

The Traditional Church Calendar 101

Practicing Holidays

The year is full of holidays. From December through May, the holidays we celebrate are largely sacred

in origin. The biggest, of course, are Christmas and Easter, but there are many more. The holidays from June through November are largely secular. Oddly, the sacred-secular divide is alive and well in the American holiday calendar.

These holidays are gathered into six-month time frames for a reason. Historically, Christians have followed a schedule of Scripture readings for worship that divides the year in two, the Half Year of Our Lord (approximately December through May) and the Half Year of the Church (June through November).

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During the Half Year of Our Lord, readings trace the life of Christ. Throughout this time, specific holy days observe important events in His life and ministry, and there are more well-known celebrations.

The benefit of remembering these holy days is obvious: they teach the story of Jesus. When celebrated properly, your faith and knowledge of Christ are fed and strengthened. The Annunciation (March 25) remembers Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she will be the mother of God—and so Jesus is both God and man. The Baptism of Our Lord in January reminds us that Jesus numbered Himself among sinners to be our Redeemer.



Get to know your Christian calendar

BEGINNINGS

Start of a season in the church year.

FESTIVAL DAYS

Commemorating an important aspect of Christ's person and/or work.

FEASTS OR FESTIVALS

Remembering individuals, most of whom interacted directly with Christ, usually during a worship service with holy communion.

COMMEMORATIONS

"Second-tier" holy days commemorating important individuals, perhaps by recalling them at the start of a class or during family devotions.

THE HALF-YEAR OF THE CHURCH		
DATE	TITLE	SIGNIFICANCE
SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	HOLY TRINITY	ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS
SEPTEMBER 30	JEROME	TRANSLATOR OF HOLY SCRIPTURE
OCTOBER 25	DORCAS (TABITHA), LYDIA AND PHOEBE	FAITHFUL WOMEN
OCTOBER 31	REFORMATION	BIRTHDAY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION
NOVEMBER 1	ALL SAINTS' DAY	REMEMBRANCE OF ALL WHO HAVE DIED IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
NOVEMBER 19	ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY	CHARITY
4TH SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS: SEASON OF ADVENT	ADVENT	PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING
DECEMBER 17	DANIEL, SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDENEGO	WITNESSES IN EXILE

THE HALF-YEAR OF OUR LORD		
DATE	TITLE	SIGNIFICANCE
DECEMBER 24: SEASON OF CHRISTMAS	CHRISTMAS EVE	NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
DECEMBER 25	CHRISTMAS DAY	BIRTH OF CHRIST
DECEMBER 28	HOLY INNOCENTS	MARTYRED IN BETHLEHEM BY KING HEROD
DECEMBER 31	EVE OF CIRCUMCISION AND NAME OF JESUS	CHRIST'S FIRST INCARNATE OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW
JANUARY 6: SEASON OF EPIPHANY	EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD	PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS
1ST SUNDAY AFTER JANUARY 6	BAPTISM OF OUR LORD	JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS SAVIOR
JANUARY 18	CONFESSION OF ST. PETER	"YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." (MATTHEW 16:16)
JANUARY 25	CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL	MISSIONARY TO THE GENTILES
FEBRUARY 14	VALENTINE	MARTYRDOM
FEBRUARY 15	PHILEMON AND EPHEBUS	MASTER AND SLAVE ARE BROTHERS IN CHRIST
SUNDAY BEFORE ASH WEDNESDAY	TRANSFIGURATION	CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE GOD INCARNATE
EARLY - MID-FEBRUARY: SEASON OF LENT	ASH WEDNESDAY	REFLECTION AND PREPARATION FOR EASTER
MARCH 17	PATRICK	MISSIONARY TO IRELAND
MID-MARCH - MID-APRIL	PALM SUNDAY	BEGINNING OF HOLY WEEK
MID-MARCH - MID-APRIL	HOLY THURSDAY	CHRIST INSTITUTES THE LORD'S SUPPER
MID-MARCH - MID-APRIL	GOOD FRIDAY	DEATH OF JESUS
MID-MARCH - MID-APRIL: SEASON OF EASTER	EASTER SUNDAY	RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
MAY 9	JOB	BELIEVER
MAY 24	ESTHER	BELIEVER, WIFE OF XERXES
40 DAYS AFTER EASTER (MID-MAY TO MID-JUNE)	ASCENSION OF OUR LORD	ASCENSION OF JESUS
50 DAYS AFTER EASTER: SEASON OF PENTECOST	PENTECOST	THE HOLY SPIRIT IS Poured OUT ON CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM