



# NewsLetter

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### Pope Francis Elevates Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to Feast

Extolling the virtues of Saint Mary Magdalene as the “apostle to the apostles” and the “witness to Divine Mercy,” the first to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection, and as a model of the dignity of women, Pope Francis has decided to elevate her liturgical Memorial on July 22 each year to the rank of a Feast. A decree to that effect was issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on June 3, 2016, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Prot. n. 257/16).

The former Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene was already enriched with many proper liturgical texts in both the *Roman Missal* and *Liturgy of the Hours*, thus enabling a smooth transition to the new rank of Feast. Beginning this July 22, the following changes are to be made to her liturgical celebration:

- The *Glory to God in the highest* is sung or said at Mass.
- All the readings for St. Mary Magdalene in no. 603 of the *Lectionary for Mass* are now proper, instead of just the Gospel.
- In the Office of Readings of the *Liturgy of the Hours*, the psalmody, verse, and First Reading with its Reponsory are taken from the Common of Holy Women; the *Te Deum* is also sung or said after the Second Reading with its Reponsory.

Enclosed with the Latin decree was the text of a new Preface composed in honor of St. Mary Magdalene, entitled “The apostle to the Apostles.” Although the Latin text may now be used in Latin-language Masses, vernacular editions in English and Spanish for use in the United States remain to be produced, approved, and implemented. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy will provide its member Conferences of Bishops with a draft English translation in due course, and the USCCB will commence work on a Spanish translation. The entire process may take from one to two years. Until the new Preface is implemented, Preface I or II of Saints will still be used for the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

The Secretary of the Congregation, Archbishop Arthur Roche, provided additional commentary on the importance of St. Mary Magdalene to the life of the Church and the circumstances motivating Pope Francis’ decision. He wrote, “This decision, in the current ecclesial context, seeks to reflect more deeply upon the dignity of women, on the new evangelization and on the greatness of the mystery of God’s Mercy.” The Archbishop’s commentary is available through the Congregation’s website at [www.Vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/articolo-roche-maddalena\\_en.pdf](http://www.Vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/articolo-roche-maddalena_en.pdf).

Finally, as a result of this decision, the entries for July 22, 2016 and July 22, 2017 in the *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America* are amended as follows (the Feast is impeded in 2018 by the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time):

July 2016

July 2017

**22 Fri Saint Mary Magdalene** white  
*Feast*  
Sg 3:1-4b or 2 Cor 5:14-17/Jn 20:1-2, 11-18 (603)  
Pss Prop

**22 Sat Saint Mary Magdalene** white  
*Feast*  
Sg 3:1-4b or 2 Cor 5:14-17/Jn 20:1-2, 11-18 (603)  
Pss Prop

The decree of the Congregation is reprinted below for the benefit of our readers:

**CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS**

Prot. n. 257/16

**DECREE**

The Church, both in the East and in the West, has always regarded Saint Mary Magdalene the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist, and with the greatest reverence has always honored her although in diverse ways.

Given that in our time the Church is called to reflect in a more profound way on the dignity of Woman, on the New Evangelization and on the greatness of the Mystery of Divine Mercy, it seemed right that the example of Saint Mary Magdalene might also fittingly be proposed to the faithful. In fact this woman, known as the one who loved Christ and who was greatly loved by Christ, and was called a "witness of Divine Mercy" by Saint Gregory the Great and an "apostle of the apostles" by Saint Thomas Aquinas, can now rightly be taken by the faithful as a model of women's role in the Church.

Therefore the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis has established that from now on the celebration of Saint Mary Magdalene should be inscribed in the General Roman Calendar with the rank of Feast rather than Memorial as is presently the case.

The new rank of celebration does not involve any change of the day on which the celebration itself takes place and, as for the liturgical texts, the following is to be observed:

- a) The day dedicated to the celebration of Saint Mary Magdalene remains the same as it appears in the Roman Calendar, that is July 22.
- b) The texts to be used in the Mass and in the Divine Office remain the same as those contained in the Missal and in the Liturgy of the Hours on the day of the Feast, with the addition in the Missal of a proper Preface, attached to this Decree. It will be the responsibility of the Conferences of Bishops to translate the text of the Preface into the vernacular language so that, having received the approval of the Apostolic See, it can be used and in due time included in the next reprint of the Roman Missal.

