

# Learning about Liturgical Seasons and Days



Teaching Challenging Transforming

## Background Information

Reference: [http://cyberfaith.com/liturgical\\_year.cfm](http://cyberfaith.com/liturgical_year.cfm)

Just as a typical calendar has four seasons, twelve months, fifty-two weeks, and 365 days that include holidays, solemn days, commemorative days, and days that are just "average," the Liturgical Year Calendar of the Church uses similar terms and measurements.

The Liturgical Year is marked by special seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, The Paschal Triduum or Three Days, Easter, and Ordinary Time. The Liturgical Year begins on the first Sunday of Advent, which usually occurs around the beginning of December or the end of November, and ends on the feast of Christ the King.

The purpose of the Liturgical Year Calendar is not to mark the passage of time, but to celebrate and understand more fully the entire mystery of Jesus Christ, from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of his return in glory. During the course of a year, the Paschal Mystery: the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, is viewed from different angles, in different lights.

The Liturgical Year Calendar communicates what readings the Church has designated to be used for each day. It articulates the special feasts and commemorations celebrated during each season. It communicates the colour of the vestments to be worn by the priest during each celebration of the liturgy. The colours for the seasons are: Advent ~ purple/dark blue, Christmas ~ white/gold, Lent ~ purple, Easter ~ white/gold and Ordinary times ~ green.

The Liturgical Cycle covers a three-year period in which Year A focuses predominantly on Matthew's Gospel, Year B on Mark's Gospel and Year C on Luke's Gospel. John's Gospel is interspersed throughout the years, particularly during Easter. It is the arrangement of the Scriptures for the Sundays and weekdays of the seasons and of ordinary time.



### Advent (Violet)

The liturgical year begins with Advent which always contains four Sundays. A common devotional for this season of preparation is the Advent Wreath that includes four candles. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays of Advent. Christmas decorations which appear in the church during Advent are in preparation for the coming of the Christ child.

The church year actually begins with the First Sunday of Advent. The stole and chasuble of the priest is violet or a shade of purple.

Advent is seen as a time for preparation, anticipation and hope. "Prepare ye, the way of the Lord." Surprisingly, on the third Sunday of Advent, the church celebrates the half way mark and so suggests pink or rose as the colour of the day. Like children, we get excited when we are half way there and pink symbolizes that joy with a colour that holds onto the purple but promises the white of Christmas!



## Christmas (White)

The Christmas season, during which we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, includes the Feast of the Holy Family, the Feast of the Mother of God and Epiphany. The Church remains ornamented with Christmas lights and decorations during this season.

The Church chooses white for the Feast of Christmas. White is the colour of purity and new life. White is appropriate for a new born infant.

## Ordinary Time (Green)

During the season between Christmas and Lent, the readings focus on Jesus' early ministry of teaching, and healing, and the gathering of disciples. Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Tuesday) celebrations often mark the end of this season. Ordinary Time resumes later in the year.

The word "ordinary" in Ordinary Time comes from the word ordinal. "Counted Time" would be a better translation. The occurrence of Easter determines the length of this counted time. Easter falls on the 1st Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. (*when the tilt of the Earth's axis is inclined neither away from nor towards the Sun, the centre of the Sun being in the same plane as the Earth's equator.*) The timing falls between March 22 and April 25.

The Sundays and weeks of Ordinary Time are days of growth and harvest -- days of hope and time to mature in one's faith. Green is the colour of on-going life in nature: the renewal of spring grass, flowers and trees. Green signifies hope and growth. The green weeks, 1 to 34, provide time to be refreshed with the Sunday Scriptures, sequentially following the life and works of Jesus in his public ministry. The longest liturgical season is that of the weeks following Easter. The last Sunday of the liturgical year is the celebration of the Feast of Christ the King.



## Lent (Violet)

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent which continues until the Holy Thursday. Lent is a time of penance observed with fasting and abstinence. A common devotion for Lent is praying the Stations of the Cross.

Lent is a 40 day fast and penance period in the Catholic Church. The church is draped in violet. This time is a time of penance and self-denial as well as a time to go the extra mile. It is a time of preparation for and renewal of baptism.

