

Feast of the Ascension Moves to Sunday

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore beginning this year, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord will be observed on the Seventh Sunday of Easter (May 12, 2002) rather than on the Thursday after the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

The Province of Baltimore, including the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Dioceses of Arlington, Richmond, Wheeling-Charleston and Wilmington, as well as the Province of Washington, including the Archdiocese of Washington and the Diocese of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, are adopting the change concurrently.

For some time and in many places around the world, bishops have been concerned that the Thursday celebration of the feast kept many of the faithful from full adherence to this holy day of obligation, which involves both a mandatory attendance at Mass and contemplative removal from the world of work and other routine obligations. The Feast of the Ascension is important to Catholics as an integral part of the redemptive work of Christ, beginning with His betrayal, suffering and death, followed by the Easter celebration of his resurrection and concluding with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

So that it may be celebrated on Sunday, "the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church," [Canon 1246], the Holy See has allowed the feast to be moved to the following Sunday. In the United States, approval to transfer the feast was obtained in 1999. By decree of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, authority to implement the change was granted to the ecclesiastical provinces. Many provinces, including most of those in the western part of the country, have already moved the feast. The change has also already been made in many countries around the world. Media Point of contact is Ray Kempisty at 410-547-5378.