the revelation given in Christ, but from the beginning of the Church, Christians have marked sacred time in various ways.

For Christians, these are more a matter of Sacred Tradition than the explicit direction of Sacred Scripture. We mark time daily in the celebration of the Holy Mass, which Our Lord said to do in memory of him, of the offering of his body and blood on Calvary. Then weekly we come together on Sunday, “the Lord's day” as the book of Revelation calls it, to celebrate the glory of the Lord in his Resurrection.

Then in the cycle of solemnities throughout the year we follow the saving life of the Savior and his Blessed Mother and the saints. The Church has determined that Sundays and certain other of the solemnities throughout the year should be days “of precept” or obligation, meaning that on these days the faithful, at least those who are of the age of reason, **must assist at Holy Mass.**

The Precepts of the Catholic Church

2042 – The first precept (“You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor”) requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principal liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days

This is a serious obligation for Catholic Christians. Even so, the small number of holy days of obligation could not possibly exhaust the richness of the many feasts and memorials of the Christian year whereby we receive the graces of the great persons, human and divine, who have done such great things for our salvation. The Catholic Church's Liturgical Calendar is always changing. Lent and Easter shift year to year, Christmas falls on a different day of the week, and our Holy Days of Obligation change some years based on what day they land.

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 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. This decree of the Conference of Bishops was approved and July 4, 1992.



HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION



SUBSEQUENT ACTION: Canon 1246, §2 In accord with the provisions of canon 1246, §2 of the Code of Canon Law, which states: "... the conference of bishops can abolish certain holy days of obligation or transfer them to a Sunday with prior approval of the Apostolic See," the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States decrees that the Ecclesiastical Provinces of the United States may transfer the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter to the Seventh Sunday of Easter according to the following procedure. The decision of each Ecclesiastical Province to transfer the Solemnity of the Ascension is to be made by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the bishops of the respective Ecclesiastical Province. The decision of the Ecclesiastical Province should be communicated to the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and to the President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. This decree was approved by His Holiness Pope John Paul II by a decree of the Congregation for Bishops signed by His Eminence Lucas Cardinal Moreira Neves, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, and dated July 5, 1999.

RESOURCES:

[Holy Days of Obligation \(Youtube\)](#)

[Do I Have to Go to Mass? Sunday Obligation Explained](#)

[Why Do Christians Have a Sunday Obligation? Catholicism 101](#)