Where, according to particular law, Saint Mary Magdalene is legitimately celebrated on a different day and as a Solemnity, this day and rank remains as before.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, June 3, 2016, Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Robert Card. Sarah  
Prefect

✠ Arthur Roche  
Archbishop Secretary

## The Liturgical Celebration of Consecutive Feast Days (and Nights)

When two liturgical celebrations ranking high on the Table of Liturgical Days fall on consecutive days, what liturgical texts are used, especially on the evening of the first day? Should the Mass for the first day be celebrated, or is it permissible (or even required) to anticipate the next day's feast? What is prayed in the Liturgy of the Hours? These perennial questions over the years have resulted in different advice, and an exploration of the topic now seeks to shed some light on the confusion. The choice of liturgical texts is treated here, while its effect on one's obligation will be addressed in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

After much initial discussion, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship addressed the question in 1974 and issued guidelines in a Note, "On the Mass of a Sunday or holyday anticipated on the preceding evening" (*Notitia* 10 [1974], 222-223). The Note emphasizes the importance of the rankings in the Table of Liturgical Days in the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* in choosing the proper celebration:

In the case of a Sunday following a holyday or vice versa, the best way to achieve completeness in the observance of the entire liturgical day is to apply to the celebration of an evening Mass what is laid down in the case of Evening Prayer, namely: "Should... Vespers (Evening Prayer) of the current day's Office and First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of the following day be assigned for celebration on the same day, then Vespers (Evening Prayer) of the celebration with the higher rank in the Table of Liturgical Days takes precedence; in cases of equal rank, Vespers (Evening Prayer) of the current day takes precedence." (no. 2; found in DOL 448, pg. 1177)<sup>1</sup>

This document is well known, since an English translation is readily available. As a result, many people understandably question why liturgical calendars and published *ordos* do not always strictly adhere to this system of priority based on rank of the coinciding feasts in the Table of Liturgical Days.

In fact, ten years after the original Note, the Congregation departed from its 1974 solution and issued revised criteria based instead on the principle whereby precedence is given to the "feast of precept" (usually translated as holy day of obligation), that is, favoring the celebration of the day carrying an obligation for the faithful to attend Mass. This rationale, no doubt, was to serve the pastoral needs of the faithful, some of whom attend Saturday evening Masses expecting to experience the Sunday liturgy and thus fulfill their obligation. The newer guidelines ("De Calendario Liturgico Exarando pro Anno 1984-1985," *Notitia* 20 [1984], 603-605) are only available in Latin, and so its provisions are less known to those without access to the Congregation's journal or a vernacular translation.

Although it was addressing specific issues in the 1985 liturgical calendar, the 1984 guidelines nonetheless established principles of priority that are applicable today. These guidelines may be summarized as follows:

1. In the celebration of Mass, precedence is always to be given ("*praecedentia semper danda est*") to the feast of precept, *regardless of the ranks of the two consecutive feasts*; and
2. At celebrations of Evening Prayer on a holy day of obligation in which the people participate, the older guidelines would still apply, except that the texts of Evening Prayer I of the following day *may* be replaced by Evening Prayer II of the current day.

As a reminder, every Sunday is observed as "the primordial holy day of obligation" in the universal Church (Code of Canon Law, canon 1246 §1). There are an additional six feasts of precept in the Latin Church dioceses of the United States: the solemnities of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Jan. 1), the Ascension of the Lord (Thurs. of the Sixth Week of Easter, and since 1999, only in the ecclesiastical provinces of Boston, Hartford, Newark, New York, Omaha, and Philadelphia), the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Aug. 15), All Saints (Nov. 1), the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Dec. 8), and the Nativity of the Lord (Dec. 25). When January 1, August 15, or November 1 fall on either a Monday or Saturday, the obligation to attend Mass is removed that year.

