

# Feasts not held in Lent



Father John Dietzen

Question Corner

**Q.** I'm puzzled by the relative lack of importance attached the feast of the Annunciation (March 25) by the church. Dec. 8, the feast of Our Lady's conception, is a day of obligation, but the feast of Our Lord's conception is not.

The church teaches that life begins at conception, and the Annunciation marks the event when the Word became flesh. It would seem that promoting this feast would both honor our Lord and emphasize our commitment to the church's teaching about the origin of life.

Our Catholic paper had an article about a Catholic English martyr, Margaret Clitherow. Her feast, they said, is on the feast of the Annunciation. Can another saint be commemorated on that day? (Pennsylvania)

**A.** The Annunciation is apparently the first event in Mary's life to be honored liturgically by Christian people.

It was widely believed in the early centuries of Christianity that March 25 was the day of Christ's death. St. Augustine (died 430) echoed a long tradition when he declared that Jesus was put to death on the same day of the year on which he was conceived (*De Trinitate*, Book 4).

By that time, a church had been built in Nazareth to commemorate the Annunciation, which would seem to indicate some liturgical celebration of that feast already.

Probably the feast of the Annunciation would have developed into a more solemn celebration except for one fact. For centuries, in both Eastern and Western parts of Christianity, the widely accepted practice was that no eucharistic liturgy could be celebrated during Lent except on Sunday. In fact, no feast at all was to be observed during what then was called the "great fast."

Since March 25 usually occurs during Lent, often on the days of the Sunday "scrutinies" for catechu-

mens, and even during Holy Week, this would bar the celebration of any feast in March.

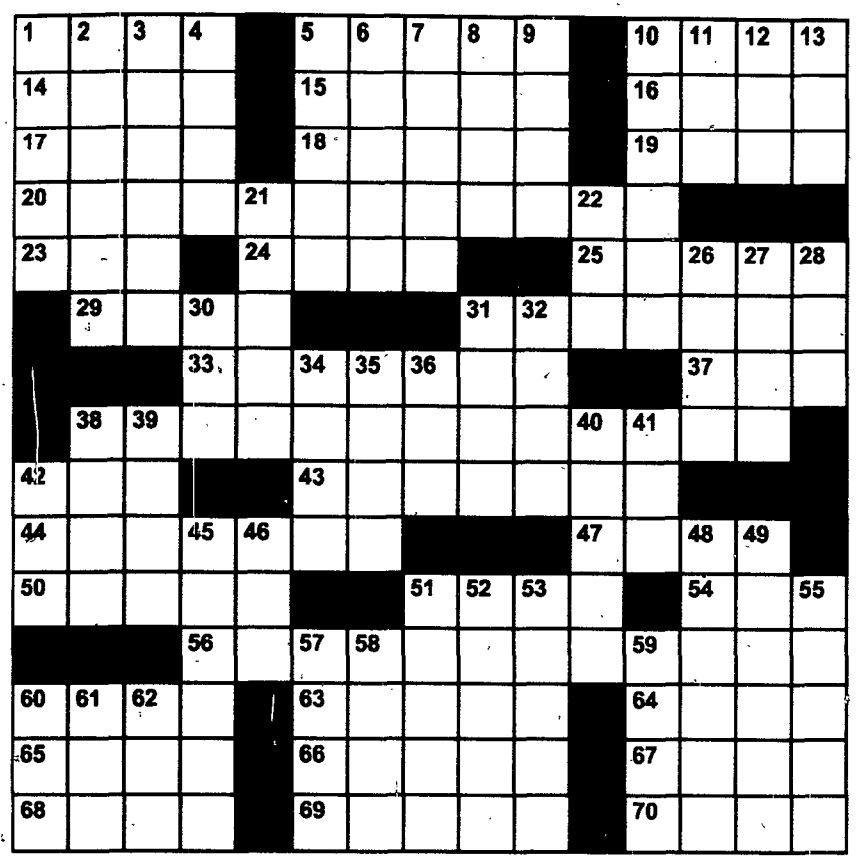
Some Christian churches tried to move the feast to the week before Christmas, Dec. 18, or during January, but these alternatives never became popular. Eventually, about the year 700, despite Lent, the feast finally was established on March 25.

Even today March 25 often falls in the final days of Lent or during Holy Week, in which case the feast may be observed later, during the Easter season.

The pro-life implications of this feast are not overlooked. Increasingly today, parishes and dioceses give special attention, liturgically and in other ways, to the fact that since we honor the presence of the Word in the womb of his mother from the beginning of her pregnancy, so we should respect the sacredness of other human beings from the moment of their conception.

Finally, feasts of several saints are observed every day of the year, though most of them are not on the calendar for celebration by the universal church. Even Dec. 25 has at least half a dozen saints whose feast day occurs along with the birth of Christ.

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## Catholic Crossword

**ACROSS**

- 1 Back talk
- 5 Form
- 10 Jesus turned water into wine here
- 14 Walkway
- 15 What some messages are
- 16 Science subj.
- 17 Dies \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 Fanon or maniple
- 19 What Peter and Andrew used
- 20 There are ten of them
- 23 Wind direction
- 24 Charges
- 25 Sicilian volcano (var.)
- 29 Agitated state
- 31 Archangel
- 33 Three element vacuum tubes
- 37 \_\_\_\_\_ the line
- 38 August 15, Feast of \_\_\_\_\_
- 42 Type of bread
- 43 "\_\_\_\_\_ O Lord and these thy gifts ..."
- 44 Herb
- 47 "Only in God is my soul at \_\_\_\_\_" (Ps 62:2)
- 50 Wood from Lebanon used in Solomon's Temple
- 51 "Great" pope of the fifth century
- 54 Faucet
- 56 Sistine Chapel artist
- 60 Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God

**DOWN**

- 1 Little girl component
- 2 Namesakes of the brother of Moses
- 3 Pollen-bearing part of a flower
- 4 Son of Noah
- 5 Bread for teatime
- 6 Crowd
- 7 First man and others
- 8 Soccer great
- 9 First place
- 10 High Mass fragrance burner
- 11 Card
- 12 Commandment word
- 13 Lou Gehrig's disease (abbr.)
- 21 Media members org.
- 22 Keyboard key
- 26 Marshall \_\_\_\_\_
- 27 Elemental gas
- 28 Grog
- 30 Follower suffix

- 31 Precious stones
- 32 Snakes
- 34 Code assigned to books (abbr.)
- 35 Norway capital
- 36 Owed at present
- 38 Biblical city
- 39 "Do not give \_\_\_\_\_ to every word that is spoken ..." (Eccl 7:21)
- 40 The Shroud of \_\_\_\_\_
- 41 Quality or condition suffix
- 42 Mythical bird
- 45 Make a bet
- 46 Jackie O's hubby
- 48 Patron of sailors, also known as Erasmus
- 49 Collection of Jewish law and tradition
- 51 \_\_\_\_\_ pray
- 52 Make happy
- 53 "\_\_\_\_\_ they are bound by the \_\_\_\_\_ they have sworn." (Ez 21:28)
- 55 Positions
- 57 Roman statesman
- 58 Greek goddess
- 59 Struggle for breath
- 60 "But when you give alms, do not \_\_\_\_\_ your left hand know what your right is doing ..." (Mt 6:3)
- 61 \_\_\_\_\_ Maria
- 62 N.E. engineering school

Answers on page 4 (No. 37)

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