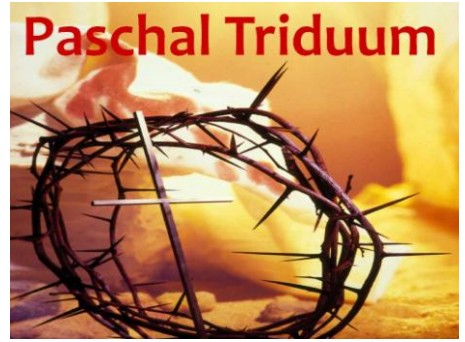
## ASH WEDNESDAY (The Beginning of Lent)

The mark of ashes, a symbol of repentance, is given to Christians to indicate the start of the penitential season of Lent. Ashes are etched in the sign of the cross on the foreheads of Catholic around the world on Ash Wednesday, symbolizing the beginning of the 40 days of fasting and penance in preparation for Easter.



## Paschal Triduum (Red/Violet/White)

The Paschal Triduum is a separate season during what is often called “Holy Week”. This three-day observance begins on the evening of Holy Thursday with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper and ends on Saturday evening with the Easter Vigil. The ceremonies of this special season celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.



Red is usually associated with the Palm Sunday celebrations (the Sunday prior to Easter). Palm Sunday is not strictly part of Holy Week but it is common for teachers and students to celebrate it as if it was. Violet is usually associated with Holy Thursday and Good Friday. The White Vestments are not worn until the Gloria/Alleluia part of the Easter Vigil (Saturday evening).



## Easter (White/Gold)

The Easter season is 50 days long, with the Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, marking its end. Ascension Thursday occurs 40 days after Easter Sunday, although it may be celebrated on the following Sunday. Readings during the Easter season focus on Jesus’ teaching after the Resurrection.

The festive colours used during the Easter season are white and gold. Easter is the most important season in the Church’s calendar.

## Pentecost (Red)

Pentecost's colour is red. It also becomes the colour for all feasts of Apostles, except John, and for feasts associated with the martyrs of the church.



## Seasons of the Church: Seasons of the Heart...

We could summarize each facet of the Liturgical Year in these phrases written by John Gallen SJ:

- ❖ **ADVENT:** The Experience of Desire
- ❖ **CHRISTMAS:** The Experience of Discovery
- ❖ **LENT:** The Experience of Rescue
- ❖ **EASTER:** The Experience of Transformation
- ❖ **ORDINARY TIME:** The Experience of Journey



## Useful Resources and Websites

<http://ri.bne.catholic.edu.au/ree/re/Pages/default.aspx>

**Brisbane Catholic Education Religious Education Website**

<http://ri.bne.catholic.edu.au/ree/RE/REL/Pages/REeNewsandCalendars.aspx>

**Term Religious Education Calendar**

**Brisbane Catholic Education Religious Education Portal**

<http://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=10643>

**Brisbane Catholic Education ResourceLink**

<http://ri.bne.catholic.edu.au/ree/RE/CLT/Pages/3to7.aspx>

**Making Meaning through Prayer and Ritual Level 4 and 5 RE Module**

<http://catchingfire.bcehosting.qld.edu.au/Home>

**Brisbane Catholic Education Catching Fire Website**

[http://cyberfaith.com/liturgical\\_year.cfm](http://cyberfaith.com/liturgical_year.cfm)

**Liturgical Year 2010**

<http://www.loyolapress.com/liturgical-year.htm>

**Liturgical Year**

[http://www.blestarewe.com/resources/feasts\\_seasons/index.html](http://www.blestarewe.com/resources/feasts_seasons/index.html)

**Liturgical Calendar**

<http://resource.fraynetwork.com.au/object.cfm?o=125&pid=643&showrm=true&uptam=false>

**Ordinary Time**

<http://resource.fraynetwork.com.au/object.cfm?o=121>

**Prayer for Lent**

[http://www.caritas.org.au/project\\_compassion\\_10/index.html](http://www.caritas.org.au/project_compassion_10/index.html)

**Caritas Website: Season of Lent**

<http://resource.fraynetwork.com.au/object.cfm?o=123>

**Symbols of Easter**

<http://resource.fraynetwork.com.au/object.cfm?o=128>

**Advent**