

The Church Year

Lisa and Terrence were talking after Mass. "I wonder how the priest picks out what color robe to wear," Lisa said.

"He always seems to match the color of the church decorations," Terrence replied. "I wonder if they plan that."

"Maybe they share a calendar," Lisa said, giggling.



Celebrating With Family

All families have traditions. It might be an annual family reunion barbecue. Or a secret-Santa drawing for Christmas. Traditions are things your whole family shares. When you grow up, you'll probably pass on these traditions, too.



What traditions does your family have?

Seasons of the Catholic Year

The Church has traditions, too. In fact, the Church has a lot of traditions! To keep track of all the special Church celebrations, the Church has its own calendar. The **Church year** begins on the first Sunday of Advent. The Church year is organized to help us understand and experience all the Church traditions. Each season has its own special meanings, symbols, and colors.

Advent



Color: Violet, for humility and hope.

Symbols: Candles and stars represent Christ as the Way and the Light.

Evergreen branches remind us of eternal life and Jesus' family tree.

Advent begins in late November or early December. During Advent, we look forward to the birth of Jesus at Christmas. We hear how God's people waited for a Savior in the readings at Mass. We hear about God's angel messengers and about John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus.



How do you normally get ready for Christmas?

How can you prepare yourself for the coming of Jesus?

Christmas



Colors: White or gold, for light, innocence, and joy.

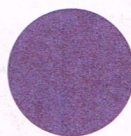
Symbols: Gifts represent the three gifts the Wise Men brought to Jesus. The star of Bethlehem reminds us that Christ shows us the way to him.

Christmas isn't just one day for Catholics. The Church's Christmas season begins on December 25 and continues into January! During Christmastime we hear about Jesus' birth. We learn about the three Wise Men who worshiped Baby Jesus. We also hear about Jesus' childhood, like how Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple. We also hear the story of Jesus' baptism.



What's your favorite part of celebrating Christmas?

Lent



Color: Purple, for sorrow and penance.

Symbols: Ashes remind us of our sins and God's mercy. The cross reminds us of Jesus' death. A crown of thorns reminds us of Jesus' suffering for us.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which is in February or March. Lent lasts for forty days. We are supposed to spend these forty days getting ready for Easter. During Lent we reflect on everything Jesus has done for us. We pay special attention to his mercy, forgiveness, and suffering on the cross. We also try to do extra-good deeds to show our love. We can also give up something we like as a way of showing Jesus we are grateful for his sacrifice and want to be like him.

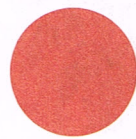


What could you do during Lent to show Jesus you want to be like him?

Triduum: The Last "Three Days"



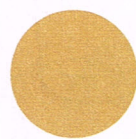
Colors: On Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday we use white to represent Jesus' victory over death on Easter. On Good Friday we use red to represent Jesus' sacrifice for us.



Symbols: Candles represent Jesus, the Light of the World. We wash the feet of others to show that we will serve like Jesus. The cross reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice and death.

Lent ends in a three-day celebration called the **Triduum**. On Holy Thursday evening, we remember how Jesus shared the first Eucharist with his disciples by giving them his Body and his Blood. On Good Friday, we remember Jesus' crucifixion. On Holy Saturday at sunset, the Church celebrates Christ's resurrection at the Easter Vigil. During the Easter Vigil Mass you will receive the sacraments of initiation.

Easter



Colors: White or gold, for Christ is our Light, victory over death, and eternal glory.

Symbols: A lamb represents Jesus' sacrifice for us. Eggs represent our new life now that Jesus has risen from the dead.

The **Easter** season begins in March or April and lasts for fifty days. The last day of the Easter season is called **Pentecost**. During Easter we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the news that we, too, will rise and live forever in heaven. We also remember how the Holy Spirit came to the apostles and made them strong, wise, and eager to build the Church. The Holy Spirit also comes to us through our baptism and confirmation.



How can you celebrate Jesus' victory over death?

Ordinary Time



Color: Green, for growth and eternal life.

Symbols: Plants, because they represent the growth that occurs during this time.

We celebrate **Ordinary Time** twice each year. The first time is between Christmas and Lent, usually January and February. It's celebrated again after Pentecost until Advent. During Ordinary Time, we learn about Jesus' travels, miracles, and teachings. The more we learn about our faith, the better we know and love God.

ACTIVITY

FEAST DAYS AND HOLY DAYS

These six seasons aren't the only things the Church year includes. It also suggests **feast days** for important events and saints. Some feast days are so special they are called **holy days of obligation**. That means we have to go to Mass, even if it's not a Sunday, to celebrate with the rest of our Church family.

In the United States, these are the holy days we celebrate:

- January 1: Mary, the Holy Mother of God
- Sixth Thursday or seventh Sunday of Easter: The Ascension of the Lord
- August 15: The Assumption of Mary, when her body was taken into heaven
- November 1: All Saints
- December 8: The Immaculate Conception of Mary
- December 25: The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Have you ever celebrated one of these holy days?



A COLORFUL YEAR

Draw a line to connect the season to the symbol.

Advent: Violet

Christmas: Gold or light yellow

Lent: Dark purple

Triduum: Red and white

Easter: Gold or dark yellow

Ordinary Time: Green



In Short



- The Church follows a liturgical calendar.
- Liturgical seasons have their own symbols, themes, and colors.
- The liturgical calendar includes feast days, holy days, and saints days.

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