

# CATHOLIC PRACTICES



## Opening Prayer

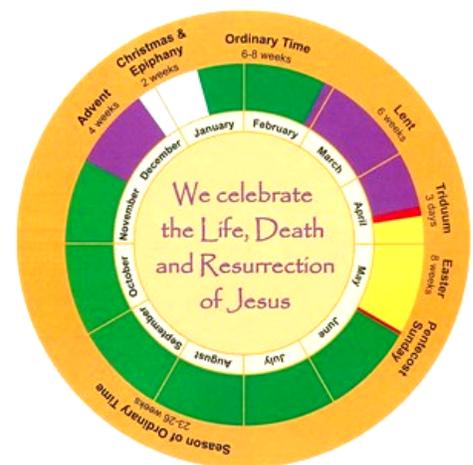
Heaven Father, you give us the gift of time and seasons in which you allow us to encounter your Son through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Be with us as we journey to deeper our relationship with you at all times. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Scripture Reading *Hebrews 13:1-2, 7-8, 17-18*

In this reading from the letter to the Hebrews, the author is encouraging honorable behavior in the Church, reminding the audience that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The call to love, to demonstrate hospitality, and imitate the faith of the martyrs is fundamental to the Christian life.

## What is the Church's Liturgical Year?

- The Church follows a calendar in which we have made time sacred. This calendar is also known as the **liturgical year**.
- The Liturgical Year begins with the First Sunday of Advent season (on the Sunday closest to November 30<sup>th</sup> – Feast of St. Andrew) and ends with the Solemnity of Christ the King.
- The calendar is made up of seasons, which prepare and celebrate particular parts of the paschal mystery, like Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, and a season that commemorates life and growth, Ordinary Time.
- The Calendar has movable feasts, like Easter (based on the Sunday following the first full moon of Spring) and set days, like Christmas (December 25<sup>th</sup>).
- Throughout the Liturgical Year, the Church celebrates the Paschal Mystery of Christ, in unique and particular ways to remind us of the various aspects of Christ's life.
- The Church also celebrates the lives of the saints throughout the Liturgical Year, a practice that developed from the remembrance of martyrs on the date of their death.



### What is the Communion of Saints?

- The **communion of saints** is the spiritual unity which binds together the faithful on earth, the souls in **purgatory**, and the saints in heaven as the same mystical Body of Christ.
- Being more closely united to Christ, the saints in heaven intercede with the Father for us because of their fraternal concern.
- Not only do the saints provide an example for us, but our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, for through their imitation of Christ's love, they enjoy eternal life in Christ.
- From the very beginning of the Church, the Church has honored with great respect the memory of the dead. Our prayer for the dead is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

### What are the liturgical colors?

- **White** is used in the seasons of **Easter** and of **Christmas**; also on celebrations of our Lord (other than his Passion), of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saints who were not martyrs; also at funerals. White celebrates joy, new life, and purity.
- **Red** is used on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, on Pentecost Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord's Passion, on feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists and other martyred saints. Red symbolizes the blood of the martyrs and the Holy Spirit.
- **Green** is used in **Ordinary Time**. It symbolizes growth and continuation.
- **Violet** is used in the seasons of **Advent** and of **Lent**. Violet is a symbol of penance and preparation.
- **Rose** vestments may be used on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and on Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent). It symbolizes subdued joy and relieved repentance.

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### What are the Church's holy days?

- **Holy Days of Obligation** are Solemnities in the Church calendar where Catholics are required to attend Mass.
- There are 10 Holy Days of Obligation in Rome. Each country's Bishop's Conference can set the list of Holy Days of Obligation, with Vatican approval. In the United States, other than Sunday, 5 Holy Days of Obligation are celebrated:
  - **Immaculate Conception** – December 8
  - **Christmas** – December 25
  - **Mary, Mother of God** – January 1
  - **Assumption** – August 15
  - **All Saints' Day** – November 1
- If the Solemnities of the Mary, Mother of God, the Assumption, or All Saints' Day fall on a Saturday or a Monday, the precept to attend Mass is abrogated.
- Other Solemnities are celebrated on Sundays throughout the Liturgical Year. These days honor particular aspects of Christ's life.
  - **Epiphany** – Sunday after January 1
  - **Easter** – First Sunday after the first full moon of Spring
  - **Ascension** – Seventh Sunday of Easter
  - **Pentecost** – Fifty Days after Easter
  - **Most Holy Trinity** – Sunday after Pentecost
  - **Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)** – Sunday after Trinity Sunday
  - **Christ the King** – Last Sunday in Ordinary Time

### How does the Church decide what Scripture readings to read each day?

- All of the readings for Mass are contained in a book known as a **lectionary**.
- To be able to proclaim more of Sacred Scripture at Mass, the Church devised a three-year cycle of Sunday readings and a two-year cycle of weekday readings, as well as adding an Old Testament and Epistle reading on Sundays.
  - Year A: Matthew; Year B: Mark (John 6); Year C: Luke
  - John's Gospel is also read on Sundays in the Christmas and Easter season each year.
- On Sundays, the Gospel readings are continuous, meaning a particular Gospel is treated as a whole, while the First Reading: Old Testament readings are chosen to relate with the Gospel and the Second Reading: Readings are organic, providing a semi-continuous reading of Paul and James.
- On weekdays, the Gospel readings are organic – Mark is read during weeks 1-9; Matthew 10-21; and Luke 22-34 and the First Reading is organic, but more selective than on Sundays since both testaments are used. i.e. Daniel and Revelation are read at the end of the liturgical year because of their themes.