



A Lexicon of Medieval Nordic Law

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Appendix F:

Calendar of Church Feast and Fast Days

The ecclesiastical calendar below combines the information given in the OSw, ODan, OGu, OFar, Olce and ONorw laws. The language of the last three of these is throughout recorded as ON. The dates given are those known from the medieval Catholic calendar, supplemented by information from current practice. Where a saint was celebrated on a number of days in the year, the date(s) given derive either from a specific statement in the law, or from the context. Some of the dates given differ from those now current in England and these have been noted. The English equivalents given here are those that are most often used currently, whereas the actual translations employed by the individual editors of the laws are not consistent. The latter can be found in the body of the lexicon.

Ref: Lithberg and Wessén 1939, 75–113.

Date or extent of feast where more than one day; range of dates for the feast, where it is movable	Feast name in the Old Norse Laws	Language	(Standard) English translation and explanatory notes
movable: 27 th November–3 rd December	<i>advent</i>	ODan, OSw	Advent
6 th December	<i>nikulásmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Nicholas
7 th December	<i>ambrósíusmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Ambrose
13 th December	<i>magnúsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of the Translation of St Magnus (Erlendsson of Orkney)
21 st December	<i>thomasmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Thomas
23 rd December	<i>þorláksmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Þorlákr
24 th December	<i>helga náttin</i>	ON	Christmas Eve
	<i>jólanátt</i>	ON	
25 th December	<i>jóladagr</i>	ON	Christmas Day/Season
	<i>jólahelgr</i>	ON	
	<i>jul</i>	OSw, ODan	
	<i>jól</i>	ON	
5 th January	<i>tolftidagher</i>	OSw	Twelfth Night
	<i>tolftidagher</i>	ODan	
6 th January	<i>þrættandidagher</i>	OSw	Feast of the Epiphany
	<i>þrættandi dagr jóla</i>	ON	Not Twelfth Day, but Epiphany. Twelfth Night is 5 Jan, the vigil of this Feast.
11 th January	<i>brettifumessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Brictiva
21 st January	<i>agnesmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Agnes
25 th January	<i>pálsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Paul (not to be confused with the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 th June)

1 st February	<i>brigíðarmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Brigid
movable: the Sunday before Ash Wednesday: 1 st February–7 th March	<i>kötsunnudagher</i>	OSw	Sunday before Lent, Quinquagesima
2 nd February	<i>maríumessa</i> recorded as <i>kyndilmessa</i> in a manuscript variant	ON	Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
	<i>kyndilmæssa</i>	OSw	Candlemas
movable: 4 th February–10 th March	<i>askuopendsdagher</i>	OSw	Ash Wednesday
movable: from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday): 4 th February until 21 st March–10 th March until 24 th April	<i>langafasta</i>	ON	Lent
movable: 8 th February–14 th March	<i>hvitisunnudagher</i> (<i>drottins dags i hvíta dogum</i> in Grg)	OSw	First Sunday in Lent
22 nd February	<i>pétrsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Peter (not to be confused with the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 th June)
24 th February	<i>matthiasmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Matthias
	<i>mattíasmessa</i>	ON	An alternative date is 14 th May
movable: the Sunday before Palm Sunday: 8 th March–11 th April	<i>kæra sunnudagher</i>	OSw	Fifth Sunday in Lent, otherwise called Passion Sunday
12 th March	<i>gregoriusmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Gregory
movable, starting with Palm Sunday: 15 th March–18 th April	<i>dymbilvika</i>	OSw	Holy Week (the week before Easter)
movable: 18 th March–21 st April	<i>kloknaopendsdagher</i>	OSw	Wednesday in Holy Week, Wednesday next before Easter
movable: 19 th March–22 nd April	<i>skærþorsdagher</i>	OSw	Maundy Thursday
	<i>skiríþórsdagr</i>	ON	
movable: 20 th March–23 rd April	<i>langafre(a)dagher</i>	OSw	Good Friday
	<i>langafrjádagr</i>	ON	
21 st March	<i>benedictusmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Benedict
movable: 22 nd March–25 th April	<i>paskadagher</i>	OSw	Easter Day
	<i>páskadagr</i>	ON	Easter Day
movable: 22 nd March–25 th April	<i>paskar</i>	OSw	Easter season
	<i>paske</i>	ODan	
	<i>páskar</i>	ON	
25 th March	<i>maríumessa i fastu</i>	OGu	Feast of the Annunciation, also called Lady Day
	<i>maríumessa í föstu</i>	ON	
	<i>maríumessa um várit</i>	ON	
	<i>varafrudagher (i fastu)</i>	OSw	
16 th April	<i>magnúsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Magnus (Erlendsson of Orkney)
23 rd April	<i>jóhannesmessa</i> (variant of: <i>jóansmessa</i>)	ON	Feast of St Jón Ögmundarson, bishop of Hólar 1106–21 (celebrated from 1200; cf. note in the translation of <i>Grágás</i>)

