

“In *Sacred Times*, Fr. Turner has provided an indispensable resource for understanding many of the ins and outs of the General Instructions of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Roman Missal, in particular the General Roman Calendar and the Table of Liturgical Days. He meticulously examines, for example, how one navigates the celebration of consecutive solemnities and anticipated (Saturday) Masses. In the reform of the liturgy, Turner reveals some of the tensions, at times, between the revisers of the liturgy, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and various popes. Readers will find Turner’s discussion on making the Roman calendar truly universal and not a ‘Mediterranean calendar,’ why certain saints were included or excluded from the General Calendar, and how the Roman Rite came very close to losing Ash Wednesday fascinating indeed.”

—Peter D. Rocca, CSC, general editor, Paulist Press Ordo

“Once again, Fr. Paul Turner invites his readers to break open the rites of the Church with care. *Sacred Times* unpacks the logic of the reformed General Roman Calendar, highlighting its emphasis upon the paschal mystery as the heart of the liturgical year and explaining the pastoral and theological reasoning regarding everything from the Proper of Saints to the celebration of vigil masses. Replete with references and helpful appendices, this volume offers clear distinctions and principles for those in professional church ministry as they prepare for worship and a welcome compendium of sources for academics and students of liturgical and pastoral studies.”

—Katharine E. Harmon, project director,
Obsculta Preaching Initiative, St. John’s University School of
Theology and Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota

“The revision of the liturgical calendar was key to the reform of the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council, not only in providing a foundation for the work on the Missal, Lectionary, and Liturgy of the Hours but also in expressing a renewed theology of time centered on the Paschal Mystery. Fr. Paul Turner, with his customary diligence, is a knowledgeable guide to the work of revision. This, however, is not just a work of historical research; it also provides a guide to the current liturgical year, calendar, and days of special prayer highlighting the origins and history of each celebration, which will be a helpful resource to all who plan and prepare liturgy.”

—Martin Foster, director, Liturgy Office,
Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

“Paul Turner’s *Sacred Times* is an extraordinary resource for anyone with a question about or interest in the liturgical year. It should be on every priest’s or liturgical minister’s bookshelf. Not merely supplying information, in a conversational tone Turner takes the reader behind the scenes to discussions and decisions that have been made in developing the liturgical calendar, providing annotations to original documents. Every day is sacred in this volume, and the reader learns the origin of every saint’s feast. A final chapter on the table of liturgical days explains the ranks of feasts which can often be confusing.”

—Julia Upton, RSM, PhD, retired distinguished professor
of theology, St. John’s University, New York

“Even those who have often traversed the liturgical year as revised by Vatican II will find new information and new contexts in Paul Turner’s *Sacred Times*. A scholar’s thoroughness, a teacher’s clarity, and a pastor’s care are combined and presented in an accessible manner. From the historical conciliar background of the calendar’s revision to practical insight for current-day observances, this is a most useful book. It will be a gift for all whose ministry is connected to the sacred times, as well as the faithful who celebrate week by week or day by day.”

—Alan J. Hommerding, pastoral musician, hymnwriter,
composer, author, liturgical publications editor,
GIA Publications

“Fr. Paul Turner’s *Sacred Times* will be a most welcome addition to the office bookshelves of every liturgist and liturgical musician. The scope of the work is comprehensive and concise at the same time. It is also well structured, in a manner to both make for easy reading and comprehension as well as for finding just the miniscule detail one is looking for at a moment’s notice. Especially helpful are the included tables and appendices, particularly the reminders of the variety of ranks of our liturgical celebrations and their hierarchy, and their significances for liturgical adaptations. Every pastor, liturgist, and liturgical musician should add this book to their collections of reference materials.”

—Orin Johnson, director of music and liturgy,
St. Margaret of Scotland, in the Archdiocese of St. Louis,
and author of *Incarnate in Word and Song*

Sacred Times

*A Guide to
the General Roman Calendar
and the Table of Liturgical Days*

Paul Turner



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ET AGRICVLTVRÆ ET GENERATIONVM HVMANÆ VITÆ
QVÆ TAM PLENA EST CELEBRATIONIS, PASSIONIS AC MYSTERII
QVAM CALENDARIVM LITURGICVM
DEDICAT AVCTOR HVNC LIBRVM
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ET MARITO EIVS LAVRENTIO HALVORSONO

