

The Liturgical Year

As we gather for Eucharist each Sunday we notice that throughout the year the color of the priest's and deacon's vestments changes. We may see green, white, purple (or violet), or red. Hymns and readings change too. All these changing elements help us recognize the feast or season of the liturgical year we are celebrating. The liturgical year is the cycle of seasons and feasts the Church celebrates each year.

Sunday. Sunday is the weekly celebration of the Resurrection. It is the Lord's Day. From the days of the early Church, Sunday has been ranked as the first holy day of all.

Advent and Christmas. During the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas, we prepare for and celebrate the Incarnation and Nativity and the announcement of Jesus as the Savior of the world.

Lent, Easter Triduum, and Easter. During Lent catechumens prepare for their initiation into the Church. All the faithful join with them and renew their own Baptism. The whole Church prepares for the celebration of Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the celebration of Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday are the most important days of the liturgical year. We call these days—which begin with the celebration of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and conclude with Vespers, or Evening Prayer, on Easter Sunday—the Easter Triduum, or simply the Triduum, a term which means "three days."

Ordinary Time. The longest part of the liturgical year is called Ordinary Time. The word *ordinary* comes from a Latin word meaning "number." On these numbered weeks of the year—for example, the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time—we listen to the events of the public ministry of Jesus and respond to his invitation to live as his disciples.

Solemnities, Feasts, and Memorials. The Church also celebrates a yearly cycle of feasts. These include the Holy Days of Obligation and other days, such as the Solemnity of Christ the King, and days remembering Mary, the Apostles, and the other saints.