

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

WHAT

☒ AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE ☐ A BORING ARTICLE

TOPIC

☒ SOLEMNITIES ☒ FEASTS ☒ MEMORIALS ☐ CATS

AUTHOR

JONATHAN TEIXEIRA

PUBLICATION

FOCUS BLOG - [FOCUS.ORG/BLOG](https://focus.org/blog)

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nearly 2,000 years of Catholicism has given us plenty to celebrate.

In order to organize all our special days and highlight their relative importance, the Church has developed a universal liturgical calendar.

After numerous revisions throughout the centuries, today's liturgical calendar categorizes celebrations into three classifications: solemnities, feasts, and memorials, each with a different level of importance. This guide provides a quick overview of each.

PLEASE NOTE

This guide provides only a simple overview. For a more complete understanding of liturgical nuance, please consult the sources and/or your local liturgical authority.

The classification of a particular celebration can change depending on location. For example: St. Benedict is celebrated with an obligatory memorial in the universal calendar, but with a feast in Europe since he is one of its patrons. Even more, it's a solemnity in the diocese and abbey of Montecassino where he is buried.

Personal devotion can also inform one's private celebration of the day. For instance, one's patron saint's day may be a memorial, but could be personally celebrated closer in style to that of a solemnity. (i.e. cake, party, no fasting, etc.)

SOLEMNITIES

RANK 01	CELEBRATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBLIGATORY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEGINS EVENING PRIOR
REQUIRED MASS PARTS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GLORIA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL	
MASS READINGS 3 READINGS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC	MASS TEXTS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC <input type="checkbox"/> ORDINARY
<p>NOTES</p> <p>The easiest way to remember what a solemnity looks like is to think it's just like a Sunday.</p> <p>Solemnities that fall on Sundays are celebrated during Ordinary Time and Christmastide, but are usually moved to the following Monday the rest of the year.</p> <p>Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation are considered Solemnities.</p> <p>Some Solemnities are “fixed,” celebrated on the same date every year (St. Joseph on March 19), while others are “movable” and are celebrated on dates relative to other liturgical events (Pentecost is 50 days after Easter).</p>	<p>NOTABLE SOLEMNITIES</p> <p>Mary, Mother of God January 1</p> <p>St. Joseph, Husband of Mary March 19</p> <p>Easter First Sunday after the calendrical Paschal full moon</p> <p>Assumption of Mary August 15</p> <p>All Saints' Day November 1</p> <p>Immaculate Conception 8 December</p> <p>Christmas 25 December</p>

FEASTS

RANK 02	CELEBRATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBLIGATORY <input type="checkbox"/> BEGINS EVENING PRIOR	
REQUIRED MASS PARTS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GLORIA <input type="checkbox"/> CREED <input type="checkbox"/> PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL		
MASS READINGS 2 READINGS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC		MASS TEXTS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC <input type="checkbox"/> ORDINARY
<p>NOTES</p> <p>Since Sundays are treated as Solemnities, feasts are not celebrated when they fall on a Sunday.</p> <p>Feasts of the Lord (e.g. Transfiguration) are celebrated when falling on a Sunday. When this happens, they resemble a Solemnity (3 readings, creed, begins with the previous days evening prayer, etc).</p> <p>While specific texts are used in the Mass like on a Solemnity, fewer parts of the Mass use special texts.</p> <p>All the Apostles' feast days are feasts, except for Peter and Paul (June 29), which is a solemnity.</p>		<p>NOTABLE FEASTS</p> <p>Baptism of the Lord January 11</p> <p>Transfiguration August 6</p> <p>Nativity of Mary September 8</p> <p>Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels September 29</p> <p>All Souls November 2</p> <p>Dedication of St. John Lateran November 9</p> <p>The Holy Innocents December 28</p>

MEMORIALS

RANK 03	CELEBRATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBLIGATORY <input type="checkbox"/> BEGINS EVENING PRIOR
REQUIRED MASS PARTS <input type="checkbox"/> GLORIA <input type="checkbox"/> CREED <input type="checkbox"/> PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL	
MASS READINGS 2 READINGS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC	MASS TEXTS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORDINARY
<p>NOTES</p> <p>The celebration of memorials can either be obligatory or optional, and depends on what/who is being celebrated. Despite it's obligatory status, all feasts are celebrated in the same fashion.</p> <p>Memorials have specific opening prayers for Mass. The rest of the Mass texts are taken from a set of texts tailored to the state in life of the saint (pastor, martyr, etc), and are used for all similar memorials.</p> <p>While specific readings for Mass are available, they aren't often used so as not to disrupt the cycle of daily readings. If a saint or event appears in the Scriptures, that is usually the reading, and it is usually used.</p> <p>Memorials during Lent and December 17-24 are celebrated as commemorations, meaning the opening prayer is used, but everything else comes from the regular texts of the day. This also means they don't interrupt your Lenten penances, unless a special dispensation is given by the local Bishop. This might happen on the feast of a diocesan or parish patron, such as St. Patrick, but isn't always the case. If in doubt, check your diocese's website.</p>	<p>NOTABLE MEMORIALS</p> <p>André Bessette January 6</p> <p>Thomas Aquinas January 28</p> <p>Paul Miki and Companions February 6</p> <p>Perpetua and Felicity March 7</p> <p>St. Patrick March 17</p> <p>St. Isadore April 4</p> <p>Our Lady of Fatima May 13</p> <p>Ignatius of Loyola July 31</p> <p>Queenship of Mary August 22</p> <p>Padre Pio September 23</p> <p>Thérèse of Lisieux October 1</p> <p>John Paul II October 22</p> <p>Francis Xavier December 3</p>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHOR	PUBLICATION	SOURCES
JONATHAN TEIXEIRA	FOCUS BLOG - FOCUS.ORG/BLOG	bit.ly/wtd-ig
FOCUS The Fellowship of Catholic University Students launches college launches students into lifelong catholic mission. Learn more at focus.org .		
WANT MORE? You can find more of Jonathan's Illustrated Guides and a wide variety of interesting articles on the FOCUS Blog at focus.org/blog .		

What's the Difference? An Illustrated Guide to Solemnities, Feasts, and Memorials by Jonathan Teixeira. Published on the FOCUS blog at focus.org/blog. Contact Jonathan at jonathan.teixeira@focus.org or on twitter [@jonteixeira](https://twitter.com/jonteixeira).