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Abbreviations

DOL	International Commission on English in the Liturgy, <i>Documents on the Liturgy, 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts</i> , ed. and trans. Thomas C. O'Brien (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982)
GILH	General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1975)
GIRM	The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Revised Edition (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011)
ICEL	International Commission on English in the Liturgy
ILM	Introduction: <i>Lectionary for Mass</i> (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000)
OBC	<i>The Order of Baptism of Children</i> (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020)
OCIA	<i>The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults</i> (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2024)
OCM	<i>The Order of Celebrating Matrimony</i> (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016)
ODCA	<i>The Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar</i> (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018)

- OM The Order of Mass, Roman Missal
- OUI *Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastorales curæ* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1975)
- PCS Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum, *The Rites*, Volume I (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990)
- SC Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), 1963
- UNLYC Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar, Roman Missal
- USCCB United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Chapter One

The General Roman Calendar

The Liturgical Year

The book of Genesis envisioned the creation of the entire cosmos within units of time. As God created space, so God created time. As certain spaces are especially sacred, so are certain times.

The Catholic Church arranges days on its liturgical calendar according to their sacred meaning. A secular calendar honors four seasons of the year. A school calendar arranges semesters, breaks, and vacations. Sports calendars have a pre-season, a regular season, and a post-season. The fiscal year marks its own origin and ending. The final days of any calendar year prompt observances of remembering, as the new year inspires resolutions.

The secular calendar's divisions into years, months, weeks, and days interact with the liturgical calendar. However, the principal annual references for a Christian are not spring, summer, autumn, and winter, but Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. Most American workers have weekends off. Sunday anchors the Christian week.

The secular calendar in the United States marks certain days as holidays—New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day,

Labor Day, Columbus Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The church calendar observes a cycle of saints. They populate the year alphabetically, from Adalbert to Wenceslaus, span ministries from early martyrs to contemporary writers, and died in places from Jerusalem to Futuna Island.

Colors apply to certain liturgical days. The priest and deacon vest in white for festive times and days, red for observances of the Lord's passion and of martyrs, green for Ordinary Time, violet for Advent and Lent, rose optionally for the Sundays marking the midpoints of Advent and Lent, gold or silver for solemn celebrations (GIRM 346).

Throughout the Catholic world, the calendar enjoys regional variations that integrate with the universal framework for the year. That framework establishes the principal times of the church year, as well as the saints whom all must honor. Together, the Proper of Time and the Proper of Saints make up the General Roman Calendar.

The Table of Liturgical Days

Not all days carry the same weight. Earth Day is widely observed in the United States, but it is not a federal holiday. Independence Day in one country is not the same date as in another. One couple marks their wedding anniversary with great celebration on a particular date when their neighbors in the same apartment building pass just another day.

The Table of Liturgical Days ranks the celebrations that pertain to the universal church and to smaller regions. The table helps people discern which celebration takes precedence when two coincide. In families, if someone has a birthday on December 25, all celebrate both a birthday and Christmas Day. When choosing the date for a funeral, the family may avoid scheduling it on a wedding anniversary. So in the liturgical year, the Table of Liturgical Days ranks the relative importance of days.

Renewed Vision

The General Roman Calendar underwent a rare, thorough revision following the Second Vatican Council. Changes happen repeatedly, but in the manner of new dwellers rehabbing an old house—adding features here and there. After a while, it seems prudent to freshen everything, to establish revised, comprehensive principles.

At the Second Vatican Council, the bishops approved the calendar's revision in their Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC 102–11). Centering first on the resurrection of Jesus, the Constitution recommitted to the annual cycles that reveal the entire mystery of Christ from his incarnation and passion to the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. It noted the importance of days dedicated to Mary and the saints, as well as to various devotions of the people.

Even so, it called for a revision: “The liturgical year is to be revised so that the traditional customs and discipline of the sacred seasons shall be preserved or restored in line with the conditions of modern times” (SC 107).¹ Everything aimed to celebrate the paschal mystery without interference. The results produced a calendar that more capably expressed the universality of the church and of its beliefs.

The Revisers

To implement the 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Pope Paul VI established a Consilium to oversee the work. This group appointed various subgroups, one of which revised the liturgical year.

1. Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), pp. 150–51.

The Consilium assigned a number to each subgroup. The subgroup on the calendar was foundational to the revision of books like the Roman Missal and the Liturgy of the Hours, so it received the number one.

