The Church Year
The Liturgical Year

RCIA
November 14, 2013
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The Church Year
The Liturgical Year
Liturgy

In the Hebrew Scripture, liturgy is applied to the religious duty to be performed by priests and Levites in the Temple, especially in connection with the Sacrifice.

In Christian use it has two senses:

1. In the Eastern Churches it has almost always designated the Eucharistic Sacrifice alone

2. In the Western Church it designates either the Mass alone, with its accompanying prayers and ceremonies, or the whole collection of official services used in public worship.
The origin of Liturgy is to be found in the institution by Christ of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Sacraments, as well as in His example and precepts concerning the necessity and mode of prayer.

While Christ laid down the essentials, He left the development of details to His Church, to carry out this task under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
The liturgical year is the temporal structure within which the Church celebrates the holy mysteries of Christ:

"From the Incarnation and the Nativity to the Ascension, to Pentecost and to the wait in joyful hope for the Lord's coming"
The Liturgical Calendar is a tool that kindles the hearts of Catholics so that they will remember God’s plan of salvation that was accomplished through the birth, life, death and rising of Christ.
THE LECTIONARY CYCLES

The "Lectionary," the Mass readings from the Holy Bible, follows a Sunday cycle and a weekday cycle.

The Liturgical Calendar follows a three year cycle, each year being represented by the letters, A, B and C.

During the year A cycle, the Gospel of Matthew is the primary Gospel that is used for the readings.
In year B, Mark is the primary Gospel.
In year C Luke is the primary Gospel.

The Gospel of John is proclaimed on particular Sundays in each of the years.
On weekdays in Ordinary Time, there is a 2 year cycle numbered I and II:

Year I is read in odd number years
Year II is read in even years

It should be noted that if a person attends the Holy Mass everyday for 3 years, having been present for all the readings of the 3 cycles, most of the Holy Bible will have been read to him during that time frame.
The Seasons of the Liturgical Calendar

In each cycle of the Liturgical Calendar, you will find six Seasons:

1. Advent
2. Christmas
3. Lent
4. Triduum
5. Easter
6. Ordinary Time

The Church also celebrates Solemnities, Feasts, and Memorials which may be on any day of the week. These occur during the year to commemorate special events or persons that are highly revered by the Catholic Church.
Liturgical Colors

White

Symbolizes: Light, innocence, purity, joy, triumph, glory

Season of Christmas
Season of Easter

Feasts of the Lord, other than of His passion

Feasts of Mary, the angels, and saints who were not martyrs

All Saints (1 November)

Feasts of the Apostles

Nuptial Masses
Red

Red represents charity

Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion

Good Friday

Pentecost Sunday

‘Birthday’ Feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists

Celebrations of martyred Saints
Violet represents royalty, suffering, expectation, purification, or penance.

Seasons of Advent and of Lent.

It may also be worn for Funerals.
Rose

Rose: Symbolizes Joy

3rd Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)
4th Sunday of Lent (Laetare)
Green

Green represents hope and growth

It is used in Ordinary Time
Ordinary Time
There is nothing ordinary about “Ordinary time”

Ordinary Time is the part of the year in which Christ, the Lamb of God, walks among us and transforms our lives.

It is a time of spiritual growth as we learn from the life and teachings of Christ.
Ordinary Time

Ordinary comes from the Latin word “Ordinalis” which refers to numbers in a series.

In Ordinary Time the Sundays/weeks are ordered or numbered.

This Sunday will be the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C.
Holy Days of Obligation

Most days of obligation fall on a Sunday, however, there are special Feasts in the Liturgical Calendar that fall during the week. The number of days of obligation may vary from country to country. In the United States, the following 6 days of obligation are observed:

- Christmas Day (December 25)
- Mary, the Mother of God (January 1)
- The Ascension (7th Sunday of Easter)
- The Assumption of Mary (August 15)
- All Saint’s Day (November 1)
- The Immaculate Conception (December 8)
The liturgical season of spiritual preparation before Christmas

The Season of Advent begins on the Sunday closest to the Feast of St Andrew the Apostle (November 30th)

It spans four Sundays and four weeks with the last week usually shortened according to when Christmas falls
Season of Advent

The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a New Liturgical year

This year Advent begins on Sunday, December 1, 2013

Advent ends with the beginning of the Season of Christmas, Tuesday, December 24, 2013 (Christmas Eve) at sundown
Season of Advent

Importance of the season remains to focus on the coming of the Lord

Advent comes from the Latin “Adventus”, meaning “coming”
CCC stresses the two-fold meaning of the “coming”:

“When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.” (CCC 524)
Two-fold Meaning

Reflect back on the anniversary the Lord’s First Coming

We ponder the great mystery of the Incarnation when our Lord humbled Himself, taking on our humanity, and entered our time and space to free us from sin.
Two-fold Meaning

On the other hand, we recall the Creed that our Lord will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead

... and that we must be ready to meet him
The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent.

Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history.

It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God.

That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate.
The liturgical color of Advent is Violet

This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King.

The violet of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week.

This points to an important connection between Jesus’ birth and death.

The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion.

The purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us, is to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus’ life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection.
Season of Christmas

Christmas is not just a day but a season

The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Christmas is one of the most important days of the Church year, second only to Easter itself.
Season of Christmas

It is the feast of the incarnation, the feast of God becoming flesh.

Because of this belief, God is not only Transcendent, but also wholly Immanent, Emmanuel (God-with-us):

Transcendent meaning we must rise above our present condition to reach Him

Immanent meaning He is with us as we rise toward Him
Having prayed that our Lord might come to us, we can let the reality of his coming enter more deeply into our daily experience.

We do that by savoring the story and letting his being one with us become a more conscious reality as these stories intersect with our daily lives.

- Did I take time to imagine myself there in the stable, and take it all in, as a personal witness.
- Did I really listen to what Mary and Joseph said to each other?
- Did I let myself be moved by how open the shepherds were to this mystery and how transformed they were by it?
- Did I ask Mary if I could hold her child?
- What happened within me as I beheld my Savior so small, so vulnerable?
Through contemplative prayer we can take each of the gospel stories and let ourselves become a part of the story or let the story become a part of our lives.

The Epiphany is part of the powerful story where the Magi visit the new King. Herod is out to kill the child. In spite of the cleverness of the Magi to return another way, many innocents are slaughtered.

The Holy Family flees to Egypt and Jesus enters the mystery of his people's slavery and liberation.

Perhaps the Feast of the Holy Family will be a time to reach deeper into our desires and to ask for graces for our family. This might be a wonderful time for us to contemplate the hidden life of Jesus.
The Seasons of Lent, the Triduum and Easter

We will study these seasons in detail later in the year.

The Season of Lent extends from Ash Wednesday to the evening Mass on Holy Thursday.

Lent is the penitential season set aside by the Church in order for the faithful to prepare for the celebration of the Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection.
During this holy season, inextricably connected to the Paschal Mystery, the Catechumens prepare for Christian initiation, and current Church members prepare for Easter by a recalling of Baptism and by works of penance: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent:

Baptism (the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it)

Penance
Holy Triduum

Holy Thursday

Good Friday

Holy Saturday
At the Mass on Holy Thursday we celebrate the events of the Last Supper.

It was at the Last Supper that Jesus instituted the three pillars of our Catholic faith:

- The Eucharist
- The Priesthood
- Mass

Following the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples demonstrating that they (and we) must be servant leaders.

In memory of this act our priests will wash the feet of several of our fellow parishioners.
Nightwatch/Adoration

Following the Holy Thursday Mass Adoration of the Holy Eucharist continues until midnight

This symbolizes the time Jesus spent in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane
Good Friday

We remember the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a Good Friday service but there is no Mass.

During this service our Gospel reading details the events of our Lord’s Passion.

We venerate the Cross honoring our Lord’s sacrifice for us.
At the Easter Vigil Mass we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this service our catechumens and candidates will enter the Church through the Sacraments of Initiation:

Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist
Season of Easter

- Easter is not one day or one solemnity—it is a fifty day celebration, extending from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.

- A season of solemnity and exaltation at the triumph of Jesus over sin and death.
Ordinary Time

Following the Seasons of Christmas and Easter we enter ordinary time.

Following the Season of Christmas, Ordinary Time will extend to the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

Following the Season of Easter we enter a second and longer period of Ordinary Time that will last until Advent.
Ordinary Time

As stated previously Ordinary Time is far from ordinary

It is the time during the Church year when we are exposed to the teachings of Jesus that allow spiritual growth and conversion.