



# Month of the Holy Name of Jesus

The month of January ([Overview](#) - [Calendar](#)) is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus. "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:10). Christ's name is chosen in heaven, and the Angel Gabriel announces it when he informs the Blessed Virgin of the incarnation: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus". It is a name that has marvelous implications, for it means "savior." The very name bespeaks the magnitude of His mission, His infinite love, a love that will cause Him to offer Himself up for us.

The name of Jesus is the sweetest of all names, and He who bears it is most worthy of all love. He who calls Jesus his friend can be assured that this friend is the most devoted and unselfish of all friends.

Jesus is our all. In His name we may pray to the Father with assurance of being heard. In His name the Church administers all her sacraments. In His name she offers all her prayers and blesses homes, the fields, and the sick. In the name of Jesus she casts out evil spirits, and at the hour of our death bids us, "Go forth, Christian soul." She assures us that whoever shall call upon this name will be saved. When our soul has departed this life to seek its eternal home, the Church asks in the name of Jesus, "Eternal rest give unto him, O Lord."

— Benedict Baur, O.S.B.

## History of the Feast



This feast originated towards the end of the fifteenth century, and was instituted by the private authority of some bishops in Germany, Scotland, England, Spain, and Belgium. The Office and the Mass composed by Bernardine dei Busti (d. 1500) were approved by Sixtus IV. The feast was officially granted to the Franciscans 25 February, 1530, and spread over a great part of the Church.

The Office used at present is nearly identical with the Office of Bernardine dei Busti. The hymns "Jesu dulcis memoria", "Jesu Rex admirabilis", "Jesu decus angelicum", usually ascribed to St. Bernard, are fragments of a very extensive "jubilus" or "cursus de aeterna sapientia" of some unknown author in the thirteenth century. For the beautiful sequence "Dulcis Jesus Nazareus" (Morel, "Hymnen des Mittelalters", 67) of Bernardine dei Busti the Franciscans substituted a prose sequence of modern origin: "Lauda Sion Salvatoris".

— Excepted from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*

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## Monogram for the Holy Name

According to the ancient mind, a person's name was the expression of his nature, work, or mission. Early Christians accordingly used our Savior's Name to bring to mind His adorable Person; and in their art they gave it the following shortened or symbolic forms:

a) **The Chi-Rho Symbol.** The oldest monuments bearing this symbol date to the third century, the first being found on a burial inscription of a consul from the year 369. From the third century we have the following authentic forms: (1) the separate letters; (2) the superimposed letters; (3) the monogram cross.

After the triumph of Christianity, the Chi-Rho monogram spread into all countries and found manifold use. It no longer served as a mere abbreviation of the sacred Name, but stood as a symbol for Christ the King. Artists often surrounded it with a laurel wreath or a circle. This signified Christ's dominion over the world, or His triumph over all enemies of His kingdom.



b) **The IHS Symbol.** The familiar abbreviation IHS is a symbol of the Name Jesus which has retained its popularity down through the centuries. It owes its spread to St. Bernardine of Siena, who had it placed on his banner, surrounded with twelve rays of the sun and surmounted by a cross. It soon became the most popular monogram for the holy Name of Jesus. By his fervent words St. Bernardine persuaded many priests to place the letters on altars or on the interior and exterior walls of churches. Many Italian cities responded to his efforts and put the monogram in large letters on the outer walls of their town halls, as may still be seen in Siena.

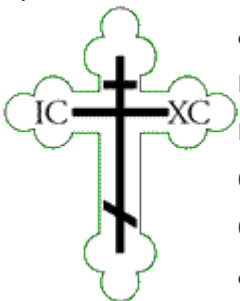


What is its derivation? IHC is the abbreviation of the Greek ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, i.e., Jesus (the first three letters of the word). The older form for the Greek sigma, S, resembled our capital C. In Christian antiquity this monogram does not occur too frequently and may not be older than the fifth century. In recent centuries the IHS has been falsely interpreted as *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, or even *Jesu humilis societas* (and regarded as a colophon for the Society of Jesus). Another interpretation that is sometimes made is *In Hoc Signo (vinces)*, and out of the added v (for *vinces*) three nails are formed.

c) **Ichthys.** The early Church loved another monogram for our Savior's name, the widely-used ICHTHYS. Christ's full title was (in Greek): *Iesous Christos Theou Yos Soter*, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. The initial letters of these five words form the Greek word ICHTHYS, which means fish. For this reason Christ is often pictured as a fish. Thus both the abbreviation and the picture became for the early Christians a secret symbol for the Redeemer. Yes, they even call our Lord "the great and pure Fish" (Aberkios tomb inscription, about 180). Tertullian presupposed popular familiarity with the fish symbol when he wrote about 200: "We (Christians) are born as little fishes in water after the model of our *Ichthys* Jesus Christ" (*On Baptism*, ch. 1).



d) **The Cross** as a Symbol for the Divine Name. The similarity between the Chi-Rho symbol and the Cross is so apparent that it was not long before the two became related artistically. The Cross and the divine Name serve as symbols of redemption, and as a means of protection against the attacks of the demons. Thus it became customary to put the cruciform monogram on doors and houses. One of the more common methods for the cruciform arrangement involved the use of the two words Φως and ζωη (light and



life), terms which Christ applied to Himself in John 8:12; 11:25. Jesus is our Light and Life, for He gives us divine faith and grace. The liturgy desires, prays for, and obtains light and life for the living and the dead. Here we have the reason why the combination of the two concepts, light and life, in the form of a cross became such a popular word symbol in the early Church and is frequently found on doors of houses (Syria), on tombs, and also on ampullas, terracotta lamps, and other articles.

