

## “YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST”—RANKING CHURCH DAYS (PART 1)—BY FR. STEVE LAPE



All time is holy, for each moment that we have on this earth is a special gift from God. We often don't stop to think about that, since we busy ourselves with so many tasks during each day: work, family duties, cleaning, shopping, eating, exercising, visiting, vacationing, etc. Yet, just like any gift from God, time is something that we should use more thoughtfully and carefully, since it is a limited gift, as we can't live on this earth forever. God gives us life and time ultimately to use for God's purposes, not for mere self-indulgence.

To help make us aware of this precious, limited gift of time that we're to use, first and foremost, for the glory of God, the Catholic Church created a calendar of days for its liturgies to be celebrated throughout a given year. Certain days are ranked as being of higher importance than other days, in terms of how they're celebrated.

First of all, the holiest day of the year for Christians is Easter Sunday, since we celebrate that Sunday when Jesus rose from the tomb, conquering sin and death to bring the hope of eternal peace and joy in Heaven to the world. Connected with that are Holy Thursday (commemorating the evening when our Lord shared in His Last Supper with His Apostles, a celebration which Catholics consider the first Eucharist), Good Friday (the next day on which Jesus suffered and died on the cross), and Holy Saturday (the day in which Jesus lay in a tomb).

There are 5 categories of days on the Church's calendar: Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials, Seasonal Weekdays, and Ferial Weekdays. Solemnities are of greatest importance. All Sundays are considered

solemnities, since each Sunday recalls that 1st Easter Sunday when our Lord was resurrected from the dead. There are 6 Holy Days of Obligation, which are solemnities: Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1), Ascension Thursday, Assumption of Mary (Aug. 15), All Saints (Nov. 1), Immaculate Conception of Mary (Dec. 8), and Christmas (Dec. 25). All Catholics are required to attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days, except for a serious reason to prevent attendance (such as a serious illness). A few solemnities always fall on a Sunday, such as Easter, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi (Body and Blood of Christ), Epiphany, and Christ the King. Not all solemnities require Mass attendance, but are still ranked of high importance: St. Joseph, husband of Mary (3/19), the Annunciation (Angel Gabriel's announcing to Mary that she'd conceive Jesus in her womb) (3/25), Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday after Corpus Christi), John the Baptist's Birth (6/24), and Saints Peter & Paul (6/29).

Solemnity celebrations are all offered like a Sunday Mass, including the Gloria and the Creed, as well as 3 readings and a psalm. They each begin the evening before with Evening Prayer (from the Liturgy of the Hours, which the universal prayer of the Church that priests, deacons and religious have taken vows to pray on behalf of the Church, using special prayer books) and some of them have Vigil Masses (an anticipation Mass done the evening before the actual solemn day). Next week, we'll focus on the other categories of feasts, memorials, seasonal & ferial days.

