

# Tridentine Community News

January 18, 2009

## Classes of Feast Days

The Church Calendar incorporates a broad range of feasts throughout the year. On the one hand are self-evidently major feast days such as Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, and the Immaculate Conception. On the other end of the spectrum are days for which no particular Mass is specified. Let's examine how this works.

In the Extraordinary Form of Holy Mass, every day of the year is assigned a Feast Class of 1 through 4. First Class feasts are the equivalent of "Solemnities" in the Ordinary Form. Nothing can preempt them. The Gloria and Credo are said at those Masses, even on weekdays.

Second Class feasts commemorate major events, e.g.: the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or major Saints, e.g.: St. Matthias. These are roughly equivalent to "Feasts" in the Novus Ordo calendar. The Gloria and Credo are said. A few named Ferias, such as the "Greater Ferias of Advent", are Second Class feasts and may not be preempted.

Most saints' feast days are Third Class feasts. These are somewhat equivalent to "Obligatory Memorials" in the Ordinary Form. In the Extraordinary Form, the Gloria, but no Credo, is said.

Most Ferial days, as well as feasts of lesser-known saints, are Fourth Class feasts. These are roughly equivalent to "Optional Memorials" in the Novus Ordo. Some days may actually allow several options. For example, January 19 may be celebrated as a Feria (Mass of the preceding Sunday); as the feast of Ss. Marius, Martha, Audifax, & Abachum; or as the feast of St. Canute. The celebrant chooses. The Gloria is omitted.

When a certain feast day does not have its own complete set of Propers and Readings, the Missal specifies that one of a variety of standard Masses be said for that saint. Again taking January 19 as an example, if the Feast of St. Canute is chosen, the Mass is the "Common of Martyrs", a standard Mass Propers/Readings set used for a variety of Martyrs' feasts, along with the "Commemorations", or second Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion, of St. Canute. No matter which Mass is chosen, the other saint(s) are to be commemorated, as you can see in the upper left section of the accompanying missal page image.

### Mandatory and Optional Displacement of the Sunday

A limited number of First and Second Class feasts must displace the Sunday Mass. For example, the Dedication of the Archbasilica of Our Savior (St. John Lateran) takes precedence on November 9.

Previous columns have addressed External Solemnities, the *optional* moving of a major feast to the nearest Sunday. The feast of the patron saint of a parish is an example of one such feast that the Universal Church permits to be transferred to Sunday. Corpus Christi is an example of a feast that U.S. Bishops permit to be moved to Sunday. The Canadian Bishops may permit moving Corpus Christi as well, though we have not yet been able to find documentation proving or disproving this.

If the transferred feast is not a feast of Our Lord, the Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion of the Sunday that has been replaced are recited as Commemorations after the prayers of the Mass are read. This is why you will occasionally notice a second set of these prayers in our Latin/English Propers Handouts.

A Votive Mass is one of a number of elective Masses in the Missal that a celebrant may choose to say on a Fourth Class, or in certain cases on a Third Class, feast day instead of the specified Mass. One example is the "Votive Mass for the Sick". At St. Josaphat, we have become familiar with the Requiem Mass being celebrated on certain Mondays on which it may preempt the specified feast.

### The Fine Print

There are many confusing and subtle rules in the Church Calendar. National and diocesan feasts are part of the possibilities. Even experienced priests need to refer to an Ordo, or official calendar with explanations, to know what Mass(es) may be celebrated on a

given day. And even then, it can be rather puzzling.

For example, Monday, January 12 was listed as a "Feria After the Epiphany" in the FSSP Ordo. This nomenclature hints that there may be something different from a regular Feria. The Ordo notes do not give a clue, so we next turn to Fortescue's "The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described". That book says that the first Sunday After Epiphany is to be the Feast of the Holy Family. It goes on to say that Ferias later that week must use the Mass of the "first Sunday After Epiphany" (note the lower case "f"). Looking in the altar missal, the Feast of the Holy Family is indeed specified for the first Sunday After Epiphany. But right afterwards, there is another Mass for the "First Sunday After Epiphany" [upper case "F" - now exactly when would that Mass be used?]. So which Mass did we use on Monday, January 12? That of the Holy Family, because the Fortescue book used a lower case "f" in "first", which seems to indicate *not* to use the more specific "First Sunday After Epiphany" Mass. There is only so much time for research, thus common sense must be relied upon from time to time.

