

## RCIA - The Liturgical Year



The Liturgical year is the way the Church marks the passage of time based on the major events surrounding Christ's life. It begins with the fixed date of His birth (the incarnation on God in Jesus) on the first Sunday of Advent and concludes on the Solemnity of Christ the King. The liturgical year calls us to ponder the same core mysteries of Christ's life over and over again, in an ever deeper and broader fashion.

There are periods of "waiting", "feasting", and "growing" that makes up the Church's liturgical year. These periods allow for a greater participation in the mass and give special importance to the Sabbath by counting the year as a series of Sundays. Sunday is the center of the liturgical season and is the foundation of the entire liturgical year with its culmination occurring in the annual celebration of Easter, through the Easter Triduum which celebrates the Lord's passion (Holy Thursday), death (Good Friday) and Resurrection (Easter). Sunday is seen as the weekly Easter. *"The intimate bond between Sunday and the Resurrection of the Lord is strongly emphasized by all the churches of the East and West."* – National Directory for Catechesis.

The sense of sight, including color, plays an important role in Catholic worship. The colors of a Catholic priest's vestments help the faithful know that certain celebrations are at hand.

**Purple:** Our times of waiting and preparation occur during our seasons of Advent and Lent. We are waiting in anticipation for the two greatest feasts or celebrations of the Liturgical year. It is a time to prepare our hearts and minds and return to God. In Lent this is through fasting, prayer and almsgiving as we prepare to renew our baptismal promises on Easter.

**White or Gold:** Feasts or celebrations use the colors white or gold. The two most important feasts of the liturgical year are Christmas, Christ's incarnation and Easter, His death and resurrection. These feasts are denoted with the color white or gold.

**Green:** Our time of growing in our faith is reflected in the color green and referred to as Ordinary Time.

**Red:** is worn on feasts of the Passion of Jesus and for the Holy Spirit, representing red tongues of fire, in addition to being worn for the feasts of martyred saints, who shed their red blood for Christ. The Easter season lasts for fifty days to the celebration of Pentecost, which commemorates the mission of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son to the Church.

**Rose:** On the Third Sunday (called Gaudete) of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent (called Laetare), the color rose may be worn as a sign of anticipated joy.

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The Function of the Liturgical year allows the Church to celebrate the whole mystery of Christ from his Incarnation to his return in glory. On set days the Church venerates with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. The Church also keeps memorials of saints who lived for Christ, who suffered with him and who live with him in glory. -*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*



## MARY



As the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary has a unique position among the saints, indeed, among all creatures. She is exalted, yet still one of us.

Redeemed by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth. At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all those who are to be saved.

*(Lumen Gentium, no. 53)*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

### Why does Mary have a special role in helping us?

Mary embraces God's will and freely chooses to cooperate with God's grace, thereby fulfilling a crucial role in God's plan of salvation. Throughout the centuries, the Church has turned to the Blessed Virgin in order to come closer to Christ. Many forms of piety toward the Mother of God developed that help bring us closer to her Son. In these devotions to Mary, "while the Mother is honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, is rightly known, loved and glorified and . . . all His commands are observed."<sup>33</sup> The Church honors her as the Mother of God, looks to her as a model of perfect discipleship, and asks for her prayers to God on our behalf.

### How does our veneration of Mary and the saints relate to our worship of God?

The honor we give to God alone is properly called **adoration**, the highest honor we can give. The honor we give to Mary and the saints is called **veneration**. Proper veneration of the saints does not interfere with the worship due to God, but rather fosters it. "Our communion with those in heaven, provided that it is understood in the fuller light of faith according to its genuine nature, in no way weakens, but conversely, more thoroughly enriches the laudatory worship we give to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit." With this understanding, we see that proper veneration of Mary does not detract from worship of God. Even as the Mother of the Savior, Mary has a place that is in every way subordinate to and dependent upon that of her Son, who is the one mediator between God and humanity. The maternal role that Mary fulfills toward us as Mother of the Church "in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power."

The Second Vatican Council explained very clearly that Mary can be said to fulfill a mediating role only in a secondary and derivative manner:

For no creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer. Just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by the ministers and by the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is really communicated in different ways to His creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.

