

Scottish National Liturgy Commission

President: The Right Reverend Hugh Gilbert OSB, Bishop of Aberdeen

On the Observance of Holy Days of Obligation in Scotland

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE DECREE OF 14 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. Jesus rose from the dead on the 'first day of the week' and for Christians it has become the first of all days. Sunday, then, is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church. The celebration of other holy days as days of obligation presents important mysteries of Christ and his Church to the faithful.

In Scotland, the present observance of the celebration of holy days, and the obligation or not to attend Mass on them, has been in place since 1986. When certain feasts fell on Saturday or on Monday they were not days of obligation and, as a result, were celebrated by only a few of the faithful. The Bishops of Scotland have considered further the significance and observance of holy days of obligation, and have made the pastoral decision to clarify the obligation in years when such feasts fall on Saturday or on Monday.

With effect from the First Sunday of Advent 2018, a revised observance of the obligation to attend Mass on holy days will be in use. This decision of the Bishops of Scotland has been confirmed by the Holy See. Consequently, the holy days of obligation in Scotland are:

- Sunday
- The Nativity of the Lord (25 December)
- The Ascension of the Lord (Thursday Week 6 of Easter)
- Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Apostles (29 June)*
- The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 August)*
- All Saints (1 November)**

* When the Solemnities of Saint Peter and Saint Paul and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary fall on Saturday or on Monday they will be transferred to the adjacent Sunday. It is intended, in such years, that a greater number of the faithful will be gathered on a Sunday to celebrate these important feasts.

** When the Solemnity of All Saints falls on Saturday it will be transferred to the adjacent Sunday, when it falls on Monday it is kept on that day with obligation. This is to ensure that All Saints is celebrated every year as a holy day of obligation and that All Saints and All Souls are always celebrated on adjacent days. In years when All Saints is transferred to Sunday 2 November, All Souls will be transferred to Monday 3 November.

These arrangements avoid Saturday holy days of obligation which could cause confusion alongside the Sunday celebration of Masses. They also ensure that the feasts of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints are always of obligation. The faithful will be annually reminded of the significance of the Apostles, the Mother of God and the Communion of Saints in the economy of salvation. This will serve to highlight defining elements of Catholic ecclesiology, Mariology and eschatology.

Table of Moveable Holy Days of Obligation 2019-2032

	Ascension	Ss Peter & Paul	Assumption	All Saints
2019	Thu 30 May	Sun 30 Jun	Thu 15 Aug	Fri 1 Nov
2020	Thu 21 May	Sun 28 Jun	Sun 16 Aug	Sun 1 Nov
2021	Thu 13 May	Tue 29 Jun	Sun 15 Aug	Mon 1 Nov
2022	Thu 26 May	Wed 29 Jun	Sun 14 Aug	Tue 1 Nov
2023	Thu 18 May	Thu 29 Jun	Tue 15 Aug	Wed 1 Nov
2024	Thu 9 May	Sun 30 Jun	Thu 15 Aug	Fri 1 Nov
2025	Thu 29 May	Sun 29 Jun	Fri 15 Aug	Sun 2 Nov
2026	Thu 14 May	Sun 28 Jun	Sun 16 Aug	Sun 1 Nov
2027	Thu 6 May	Tue 29 Jun	Sun 15 Aug	Mon 1 Nov
2028	Thu 25 May	Thu 29 Jun	Tue 15 Aug	Wed 1 Nov
2029	Thu 10 May	Fri 29 Jun	Wed 15 Aug	Thu 1 Nov
2030	Thu 30 May	Sun 30 Jun	Thu 15 Aug	Fri 1 Nov
2031	Thu 22 May	Sun 29 Jun	Fri 15 Aug	Sun 2 Nov
2032	Thu 6 May	Tue 29 Jun	Sun 15 Aug	Mon 1 Nov

The Obligation to Participate in the Mass

The Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. The faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who intentionally fail in this obligation commit a serious sin.

Just as God 'rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done,' human life has a rhythm of work and rest. The institution of the Lord's Day and the celebration of other important feasts help everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives.

It is hoped that this revised observance will enrich the faithfulness of Christ's members to him and his Church, and that they will strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Right Reverend Hugh Gilbert, OSB,
President, Scottish National Liturgy Commission