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<sup>1</sup> Citations and translations, unless otherwise updated by the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, are from *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (DOL), © 1982 International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

Despite their considerable differences, both the 1974 and 1984 guidelines agree on two important matters: “These and like cases cannot be resolved by means of a general rule because of differing pastoral considerations and the different customs of the faithful” (1974 Note, introduction [DOL 448, pg. 1177]). Also, “In the light of pastoral circumstances, the local Ordinary is to indicate at the beginning of the year in the diocesan liturgical calendar the practice to be followed throughout the diocese; when pastoral reasons seem to dictate preference of the one Mass over the other, he may even, if necessary, depart from what has been said in the present document” (1974 Note, no. 4 [DOL 448, pg. 1178]). The 1984 guidelines include nearly identical language to the 1974 Note.

Along with the role of the Diocesan Bishop in clarifying which liturgies to use in instances of overlap, there is the important acknowledgement that these documents of the Holy See were presented as guidelines, which may or may not be applicable in every pastoral situation. Together with special liturgical events planned for the diocese, as well as any additional liturgical celebrations approved for the diocesan proper calendar, an annual diocesan *ordo* (whether in a 12-month calendar or even in the form of a short letter from the diocesan office of worship) published in a timely manner would be a very effective way to mitigate any confusion about which feast to celebrate when important feasts occur in close proximity. Such a calendar would be even more important if the Diocesan Bishop should choose to depart from these guidelines, as is his prerogative.

### **Applying Calendar Guidelines to Upcoming Feasts**

At first glance, these liturgical calendar guidelines can seem perplexing. Fortunately, when the principles are applied individually to precise occasions on the calendar where one major feast follows another, the solutions become clearer. Three upcoming pairs of major feasts in the remainder of 2016 can serve as examples:

#### August 6-7, 2016 (Transfiguration and 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

In the Table of Liturgical Days, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord ranks higher (no. 5) than Sundays in Ordinary Time (no. 6). For a Saturday evening Mass, however, the consideration of rankings is superseded by the fact that Sunday is a holy day of obligation, while the Transfiguration is not. Therefore, the formulary and Lectionary readings of the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time prevail on the evening of Saturday, August 6. For the Liturgy of the Hours, by contrast, a strict application of the 1984 guidelines would hold that Evening Prayer on Saturday evening still uses the texts of the Feast of the Transfiguration due to its higher rank.

#### August 14-15, 2016 (20th Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Assumption)

Arriving at a solution to the overlapping liturgical observances in mid-August is more elusive. Ordinarily, both Sunday and the Assumption would be holy days of obligation, but as noted above, the Assumption does not carry a precept to attend Mass in the United States this year, as August 15 falls on a Monday. Applying the 1984 guidelines strictly would suggest that Mass on the evening of Sunday, August 14 is that of the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, because Sunday is always a holy day of obligation, whereas Monday, August 15 is not, at least in the United States. Celebrating the Sunday Mass on Sunday evening would also dispel any confusion about fulfillment of the Sunday obligation. (Due to the fast-approaching date, however, it would seem that celebrating the Vigil Mass of the Assumption on Sunday evening might remain acceptable in this instance, at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.)

In the Divine Office, Evening Prayer I of the Assumption is prayed on Sunday evening due to its higher rank, but the guidelines suggest the possibility (though *not* the requirement) of praying instead Evening Prayer II of the ordinary Sunday at celebrations where the faithful participate.

#### December 11-12, 2016 (Third Sunday of Advent and Our Lady of Guadalupe)

The guidelines do not apply in this case, since there are no coinciding celebrations. Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours on Sunday, December 11 are that of the Third Sunday of Advent, and despite its great popularity in the United States, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mass and Office) is liturgically celebrated only between midnight and midnight of Monday, December 12: “Feasts are celebrated within the limits of the natural day” (*Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, no. 13). Popular devotions connected with Our Lady of Guadalupe, such as the *Mañanitas*, could be celebrated in the evening hours of December 11, provided that the spirit of the Advent Sunday is kept in mind; the *Mañanitas* could perhaps even conclude with Mass at midnight to officially begin the Feast.