25 th April	<i>(litli) gangdagher</i>	OSw	Rogation Day; despite its Nordic designation, the original and principal Rogation Day in the Catholic Calendar, possibly the successor to the Roman <i>ambarvalia</i> , a ceremony designed to guard against blight in the seed
	<i>gangdagr</i>	ON	
26 th April–2 nd May	<i>crucisuke</i>	ODan	The week following the Feast of St Mark on 25 th April and thus followed by <i>krossmessa</i> , the Invention of the Cross, on 3 rd May (see below)
movable: the 3 days preceding Ascension Day: 27 th to 29 th April–31 st May to 2 nd June	<i>gangdagahelgr</i>	ON	Rogation Days (sometimes coinciding with <i>crucisuke</i> , q.v., if Easter were at its earliest date)
	<i>gangdaghar</i>	OGu	
	<i>gangdagar</i>	ON	
	<i>helgavika</i>	ON	Rogation Week
movable: 30 th April–3 rd June	<i>hælgþorsdagher</i>	OSw	Ascension Day
	<i>uppstigningardagr</i>	ON	
1 st May	<i>philippus messa ok jakobus</i>	ON	Feast of SS Philip and James (the lesser)
1 st May	<i>valborghamæssa</i>	OSw	This is usually called Walpurgis' Day, rather than the Feast of St Walpurga, as it had and has secular overtones. It is not clear in the texts if it is the Eve, 30 th April that is referred to, or to the feast day itself.
3 rd May	<i>crucismisse</i>	ODan	Invention of the Cross (3 rd May according to glossary in Routledge edition. That is, the Sunday following <i>crucisuke</i> , q.v. The word 'invention' in this context = 'finding')
	<i>krossmessa</i>	ON	The same word is used for both this feast and for that of the Exaltation of the Cross, 14 th September
	<i>krossmessa um várit</i>	ON	
movable: 10 th May–13 th June	<i>pingizdagher</i>	ODan, OSw	Whitsunday
15 th May	<i>hallvarðarmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Hallvard
18 th May	<i>sankta eriks dagh</i>	OSw	Feast of St Erik
9 th June	<i>kolumbamessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Columba
17 th June	<i>botulfsmæssa</i>	OSw	Feast of St Botulf
	<i>bótolfsmessa</i>	ON	
24 th June	<i>jónsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St John the Baptist
	<i>jóansmessa</i>	ON	
	<i>jónsvaka</i>	ONorw	
28 th June	<i>pétrsmessuaptann</i>	ON	Vigil of the Feast of St Peter