Annibale Bugnini, an Italian Vincentian and the secretary of the Consilium, served also as the chair of this subgroup, and Ansgar Dirks, a Dominican from the Netherlands teaching at the Dominican Liturgical Institute in Rome, was the subgroup secretary. Other members were Rembert van Doren, the Belgian Benedictine abbot of Mont-César; Johannes Wagner, the German priest who directed the Liturgical Institute at Trier; Canon Aimé-Georges Martimort of the Catholic Institute in Toulouse, France; the French professor Pierre Jounel of the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris; Agostino Amore, a Franciscan and church historian from the Antonianum in Rome; and Herman Schmidt, a Dutch Jesuit teaching liturgy at the Gregorian University in Rome. The members held their first meeting on January 23, 1965. Within two years Jounel replaced Bugnini as the chair.²

The revisers developed their work under the two major headings. Jounel was the specialist behind the Proper of Time, and Amore oversaw the Proper of Saints.

They were greatly helped by work conducted from 1948 to 1960 by the Pian Commission, established and named for Pope Pius XII. The ideas of the earlier group sparked conversation among the later one, which completed its work in 1969.

Terms: “Proper,” “Ordinary,” “Commons,” “Time,” “Season,” and “Saint”

The liturgical calendar uses several words that appear easy to comprehend but are applied in a particular way. An

2. Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), pp. 305, 939, 944–46, 948–50.

understanding of these terms facilitates interpreting the calendar.

The Roman Missal, the main book for all the ministers at Mass, includes two divisions, each called “Proper,” to distinguish them from what is commonly called the “Ordinary.” The Ordinary scripts the dialogues, acclamations, and prayers for every celebration. The Propers specify the changeable parts: the antiphons, prayers, prefaces, and blessings, for example, that apply to one date on the calendar, but not to another. The Proper of Time and the Proper of Saints also constitute the main divisions for the calendar’s norms.

The Missal and Liturgy of the Hours have sections called “Commons,” distinct from “Propers.” The Commons are generic texts that apply to a certain category, such as the Dedication of a Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Martyrs, among many others.

People commonly speak of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter as “seasons.” However, the English translation of the Missal more specifically calls these “times.” As there is Ordinary Time throughout most of the year, so there is Christmas Time and Easter Time. The Missal refers to the other two periods of time more simply: Advent and Lent.

The term “time” distances the liturgical calendar from the natural “seasons” of the year that shape secular calendars: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The liturgical calendar rests on the paschal mystery, not on the rotation of the earth.

The word “Saints” refers to those whose memory is kept on certain days each year. However, one will also find within the Missal’s Proper of Saints some devotional days and—at least in the United States—prayers that pertain to civil observances such as Independence Day.

Understanding these distinctions helps people find pertinent pages in the liturgical books. It also helps apply the key principles in the Table of Liturgical Days.

The Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and Calendar revised the framework in 1969. Guidance for celebrating the various times and special days is found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the Introduction to the Lectionary, and the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours.



Chapter Three

Revising the Proper of Saints

Mary

Towering above all other saints is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is the “most excellent fruit of the redemption,” an image of the goal that the faithful seek (SC 103).¹

The previous calendar teemed with observances of the life of Mary and devotion to her. The revisers maintained five feasts associated with her life: The Immaculate Conception, Nativity, the Visitation, her Assumption, and her role as the Mother of God. The Presentation and the Annunciation would convert into feasts of the Lord.²

The calendar would retain certain days of devotion: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Rosary. The revisers intended to suppress several other days: The Seven Sorrows, Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of the Snows, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of Mercy, and the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1. *Vatican II*, p. 149.

2. Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia, Schemata, n. 188, De Calendario, 11, 22 September 1966, p. 29.

The previous Missal assigned open Saturdays as devotional observances for Mary, with prayers and readings reflecting the times of the year. The revisers put no Votive Masses on certain days but allowed local communities to select them on permitted days. In 1967, Jounel explained,

It is better to group the office of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday into a votive office, rather than an optional memorial. That is first of all the proper nature of this office. Even more, one does not inscribe a votive office into the calendar. Now, lest it go unmentioned, in the calendar of 1969 to celebrate all the offices of the Blessed Virgin on Saturday would require doing them thirty-two times. This simple enumeration would give Marian devotion a materially excessive importance, contrary to the spirit that has presided over the reform of the Proper of Saints.³

The Missal today recommends but does not require the Saturday commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary (GIRM 378).

The Ranking of Saints' Days

The church honors the saints, especially the martyrs, who provide a model for Christian life, whose entry into heaven embodies the paschal mystery, and who intercede with God (SC 104). The calendar ranks certain days as solemnities, feasts, and memorials, some of which are optional. All Sundays are solemnities. Days without such ranks are called weekdays.

