



PRIDE IN OUR DIVERSITY

The following information is provided to help you become more aware of your patients' and co-workers' views, traditions and actions. While you can use this information as a guide, keep in mind that all people within a culture are **not** the same. Be sure to ask your patients and their families about specific beliefs, practices and customs that may be relevant and important during medical treatment and hospitalization.

When describing the Catholic religion, the following information may apply to those who practice Catholicism. Each piece of information does not necessarily apply to all Catholic people.



general beliefs

- ✓ God: Father, almighty, creator of heaven and earth
- ✓ Jesus Christ: son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, died and was buried. Jesus Christ descended into hell, rose on the third day and ascended into heaven. Jesus is seated in heaven with God the Father, and will judge the living and the dead at the end of time.
- ✓ Holy Spirit: third part of the Holy Trinity, imparts power.
- ✓ Belief in one holy, catholic and apostolic church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and everlasting life.
- ✓ Believe in the two major commandments: love your God with your whole heart, mind and body, and love your neighbor as yourself.
- ✓ Believe in the ten commandments as the laws of the church handed down from God to Moses.

icons

- ✓ Holy water, rosary, crucifix, statues of Jesus, Virgin Mary and/or saints.
- ✓ Sign of the Cross made before prayer.

dietary practices

- ✓ During Lent, all Fridays are considered days of abstinence. Catholics refrain from eating red meats, meat gravies, and meat sauces on these days. Additionally, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. Only one full meatless meal is permitted on these days.

religious seasons

- ✓ Lent: 40 days before Easter. Starts with Ash Wednesday and ends with Palm Sunday. On Ash Wednesday, Catholics are traditionally marked with the sign of the cross with ashes on their foreheads. Lent is a time to remember that as humans we are destined to die, and in order to enter heaven, we must repent of our sins. Lent is symbolized by, periods of prayer, fasting and alms giving.

- ✓ Holy Week: week before Easter, including Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Catholics may attend mass, special services during Lent that commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ (Stations of the Cross).
- ✓ Easter: Begins with Easter Sunday, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and continues for 7 weeks until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended onto the apostles and inspired them to teach about Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Advent: Includes 4 weeks before Christmas, a time for preparation for the birth of Christ, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and the 6 weeks after Christmas.
- ✓ Ordinary Time includes the ordinary Sundays, Holy Days and feast days outside the special Seasons.
- ✓ Ash Wednesday, Catholics are marked with the sign of the cross with ashes on their foreheads.

cultural beliefs

- ✓ RIGHT TO LIFE: Life begins at the moment of conception, and is considered a holy gift of God. Abortion and suicide are considered sins.
- ✓ SANCTITY OF LIFE: Preservation of life, life lived on earth is to serve the Lord.
- ✓ DEATH: Upon death, individuals will be judged worthy to live eternally in heaven with God the Father. At death, souls which leave this life without sin or punishment will go to heaven. Souls with temporal punishment will go to purgatory. Souls with grievous sin will go to hell. At the end of time, all souls will reunite with the resurrected bodies to live eternal life.
- ✓ Autopsy and organ donation are permitted.
- ✓ Cremation of the body is not permitted. Funerals are not conducted on Sundays.

s a c r a m e n t s

Baptism

- ✓ Symbolizes acceptance into the Catholic Church and cleansing from original sin. When children are baptized, parents and godparents accept responsibility to raise the children in the Catholic faith. Baptism must be received before any other sacrament

Holy Eucharist

- ✓ During the holy mass, the priest offers bread and wine to praise God for the atonement of sins. The bread and wine are consecrated and transformed into the body and blood of Christ, which is distributed to the congregation. In order to receive the Eucharist, Catholics must have been baptized into the faith. Generally Catholics fast for one hour prior to receiving Holy Eucharist, exceptions are the elderly and severely ill.

Confirmation

- ✓ Confirmation is an extension of the sacrament of baptism. It is a public profession of faith as a Catholic, symbolized as a strengthening of character imparted by the Holy Spirit. A bishop confers confirmation.

matrimony

- ✓ Symbolized the sacrifice and devotion of husband and wife, as Christ was devoted to the church. Marriage is considered indissoluble, even in cases of adultery, until death of one party. A priest can only confer the sacrament of matrimony.

Holy Orders

- ✓ Initiation to the priesthood gives men the power to celebrate the Holy Mass, forgive sins, and marry men and women. A bishop confers by laying on of hands to impart the Holy Spirit and impress an indelible character. Men who are initiated into the priesthood profess vows of celibacy, poverty and chastity.

Anointing of the sick (extreme unction)

- ✓ Individuals who are gravely ill or in cases of imminent death may request this sacrament. The priest will anoint the individual with holy oil, pray for or with him for repentance, absolve the individual of his sins and administer the Holy Eucharist.

important
holidays & dates

Holy Days of Obligation, attendance at mass is required

Event	Date
Feast of Mary, the Mother of God	January 1
Feast of the Ascension of the Lord	40 days after Easter
Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary	August 15
All Saints Day	November 1
Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary	December 8
Christmas, birth of Jesus Christ	December 25

Sources: [The Catholic Encyclopedia](#)

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