
Teaching About the Liturgical Year

For Catholics, the Church year is the Liturgical Year, a sequence of seasons and feasts that are celebrated in the liturgy—the official public prayer of the Church—during a year’s time. Unlike our traditional 365-day calendar, the purpose of the Liturgical Year Calendar is not to mark the passage of time, but to more fully celebrate and understand 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.

Below is a brief description of the seasons we celebrate during the liturgical year.

- **Advent** begins the liturgical year. During Advent we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birth and await Christmas, the celebration of the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This year, the season of Advent begins on November 20.
- During the **Christmas** season, we celebrate that God is with us always. The Christmas season begins on Christmas Day, December 25.
- **Ordinary Time** is divided into two parts. The first falls between Christmas and Lent. During this season, we celebrate the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and what it means to be his disciple. Ordinary Time is a time to learn and follow the teachings of Christ in our daily lives, to grow as his followers, and to become better able to give witness to his Good news in our everyday lives. The season is called Ordinary Time because the weeks are named in number order.
- Ash Wednesday begins the season of **Lent** on March 1. During Lent we remember that Jesus suffered, died, and rose to new life. We pray, give alms, and fast in order to grow closer to Jesus and to one another. During Lent, we support those preparing for the **Sacraments** of Christian Initiation.
- The Easter **Triduum** is the Church’s greatest celebration. Triduum lasts three days (from Holy Thursday evening until Easter Sunday evening) and we remember and celebrate in the liturgy, with many traditions and rituals, the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The season of **Easter** begins on Easter Sunday evening (April 16) and continues until Pentecost Sunday (June 4). During the Easter season we rejoice in Jesus’ Resurrection and in the new life we have in Jesus Christ.
- The second part of **Ordinary Time** occurs between the seasons of Easter and Advent.

Liturgies celebrated during the different seasons of the liturgical year have distinctive music and specific readings, **prayers**, rituals, and colors. All of these work together to reflect the spirit of the particular season. The colors of the vestments that the priest wears during the liturgy also help express the character of the mysteries being celebrated.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LITURGICAL COLORS



GREEN



WHEN IS IT USED?

Ordinary Time in the liturgical calendar.

SYMBOLISM

Signifies hope.

RED



WHEN IS IT USED?

Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, Feasts of the Apostles and martyrs.

SYMBOLISM

Signifies the fire of charity and blood shed for Christ.

GOLD OR WHITE



WHEN IS IT USED?

Feasts of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, and saints who were not martyred.

SYMBOLISM

Symbolizes glory, joy, innocence, and purity of soul.

ROSE



WHEN IS IT USED?

Third Sunday of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

SYMBOLISM

Symbolizes joy and love.

PURPLE



WHEN IS IT USED?

Advent and Lent, also in Requiem Masses.

SYMBOLISM

Signifies humility and penitence.