The revisers considered several options before finalizing the system. Previously the days were ranked by "class." This probably seemed too blandly juridic for a faith-based calendar.

3. Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia, *Schemata*, n. 237, *De Calendario*, 15, 14 August 1967, p. 1.

The new categories reveal the value of each day. The revisers explained in 1967,

Feasts are celebrated according to three ranks: solemnity, (which corresponds to the first class today), feast, (which corresponds to the second class), memorial, (which corresponds to the third class).

A feast that is celebrated as an option is called an optional memorial.⁴

These ranks remain in force. In some instances, days first ranked in one category have moved upward to another. Saints' days holding lesser categories are impeded when they fall on a Sunday.

In English, some people use the word "feast" more broadly. They may speak of the "feast of All Saints" or one's "patronal feast." Such colloquial usage differs from the official designation.

During the last week of Advent, the octave of Christmas, and Lent, another rank appears in the Liturgy of the Hours: commemoration. Because those weekdays rank high, most saints honored on them are optional and receive a limited treatment.

Celebrating Solemnities at Mass

The manner of celebration distinguishes these ranks. At Mass, solemnities have three Scripture readings, as do Sundays (GIRM 357; ILM 66). The Gloria is sung on all solemnities (GIRM 53), and the Creed is recited (GIRM 68), except for the weekday solemnities during the octave of Easter. A bishop may not authorize a Mass for Various Needs and Occasions on a solemnity (GIRM 371, 374). Funeral Masses may be celebrated on most solemnities. Other rules apply on solemnities of obligation, as noted below.

4. *Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia*, Schemata, n. 213, *De Calendario*, 12, 1 March 1967, p. 4.

Ritual Masses are permitted on Sundays of Ordinary Time (GIRM 372), but prohibited on solemnities (371, 374), whether or not they are days of obligation. A wedding, for example, may take place during a Mass on November 1, but the congregation is supposed to hear the readings and prayers of All Saints' Day. The same applies to ordinations. Similar instructions apply to the rites of initiation, anointing of the sick and viaticum, and to certain ceremonies pertaining to those in religious orders. However, when anointing of the sick takes place during a solemnity that is not a holy day of obligation, one of the readings may come from those recommended for the Ritual Mass (PCS 134, OUI 81).

The dedication of a new church may take place on most solemnities. Certain ones are excluded because of their centrality to the Christian year: Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.⁵

Celebrating Solemnities at the Liturgy of the Hours

In the Liturgy of the Hours, solemnities outrank all other observances. A votive celebration from the Commons or for the dead cannot take place on a solemnity (GILH 245).

Solemnities begin with Evening Prayer I (GILH 225). The hymn, antiphons, reading, responsory, and concluding prayer are all proper. If a proper text is missing, it comes from the Commons (154, 226). Worshipers may not change these formularies (247).

The psalms are proper, as are their antiphons (GILH 62, 117). These generally repeat psalms for Sundays or that relate to the celebration. At Evening Prayer I, the choices come from the "Laudate Psalms" (Psalms 113, 117, 135, 146, 147A, and 147B). The intercessions may be proper or come from the Common (GILH 134, 226).

5. Roman Missal: Ritual Masses, X. For the Dedication of a Church and an Altar.

Morning Prayer on a solemnity repeats the psalms from Sunday of the first week. These appear as old friends inviting worshipers to recall the freshness of the resurrection and the joy of remembering it in the morning. The hymn, antiphons, and reading are proper. Some elements may come from the Commons, such as the intercessions (GILH 134, 226–27).

For Daytime Prayer, the psalms break from the usual cycle and return to “complementary psalmody,” drawn from the “Gradual Psalms” (Psalms 120–28) and traditionally prayed during the middle hours of the day. Proper antiphons frame each of these to color the day. On solemnities the weekday hymn is generally used (GILH 82, 229).

The Office of Readings on solemnities has a proper hymn, antiphons, psalms, readings, and responsories. The second reading may introduce the saint of the day or present a passage written by the saint. On solemnities this office includes the *Te Deum* and the prayer of the day (GILH 68, 228).

As on Sundays, the Office of Readings may expand into Vigils (GILH 71, 73). Whereas the gospel for Vigils on Ordinary Time Sundays recalls the resurrection of Christ, the one for a solemnity comes from a designated place in the Lectionary for Mass. For example, for the solemnity of the Sacred Heart, which always falls on a Friday when a reading about the resurrection would not so naturally connect, those praying Vigils draw the gospel from one of those offered at Mass in other years of the cycle. A homily may follow.

