

The Kinds of Feast Days in the Liturgical Cycles

1st Class=Solemnity (e.g., holydays of obligation)

2nd Class=Feast (e.g., for apostles, major saints)

3rd Class=Memorial (e.g., most saints)

4th Class=Optional Memorial (e.g., lesser saints).

The Colors of the Liturgical Year

1. White - The color of light, radiance: used for Christmas, Easter, feasts of our Lord, Mary, and the saints, because of the light, joy, and holiness suggested; may also be used for Masses of Christian Burial.

2. Violet - The color of penance and mortification (Lent), of sorrow (funeral Masses), in Roman tradition royal purple (for Advent - expectation of the King). The Sarum Rite in Medieval England used sarum blue (for Advent - for Mary).

3. Green - The color of vital, growing plants (used for Time of the Year).

4. Red - The color of blood (Passion Sunday, Good Friday, feast days of the martyrs), and of fire (Pentecost and other feasts of the Holy Spirit, Who gives the warmth of divine love and the fire of apostolic zeal; feasts of the apostles and evangelists).

5. Black - Traditionally expressing a sense of mourning, sadness, sorrow, desolation (now little used, but may still optionally be used for funerals, though white is typically worn with a focus on resurrection and life everlasting in glory).

6. Rose - A color of joy and hope (used for "Gaudete" Sunday, the 3rd Sunday of Advent; and for "Laetare" Sunday, the 4th Sunday of Lent). "Gaudete" (gow-DAY-tay) is Latin for

"rejoice"; "Laetare" (lay-TAR-ay) is Latin for "be glad".

7. Gold - The color of that precious metal (may be used on any special solemn occasion).

Readings of the Liturgical Year

The following lists the appointed readings for the liturgical year from Advent – Christmas - Time of the Year (after Epiphany) through Lent – Easter - Time of the Year (after Pentecost). The most confusing part of the calendar is the shifting location of Easter (the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal [spring] equinox). Hence, the shifting location of everything from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost (and the Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi Sunday celebrations following immediately after Pentecost). The Time of the Year readings pick up approximately where they left off before Lent began (occasionally a week must be skipped).

The **Responsorial Psalm** with its versicle (refrain), not listed here for reasons of space, follows the first reading at each Mass, reflects the focus of the first reading, and on Sundays provides the thematic link between the **first reading** (foreshadowing) and **gospel** (fulfillment).

During the year, on **Sundays** there are **two** readings (plus the gospel), but on **weekdays** only **one** reading (plus a gospel). On weekdays the appointed reading will be that for Year I (in odd-numbered calendar years) or Year II (in even-numbered calendar years), but the gospel is repeated each year.

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The Liturgical Year

Think of all the different "years" we use to help us mark time. For Western countries, there is the Gregorian calendar, which begins on January 1. Then there's the school year, which runs only nine months for most countries. Many Asian countries follow a lunar calendar, resulting in shorter months. Our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate their own new year during the feast of Rosh Hashanah in the fall. Then there are businesses. They have their own fiscal years, which can begin with any month, to help them keep track of their finances. And like businesses, countries have fiscal years as well. For the United States and Canada, the fiscal year begins on April 1, while in Great Britain it's July 1.

The Church has its own liturgical year as well. It begins with the season of Advent, and it ends, appropriately enough, with the feast of Christ the King in November. As the culmination of the liturgical year, the feast of Christ the King incorporates everything we have celebrated all year long: Jesus' birth, His suffering and death, His glorious resurrection, and His gift of the Church.

The Church's **Liturgical Year** unfolds one great message "Christ Coming to Us." It speaks of God's coming to us, in Christ, and of our coming to God, in Christ. St. Irenaeus summed it up 1800 years ago: "God became man so that we might become gods." At Mass, when the water is poured into the wine at the preparation of the gifts, the same is acknowledged: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity."

Christmas Season, preceded by **Advent**, and followed by **Time of the Year**. During the first two weeks of Advent we look forward to Christ's final coming in glory; for the rest of Advent we recapitulate in ourselves the same longing to see the Messiah and His peace and justice that still sustains the Jewish people. Christmas Season recalls Christ's coming to us in mortal flesh as the light of the world, dawning in darkness, and making manifest in the flesh the Word of God through Whom all things (including ourselves) were secretly being fashioned from the beginning of creation. Christmas season runs from Christmas day until the Baptism of Jesus, the model of our re-creation.

Easter Season, preceded by **Lent**, and followed by **Time of the Year**. Lent is the great penitential season of the withering and death of sin within us; we therefore look toward baptism or toward its renewal in us as our goal. Through union with the "Paschal Mystery" by which we "die" with Christ to sin, and "rise" with Him to new life in grace, this process is accomplished. Easter Season highlights the life of the Risen Christ coming into us, in grace, with the promise of final

glory. Easter is the Sunday of the year, as Sunday is of the week.

The **Time of the Year** "after Epiphany" (or "after the Baptism of the Lord") and "after Pentecost" is a time of unfolding and growth, until Christ our King appears in glory, and we with Him, His spotless bride. Though called "Ordinary Time" it evokes the living of an "extraordinary" reality: Christ among us, our hope of glory.

The liturgical **Colors** show the relationship of the seasons. The brilliant, radiant *white* of Christmas and Easter (suggesting illumination from revelation and grace) is flanked by the *violet* of Advent and Lent (suggesting preparation and penance), and the *green* of Time of the Year (suggesting growth and maturation).

Popular Devotions have a special strength and staying power in the lives of Christians (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 48). They attain their greatest power and Catholic identity in relation to the official worship of the Church: "Popular devotions of the Christian people are warmly commended. These devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, and in some fashion are derived from it and lead the people to it" (Constitution on the Liturgy, o. 13).

The Cycles of the Liturgical Year

1. The **Seasonal Cycle**: an annual cycle of liturgical seasons --

ADVENT - CHRISTMAS - Time of the Year (after Epiphany).

LENT - EASTER - Time of the Year (after Pentecost).

2. The **Sunday Cycle**: a 3-year cycle of readings for Sundays and the Major Feast days of the year.

2017 = Year B	2020 = Year B
2018 = Year C	2021 = Year C
2019 = Year A	2022 = Year A

Note: A liturgical year begins with Advent during the previous calendar year.

3. The **Weekday Cycle**: a 2-year cycle of Readings for Weekdays during the "Time of the Year," presenting all the major portions of the Bible; a 1-year cycle of Gospel readings presents Matthew, Mark, and Luke during the Time of the Year (John is read during the Easter Season). Year I = odd years, Year II = even years. Advent and Lenten weekdays have readings organized around themes of hope and penance.

4. The **Sanctoral Cycle**: an annual cycle of remembrances of the saints on (or near) the dates of their death, chosen from all centuries and continents according to their universal appeal, variety, and what we know of them. The new calendar prescribed for the universal Church has left many "free" days open, to be filled with celebrations of more local appeal as decided by local bishops' conferences. For example, the United States Church has inserted Elizabeth Ann Seton on January 4, and celebrates on December 12th Our Lady of Guadalupe (instead of Jane Frances de Chantal). A "saint" honored in the liturgy must be one the Church has officially deemed by a judgment of long tradition or of the process of "canonization" to be certainly in heaven, or probably so ("venerable" or "blessed").