Eternal Father, who didst give to thine incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation: Plant in every heart, we beseech thee, the love of him who is the Saviour of the world, even our Lord Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.



### **The Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of January 2024**

**For the Gift of Diversity in the Church:** We pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community and to discover the richness of different traditions and rituals in the Catholic Church. (See also <https://www.popesprayer.net/>)

## Feasts for January 2024

1. [\*\*MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, OCTAVE DAY OF CHRISTMAS\*\*](#), *Solemnity*
  2. [Basil the Great; Gregory Nazianzen](#), *Memorial*
  3. [Wednesday of Christmas Time; \*Most Holy Name of Jesus\*](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  4. [Elizabeth Ann Seton \(USA and CAN\)](#), *Memorial*
  5. [John Neumann](#), *Memorial*
  6. [Saturday of Christmas Time; \*André Bessette \(USA\)\*](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  7. [\*\*EPIPHANY OF THE LORD\*\*](#), *Solemnity*
  8. [\*\*Baptism of the Lord\*\*](#), *Feast*
  13. [Hilary](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  14. [SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME](#), *Sunday*
  17. [Anthony](#), *Memorial*
  20. [Fabian; Sebastian](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  21. [THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, \(Sunday of the Word of God\)](#), *Sunday*
  22. [Day of Prayer for Unborn \(USA\)](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  23. [Vincent of Saragossa \(US\), Marianne Cope \(US\)](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  24. [Francis de Sales](#), *Memorial*
  25. [\*\*Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle\*\*](#), *Feast*
  26. [Timothy and Titus](#), *Memorial*
  27. [Angela Merici](#), *Opt. Mem.*
  28. [FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME](#), *Sunday*
  31. [John Bosco](#), *Memorial*
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## Focus of the Liturgy

The Gospels for the Sundays in January during the Christmas season follow the annual readings from St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. John. The remaining Sunday Gospels in Ordinary Time are taken from St. Mark following the Lectionary for Cycle B, and the Weekday readings follow Year II.

<b>January 7</b> The Epiphany of the Lord	<b>Matthew 2:1-12:</b> We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.
<b>January 14</b> Second Sunday of Ordinary Time	<b>John 1:35-42:</b> They saw where he was staying and they stayed with him.

<b>January 21st</b> Third Sunday in Ordinary Time	<b>Mark 1:14-20:</b> Repent and believe in the Gospel
<b>January 28th</b> Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time	<b>Mark 1:21-28:</b> He taught them as one having authority.

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### Highlights of the Month

In the first part of January we continue to rejoice and celebrate Christ's coming at Bethlehem and in our hearts. We have the wonderful feasts of Mary, Mother of God, where we honor Mary's highest title, and then we follow the Magi to the crib as they bring their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh on Epiphany. Finally, we reach the culmination of this season with the Baptism of Our Lord by St. John the Baptist. With a touch of sadness, we take down our decorations and enter into the liturgical period known as Ordinary Time where we will devote ourselves to the mystery of Christ in its entirety.



This is a time of growth and an opportunity to allow the dignity of Sunday to shine forth prolonging the joy of Easter and Pentecost. Besides those previously mentioned the month's saint days include:

**Mary Mother of God** (January 1),  
**Holy Name of Jesus** (January 3),  
**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton** (January 4),  
**St. John Neumann** (January 5),  
**St. Andre Bessette** (January 6),  
**St. Anthony, Abbot** (January 17),  
**Sts. Fabian and Sebastian** (January 20),  
**St. Francis de Sales** (January 24),  
**Conversion of St. Paul** (January 25),  
**Sts. Timothy and Titus** (January 26),  
**St. Angela Merici** (January 27),  
**St. Thomas Aquinas** (January 28)

The optional memorials of **St. Raymond of Penafort** (January 7), **St. Agnes** (January 21), and **St. John Bosco** (January 31) are superseded by the Sunday liturgy.

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### The Winter Seasons

The opening days of January may be cold and nature bleak, but the domestic church still glows warm with the peace and joy of Christmas. We dedicate the New Year to Mary on the January 1st Solemnity honoring her as Mother of God; and on January 8, the Solemnity of Epiphany, we rejoice with her, as her Son is adored by the three Wise Men.



Herald John, who ushered in the Advent season, is present once again to close Christmastide on the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord (The First Luminous Mystery), and to open the Season of Ordinary Time. He points to Jesus, the Lamb of God who unites time and eternity in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and even January's diminishing darkness seems to echo St. John's prayer: "He must increase and I must decrease."

In this liturgical season the Church eagerly follows Our Lord as he gathers his apostles and announces his mission. At Cana's wedding feast (The Second Luminous Mystery) he performs his first public miracle at the request of his Mother, and his disciples saw his glory and believed in him.

We, his present-day disciples pray for a like faith as we contemplate the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb and the unique role of the Blessed Mother in the plan of salvation. May we wholeheartedly obey her words of counsel: "Do whatever he tells you."

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