On solemnities, the concluding prayer for Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, and Evening Prayer is the same as the collect for Mass (GILH 199). The one concluding Night Prayer still pertains to that hour (198).

The two Night Prayers on solemnities match those following Evening Prayer I and II of Sunday. However, each concludes with a prayer that does not refer to celebrating the resurrection that day (GILH 230).

Celebrating Solemnities of Obligation

Certain solemnities are set aside as days of precept when the faithful are obliged to participate at Mass. A conference of bishops chooses from the following list: Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Mary the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, St. Joseph, the apostles Peter and Paul, and All Saints (canon 1246, §2).

In the revision, four days are to be observed by all the faithful: Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, and the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. However, only the first of these had to remain on its traditional day; conferences of bishops could transfer the other three to another day, but only to a Sunday, so that the whole church celebrates these mysteries every year. The revisers did not recommend transferring other days to Sunday (such as the Assumption or All Saints) because of the priority given the paschal mystery of Christ over other observances (SC 102 and 106). Local churches desiring to move a day such as All Saints to align with a day on the secular calendar may request it from the Holy See.⁶ Although nothing came of it, the revisers also considered moving holy days to Saturdays in Israel and to Fridays in Islamic countries.⁷

The United States observes several days of obligation, though with some exceptions.⁸ Three of them lose their obligatory status if they fall on a Monday or a Saturday: Mary the Mother of God, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and All Saints. This relieves clergy and laity of excessive duties on weekends. Two of these days are always obligatory: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, because

6. *Calendarium particularia* 36, DOL 481 (4031), p. 1253.

7. Bugnini, pp. 322–24.

8. USCCB Canonical Affairs & Church Governance: Complementary Norms, “Canon 1246, §2—Holy Days of Obligation,” <https://www.usccb.org/committees/canonical-affairs-church-governance/complementary-norms/#tab--canon-1246-§2-holy-days-of-obligation>.

she is patroness of the country under that title, and Christmas. Even when these dates fall on a Monday or a Saturday, the obligation remains.

The conference of bishops could not reach a national agreement relative to the Ascension of the Lord, traditionally observed on the fortieth day after Easter. Consequently, throughout most of the country, the Ascension replaces the Seventh Sunday of Easter. More of the faithful will therefore celebrate this important event in the life of Christ. However, in some dioceses, the faithful are accustomed to the traditional day, and their bishops have kept Ascension on Thursday. These are the archdioceses and dioceses within the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Boston, Hartford, New York, Omaha, and Philadelphia.⁹

In England and Wales, the following days are holy days that, if they fall on a Saturday or a Monday, transfer to the adjacent Sunday: Epiphany, Peter and Paul, Assumption, and All Saints.¹⁰ Scotland does the same for Peter and Paul and the Assumption. If November 1 falls on a Saturday in England and Wales, All Souls moves to Monday, November 3, but in Scotland All Saints moves to Sunday, and when falling on a Monday, it remains a holy day of obligation.¹¹

As on Sundays, there is to be a homily at Mass celebrated with the people (GIRM 66). Originally, two days of obligation allowed the faithful to receive communion a second time: Christmas and Easter, as both of them have a Vigil Mass.¹²

9. USCCB, Committee on Divine Worship, "The Liturgical Celebration of Consecutive Feast Days (and Nights)," *Newsletter* LII (May–June 2016): 19. Office of Divine Worship, Archdiocese of Newark: "Transfer of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord," <https://rcan.org/transfer-of-the-solemnity-of-the-ascension-of-the-lord/>.

10. "Liturgical Calendar: Frequently Asked Questions," <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/FAQ.shtml>.

11. Archdiocese of Glasgow, "Holy Days of Obligation," http://www.cathedralgl.org/uploads/3/8/7/2/3872483/holy_day_of_obligation.pdf.

12. *Inter Oecumenici*, no. 60, DOL 23 (352), p. 103.

Later the Code of Canon Law permitted the faithful to receive communion at a second eucharistic celebration, regardless of the day (canon 917).

As noted above, certain rules apply to consecutive solemnities. In the United States, these concern only the Immaculate Conception and Christmas, because Ascension never falls on Saturday or Monday, and because the obligation is lifted from the other three solemnities when they do.

Funerals may not be celebrated on solemnities of obligation (GIRM 380). In the United States, when the obligation is lifted on a Monday or a Saturday, a funeral Mass may take place.

