

# The Precepts of the Church

*I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. ~ Matthew 16:19*

**T**HE CHURCH wishes to guarantee the faithful a minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort and in the growth of love for God and neighbor. These obligatory laws or precepts are set in the context of a moral life that is bound to, and nourished by, participation in the Church's liturgy. As faithful sons and daughters of the Church, we accept and obey the prescriptions of our Mother the Church, since they are meant for our good. This is one of the defining marks of those who are spiritually mature.

	THE PRECEPTS	THE PRECEPTS EXPLAINED	
1	<b>You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.</b>	<p>By Apostolic Tradition, Sunday is the day on which the Christian community commemorates Christ's Resurrection. As such, this day is to be observed as the primary holy day of obligation. The first precept of the Church requires the faithful to participate in the Mass every Sunday and on the holy days of obligation listed at right.</p> <p>If the faithful are unable to assist at Mass on these days, either because a priest is not available or for some other grave reason (i.e., illness), they are recommended to participate in a liturgy of the Word or to spend some time in prayer personally, as a family, or as a group of families.</p>	<p>Holy Days of Obligation (in Liturgical Year order):</p> <p>The feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8)</p> <p>Christmas (December 25)</p> <p>The feast of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1)</p> <p>Ascension Thursday (40 days after Easter Sunday) (individual dioceses may instead celebrate this feast on the Sunday before Pentecost)</p> <p>The feast of the Assumption of Mary (August 15)</p> <p>All Saints Day (November 1).</p> <p>Following from the third commandment ("Keep holy the Lord's day"), we are obliged to avoid work that inhibits the worship due to God or the joy that comes from resting the mind and body on Sundays and holy days of obligation.</p>
2	<b>You shall confess your sins at least once a year.</b>	This precept ensures that the faithful are prepared to receive the Eucharist by confessing their grave sins and receiving absolution in the	sacrament of Reconciliation at least once each year.
3	<b>You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.</b>	This precept guarantees that the faithful will receive the Lord's Body and Blood at least once each year. Receiving the Eucharist during the Easter season shows the essential connection between this sacrament and the passion, death,	and Resurrection of Jesus as the center of Christian life and worship.
4	<b>You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.</b>	This precept provides for proper times of penance to help the faithful prepare for the liturgical feasts and to help them learn to master their instincts, leading to freedom of heart. On these days, the faithful are to devote themselves in a special way to prayer, works of piety and charity, and some form of personal denial. The faithful are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday (the first day of the season of Lent), all Fridays of Lent,	and Good Friday in Holy Week. In addition, they are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday — that is, consuming only one full meal plus two smaller meals that do not equal a second full meal (and no snacks). In commemoration of Good Friday, every Friday is a day of penance. While abstinence, fasting, or both are recommended, other forms of penance are permitted.
5	<b>You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.</b>	The faithful, according to their individual abilities, have the obligation to see that the Church has those things necessary for divine	worship, for apostolic and charitable work, and for worthy support of its ministers.

(CCC 2037, 2041-2046)