29 th June	<i>apostlamæssudagher</i>	OSw	Feast of SS Peter and Paul
	<i>petersmessa</i>	OSw	Feast of St Peter (specifically this June date, shared with St Paul, not the February date, which is only mentioned in Grg)
	<i>sankti petr's messa</i>	OGu	
	<i>pétrsmessa</i>	ON	
2 nd July	<i>svitunsmessa</i>	ON	St Swithun's Day (note that in the English calendar St Swithun's Day is 15 July)
8 th July	<i>seljamannamessa</i>	ON	Feast of the Saints of Selja (i.e. St Sunniva and her companions; St Sunniva's shrine was moved to Bergen in 1170)
	<i>seljumannamessa</i>	ON	
	<i>heilagra manna (messa) i Selju</i>	ON	
10 th July	<i>knútsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Canute (celebrated on 19 th January in England)
25 th July	<i>jakobsmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St James (the Great)
29 th July	<i>olafsdagher</i>	OSw	(Earlier) Feast of St Olaf
	<i>olafsmæssa</i>	OSw, ODan	
	<i>ólafsmessa</i>	ON	
	<i>ólafsmessa hin fyrri</i>	ON	
3 rd August	<i>ólafsmessa hin øfri</i>	ON	Later Feast of St Olaf
10 th August	<i>laurinzardagher</i>	OSw	Feast of St Lawrence
	<i>laurinzardagher</i>	OSw	
	<i>lafrinzsmæssa</i>	OSw	
	<i>laurentiusmessa</i>	ON	
	<i>laurentiusmessa</i>	ON	
15 th August	<i>mariumæssa (fyrra)</i>	OSw	Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
	<i>mariemisse fyrre</i>	ODan	
	<i>mariumessa fyrri</i>	ON	
	<i>mariumessa fyrri</i>	ON	
24 th August	<i>bartholomeusmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Bartholomew
	<i>bartholomeusmessa</i>	ON	
1 st September	<i>yliansmæssa</i>	OSw	Feast of St Giles
8 th September	<i>mariumæssa (öfra)</i>	OSw	Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady (or the Blessed Virgin Mary)
	<i>mariumessa øfri</i>	ON	
	<i>mariumessa síðari</i>	ON	
14 th September	<i>krossmessa</i>	ON	Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. (The same name is used for both this and the Invention of the Cross, 3 rd May)
	<i>krossmessa um haustit</i>	ON	
	<i>krossmessa hin øfri</i>	ON	
21 st September	<i>mattéimessa; mattéusmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Matthew
	<i>matthaeusmessa</i>	ON	

29 th September	<i>mikialsmæssa</i>	OSw	Michaelmas
	<i>mikjalsmisse</i>	ODan	
	<i>mikjalsmessa</i>	ON	
	<i>mikialsmæssodagher</i>	OSw	Michaelmas Day
	<i>mikialsdagher</i>	OSw	
30 th September–6 th October	<i>sialadagher</i>	OSw	Monday after Michaelmas
28 th October	<i>símons messudagr ok judas</i>	ON	Feast of SS Simon and Jude
	<i>tveggjapostulamessa/-messudagr</i>	ON	Feast of the Two Apostles
1 st November	<i>hælghunamæssudagher; aldra hælghuna dagher</i>	OSw	All Saints' Day
	<i>helgunamessa</i>	OGu	
	<i>allraheilagramessa</i>	ON	
2 nd November	<i>sialamæssudagher</i>	OSw	All Souls' Day
11 th November	<i>martinsmæssa</i>	OSw	Martinmas
	<i>martheinsmessa</i>	ON	
	<i>sancta martens dagher</i>	OSw	St Martin's Day
22 nd November	<i>ceciliomessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Cecilia
23 rd November	<i>klementsessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Clement
	<i>clemensmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Clement
25 th November	<i>katrinamæssa</i>	OSw	Feast of St Catherine of Alexandria
30 th November	<i>andreasmessa</i>	ON	Feast of St Andrew
Various: Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following St Lucy's Day (13 December), the first Sunday in Lent, Pentecost (Whitsun), and Holy Cross Day (14 September)	<i>imbrudagr</i>	ON	Ember Days (i.e. the days of fasting at the turn of the seasons: winter, spring, summer and autumn respectively)

