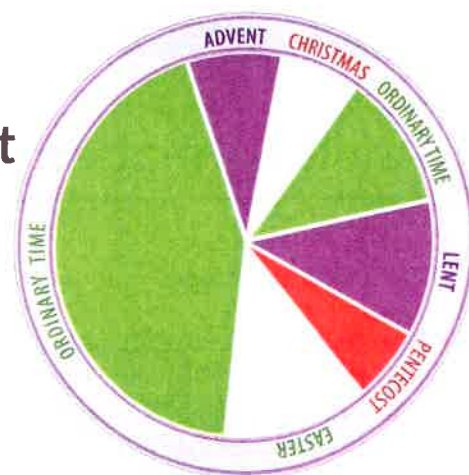


The Liturgical Year Information Sheet

Have you ever stopped to look back over your family calendar at the end of the year? What a record it holds of your family life! There are all kinds of things there that have been important to your family—birthdays, sports activities, plays, concerts, vacation days, family gatherings, doctor visits, conferences, among others. Marking these events gives us a picture of who we are.



The Church has a calendar too, the liturgical calendar, a record of the life of our family of faith. The liturgical calendar is both a *description* of the most important mystery of our faith and a *prescription* for keeping that mystery alive in our lives. The liturgical year helps us to die and rise with Christ and to remember the saving power of God throughout history. We are invited to enter more deeply into the central mystery of our faith: the suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, what we call the Paschal Mystery. The Church teaches, "Within the cycle of a year, [the Church] unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost and the expectation of blessed hope and of the Lord's return."*

Each week at Mass, we remember that Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead, and this grace and mystery is actually made present. Our liturgical celebrations make Christ present to us today! "Recalling ... the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of the Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present for all time, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold [of] them and become filled with saving grace."*

But the Paschal Mystery of Christ is so great that we can't see it by looking from just one perspective. The liturgical year helps us by highlighting different aspects of the mystery throughout the year. Each season has its own readings, color, tone, unique rituals, and prayers to give us another perspective.

The liturgical year revolves around two major cycles—Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. Each begins with a period of preparation and ends with a period of celebration. During the darkest time of the year, we honor Jesus Christ, the Light of the Word, we celebrate his presence with us today, and we long for his return in glory.

Between these seasons is Ordinary Time—not ordinary in the sense of unimportant, but ordinary in the sense of normal. This season is far from ordinary. Its name comes from the word ordinal, as we track the season by counting its Sundays. In the first, shorter part of Ordinary Time, we focus on the life and ministry of Jesus, we listen to his teaching, and grow as his disciples by living out his Good News. In addition, the liturgical year includes days to celebrate the special role of Mary, the Mother of God, and the Saints.

* Quotations are from Chapter 5 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Sacrosanctum Concilium) of Vatican Council II. The entire constitution is online on the Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

Liturgical Year Chart

Season	Days	Color	Theme	Did You Know?
Advent	Four Sundays leading up to Christmas	Dark Blue or Purple	<i>Preparation & Waiting</i> We remember Christ's birth and await the Second Coming	The color of the third Sunday of Advent is Rose.
Christmas	December 25 and 12 days after Christmas	White	<i>Joy & Peace</i> Christmas is more than a day; it's an entire season in which we celebrate God made flesh—the Incarnation.	The Feast of Epiphany, 12 days after Christmas Day, recognizes Christ as the Light of the world.
Ordinary Time	Winter weeks	Green	<i>Growth & Journey</i> Focusing on the Mystery of Christ, we make this normative time sacred.	The readings during Ordinary Time help us journey through the Bible.
Lent	The six weeks before Easter	Purple	<i>Preparation & Penitence</i> In Lent we focus on preparing ourselves for the transformation of Easter, we examine our lives, repent, and return to the Gospel.	Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. In Lent we practice almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. The 40 days of Lent remind us of Jesus' 40 days in the desert.

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Resource 2

Liturgical Year Chart *continued*

Triduum	The three days before Easter	There are different colors for each day: White, red, and white	<i>Three Holy Days</i> We recall the passion of Christ on these three holiest days of the year—Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.	The liturgies of these days are really one, which begins on Holy Thursday and ends at the Easter Vigil. This is also when many are initiated into our faith.
Easter	Easter Sunday and the following seven weeks	White	<i>Alleluia!</i> Easter is 50 days during which we rejoice in Christ's Resurrection and celebrate our own transformation in Christ's love.	This was the first annual feast of the Church—and the only one for 300 years! During the Easter Season we remember our Baptism with a sprinkling rite.
Pentecost	The Sunday after the Easter season	Red	<i>Spirit</i> We remember the gift of the Holy Spirit.	This feast is sometimes called the birthday of the Church.
Ordinary Time	Summer and Fall weeks	Green	<i>Growth & Journey</i> Ordinary in the sense of normal, not unimportant.	On these Sundays we read through books of the Bible.