Celebrating Days without Rank

Neither Ash Wednesday nor All Souls' Day is ranked as a solemnity. However, they are listed respectively in the second and third tiers in the table of liturgical days. At Mass, each has three readings during the Liturgy of the Word, but neither includes the Gloria.

Celebrating Feasts

Feast days rank just below solemnities. At Mass, the Gloria is said or sung, even if the feast falls during Advent or Lent (GIRM 53). Instead of two readings, only one precedes the proclamation of the gospel (GIRM 357). The antiphons and prayers of the Missal are proper to a feast.

In the Liturgy of the Hours, feasts have no Evening Prayer I. An exception is made for feasts of the Lord that fall on Sunday (GILH 231). Many other features resemble those for solemnities (231). In the Office of Readings the psalms are proper, as are their antiphons (62). The second reading pertains to the feast (67, 154), and the *Te Deum* precedes the prayer (69). This office may be expanded into Vigils, with a pertinent



Chapter Five

Proper of Saints

The calendar of saints begins in January. In the previous Missal, it began in late November to synchronize with Advent. However, the calendar of saints flows independent of the liturgical year, so the Missal now frames it with the civic year. Integrated below are national and universal special days of prayer not explicitly found in the Proper.

January

2 Saints Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

In the previous calendar, Basil was observed on June 14, though he died on January 1 († 379), the octave of Christmas and now the solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. Gregory of Nazianzen had been celebrated on May 9. However, his *dies natalis* was January 25 († 389 or 390), the Conversion of St. Paul.

Basil was a founder of monasticism in the East, but the revisers first categorized him as a Doctor of the Church.¹ Basil had been listed in the Roman calendar since the thirteenth century,

1. Schemata, n. 132, p. 19. Throughout this chapter, the revisers' first categorizations come from this Schemata, pp. 8–22.

and Gregory since the year 1500.² The revisers proposed their collective commemoration “by reason of the friendship between them, who cannot be honored on their own day,” making it an obligatory memorial “because of the importance of these doctors in the Church.”³

At first the revisers wanted to move their day to January 26. In the end, the two were moved off the day following Gregory’s *dies natalis* and onto the day following Basil’s. This opened January 26 for the memorial of Timothy and Titus, while giving some deference to Basil, whose presence on the calendar is older.

Basil is named in the Litany of the Saints among early doctors of the church. In the solemn profession of religious women, his sister Macrina, a consecrated virgin who died the same year he did, is also invoked. During the Consecration of Virgins, Macrina replaces Basil in the litany, perhaps to increase the number of women without unduly lengthening the list.

3 *The Most Holy Name of Jesus*

The revisers discontinued the Most Holy Name of Jesus. They believed that its significance was already assumed on January 1, when the gospel recounts the bestowal of Jesus’ name. The group asked,

Is it appropriate to give this day [January 1] the title of the name of Jesus or of the imposition of the name of Jesus?

From the biblical point of view, it seemed impossible to put in the foreground the imposition of the name of Jesus in the title, letting the circumcision pass in silence, the mention of

2. Schemata, n. 188, p. 10. Throughout this chapter, the dates for the death of saints and their addition to the Roman calendar come from this Schemata, pp. 9–28, unless otherwise noted.

3. Schemata, n. 188, p. 10.

which had been suppressed in 1961; the two acts are recalled in the same event.⁴

Furthermore, if they retained the Holy Name of Jesus, "The gospel of January 2 would be a repetition of the one on January 1."⁵

Nonetheless, in 2002, the Most Holy Name of Jesus returned to the calendar and Missal as an optional memorial. Perhaps its devotional appeal prompted the Holy See to restore it. January 2 now honored two great doctors of the church, but January 3 stood within the range of the former observance. The *Supplement* to the Lectionary includes alternative readings (510/1).

4 Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

In the United States, the calendar includes an obligatory memorial of Elizabeth Ann Seton. Born in New York City just before the nation's independence, she is considered the first saint born in the country. January 4 was her *dies natalis* († 1821). Pope John XXIII beatified her in 1963, and she was added to the particular calendar in the United States with an opening prayer.⁶ Paul VI canonized her in 1975, so the propers expanded with antiphons, suggested readings, and prayers over the gifts and after communion.⁷ These all remain in the Missal, unusual for a memorial.

The *Book of Blessings* offers a service for visiting a cemetery on All Souls' Day. In the United States, Elizabeth's name is part of the short litany of saints (1746).

4. Schemata, n. 260, p. 47.

5. Schemata, n. 260, p. 47.

6. *The Roman Missal: The Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1974), p. 599.

7. *The Roman Missal: The Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1985), p. 598.

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