What Mary does for the salvation of the human family does not come from her own power, but from a gift of divine grace that is bestowed on her through her Son. All the salvific influence that she bestows on us is produced "not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it." Mary in no way replaces Christ. Rather, her role is to bring us to Christ, as is illustrated in Mary's admonition at the wedding feast of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

## PRAYER ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Father,  
The image of the Virgin is found in your Church.

Mary had a faith that your Spirit prepared and a love that never knew sin, for you kept her sinless from the first moment of her conception.

Trace in our actions the lines of her love,  
in our hearts her readiness of faith.

Prepare once again a world for your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

--- from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

## MARIAN GLOSSARY

**ANNUNCIATION:** The visit of the angel Gabriel to the virgin Mary to inform her that she was to be the mother of the Savior. After giving her consent to God's word, Mary became the mother of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ASSUMPTION:** The dogma which recognizes the Blessed Virgin Mary's singular participation in her Son's Resurrection by which she was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when the course of her earthly life was finished.

**HAIL MARY:** The prayer known in Latin as the Ave Maria. The first part of the prayer praises God for the gifts he gave to Mary as Mother of the Redeemer; the second part seeks her maternal intercession for the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, of which she is the Mother.

**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:** The dogma proclaimed in Christian Tradition and defined in 1854, that from the first moment of her conception, Mary--by the singular grace of God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ--was preserved immune from original sin.

**MAGNIFICAT:** The title commonly given to the Latin text and vernacular translation of the Canticle (or Song) of Mary that she recites at the time of the visitation. The canticle begins with "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

**MARY:** The mother of Jesus. Because she is the mother of Jesus--Son of God and second Person of the Blessed Trinity--according to the flesh, she is rightly called the Mother of God (Theotokos). Mary is also called "full of grace," and "Mother of the Church," and in Christian prayer and devotion, "Our Lady," the "Blessed Virgin Mary," and the "New Eve."

**PRESENTATION:** The presentation and dedication of Jesus to God by Mary and Joseph in the Temple (Lk 2:22-39), in accord with Mosaic Law concerning the first-born. At the Presentation, Simeon and Anna sum up the expectation of Israel for the long-awaited Messiah, the light of the nations and the glory of Israel, but also as a sign of contradiction. The presentation of the gifts, especially of bread and wine, is a preparatory rite for the liturgy of the Eucharist at Mass.

**ROSARY:** A prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which repeats the privileged Marian prayer Ave Maria, or Hail Mary, in "decades" of ten prayers, each preceded by the Pater Noster ("Our Father") and concluded by the Gloria Patri (Glory Be to the Father), accompanied by meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life. The rosary was developed by medieval piety in the Latin church as a popular substitute for the liturgical prayer of the Hours.

**VIRGIN BIRTH:** The conception of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church's confession of faith in the virgin birth affirms that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit without human seed.

**VIRGIN MARY:** The mother of Jesus, who is honored as "ever-virgin" for her perpetual virginity.

**VISITATION:** At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would be the mother of the savior. Gabriel also told Mary that her barren cousin, Elizabeth, had conceived a son in her old age. Mary went to visit her cousin and confirmed the truth of the angel's words. The time she spent with Elizabeth is referred to as "the visitation."

### Citations

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2017) website:

[Frequently Asked Questions about Mary](#)

[Marian Glossary](#)

[Prayer on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception](#)

### Other Marian Resources:

[Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained](#)

[Mary & the Saints: Our Spiritual Mother & the Communion of Saints Episode 9 • 37m](#)

<https://watch.formed.org/symbolon-the-catholic-faith-explained/season:1/videos/mary-the-saints-our-spiritual-mother-the-communion-of-saints>

***Word on Fire: Catholicism Series: Episode 4: Our Tainted Nature's Solitary Boast: Mary, the Mother of God with Bishop Robert Barron***

<https://www.wordonfire.org/study-programs/catholicism/>

### The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known  
that anyone who fled to thy protection,  
implored thy help  
or sought thy intercession,  
was left unaided.  
Inspired by this confidence,  
We fly unto thee,  
O Virgin of virgins our Mother;  
to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful;  
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,  
despise not our petitions,  
but in thy mercy hear and answer us.  
Amen