

FR. CLIFF'S NOTES

by Fr. Clifford Smith

Holy Days of Obligation

In the Catholic Church, the Holy Days of Obligation are those days, other than Sundays, on which the faithful are required to attend Mass. The **1983 Code of Canon Law** standardized ten days to be observed as Holy Days of Obligation throughout the Church. These days are:

- The Immaculate Conception (December 8)
- Christmas (Feast of the Nativity) (December 25)
- Mary, the Mother of God (January 1)
- Epiphany (January 6) *Now celebrated in most of the USA on the Sunday after Christmas*
- St. Joseph, Husband of Mary (March 19)
- St. Peter and St. Paul (June 29)
- The Assumption of Mary (August 15)
- All Saints (November 1)
- The Ascension (39 days after Easter) *Now celebrated in most of the USA on Sunday*
- Corpus Christi (60 days after Easter) *Now celebrated in most of the USA on Sunday*

According to Canon 1246 of the **1983 Code of Canon Law**, the conference of bishops can reduce the number of holy days of obligation or transfer them to Sunday with the approval of the Holy Father. With this regard US Bishops have removed the obligation status of the Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary, and the Feast of St. Peter and Paul, unless they fall on a Sunday, in which case the Sunday Obligation attaches.

There are three additional rules that apply:

1. Throughout the universal Church, when December 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception falls on the Second Sunday of Advent, the observance of the feast is transferred to Monday, December 9th, but the obligation to attend Mass is dispensed. If December 8th falls on a Saturday or a Monday, however, it remains a day of obligation.
2. In the dioceses of the USA, whenever January 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, or August 15th the Solemnity of the Assumption, or November 1st, the Solemnity of All Saints, falls on a Saturday or on a Monday, the obligation to attend Mass is usually dispensed.
3. The Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord, which in some other places in the USA is celebrated on the Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, is primarily now celebrated on the Seventh Sunday of Easter.
4. Two solemnities which honor our Blessed Mother Immaculate Conception (which is celebrated during Advent) and the Assumption — are transferred to the following Monday if they fall on a Sunday. If a holy day is transferred to another day, the obligation is not transferred with it.

There is no obligation for the faithful to participate at Mass on Ash Wednesday or on Holy Thursday, although this is certainly highly recommended.