

How to Celebrate a Feast Day

~ from KatieWarner.com ~

In their book, *The Feasts: How the Church Year Forms Us As Catholics*, Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina write, “Christian life revolves around the calendar that Christians share. The calendar and its feasts remind us who we are. If we want to know ourselves, it is important for us to imagine how this works – how feasts form us, what they teach us, how they guide and direct our emotions, our thoughts, and our spiritual growth.”

Sadly, many Catholics today don’t even celebrate solemnities and feast days at home throughout the liturgical year (Christmas and Easter usually excepted). But why not? Celebrating the feast days of the Church not only “directs our spiritual growth,” but it’s just plain FUN. Being Catholic offers us opportunities for penance and reflection, for certain, but it also gives us lots of reasons to party...and that’s where solemnity and feast day celebrations come in.

So, if you aren’t already celebrating feast days on your own or at home with your family, here are some quick hacks and tips to get you started:

1. **Decide which feasts that you’ll make a special effort to celebrate at home.** There are a lot of feasts days in the Church, so I recommend you first focus on celebrating solemnities, feasts days of the highest rank in the liturgical calendar. This means a rough average of a couple celebrations per month, which is doable for most of us! You can also add in a few feast days that may be particularly meaningful to your family. For example, we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at our house, since she’s always been a special intercessor for us.
2. **Put them on the calendar and plan ahead.** Take note of when the feast or solemnity will occur (some dates fluctuate a little from year to year) and set a digital or written reminder a few days before the feast to get your celebration activity, food, prayers, songs, and so forth in order. I *strongly* recommend you sign up for these *feast day reminder emails*, which will alert you to an approaching solemnity AND give you resources for learning more about the feast and celebrating it at home.
3. **Learn about the solemnity or feast you’ll be celebrating.** It is pretty crucial that you know a decent bit of information (at least the basics) about the feast day you’re planning to commemorate. Read some articles about the history of the feast day, ways that the Church celebrates it, and ideas for bringing the feast day to life in your home in a memorable way. Share what you’ve learned about the feast day or solemnity with your family. (Again, CelebrateTheFeasts.com directs you to great articles and resources to learn about the solemnities on the Church calendar.)

4. **Prepare your feast day celebration(s).** Put your grocery list (for a meal that corresponds to the feast day; for example, you may make a meal with all white foods representing purity for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception) or craft supply list together a few days ahead and shop for what you need. Select any prayers or songs you might pray/sing on that day and print out copies of the prayer or lyrics for the family. You can browse Catholic blogs and Pinterest for fun ideas to celebrate (or, as I mentioned, make it easy on yourself by using the CelebrateTheFeasts.com reminders and ideas).

5. **Now, celebrate the feast!** Make a big deal about it on the feast day or solemnity that you've prepared for! Get the family excited for the planned festivities and try and be in good moods as you celebrate throughout the day! Treat it like the holiday (holy day) it is, enjoying the celebrations, however complex or simple they may be. Sometimes, though, even the best laid plans to celebrate a feast day are hard to execute amidst the unexpected twists and turns of daily family life. I recommend that as a backup plan, you do at least one small thing to acknowledge the feast day at home. If it's a Marian feast day, pray a decade of the Rosary. If it's not a Holy Day of Obligation, go to Mass anyway. These simple ways to celebrate don't take any preparation, but help turn your focus to the importance of this day on the Church calendar, and bring your family one step closer to living a vibrant, liturgical, and fun Catholic life at home.

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an intentional faith at home with your family,
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