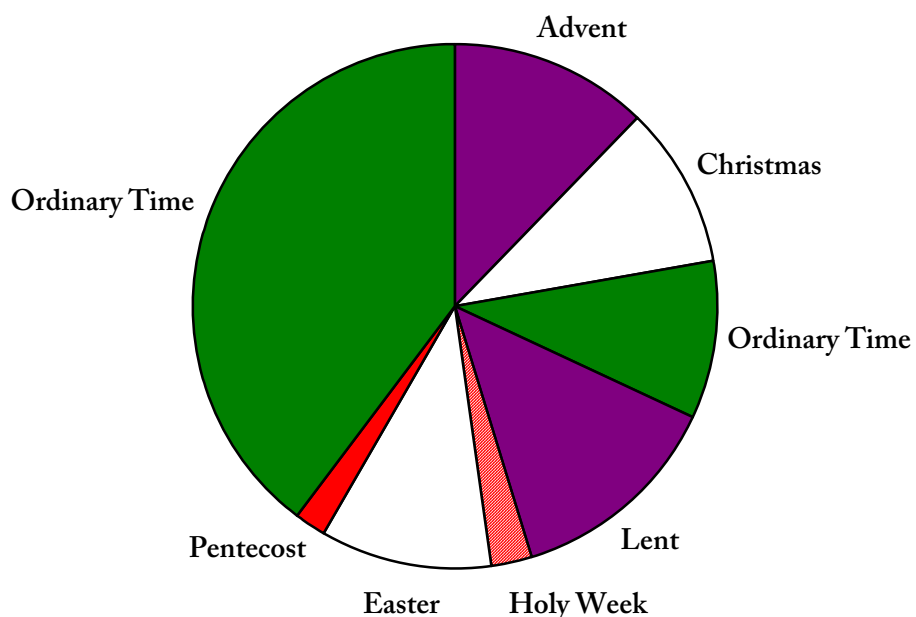


THE CYCLE OF THE CHURCH'S YEAR



The Church follows a Liturgical Calendar that connects the seasons of the year to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, providing us with a framework to enter more deeply into the Paschal Mystery of Our Lord.

The liturgical year encompasses the rites, celebrations and feasts that take place during the Church year and are highlighted in the Scripture readings and prayers of the Mass.

'Christ's saving work is celebrated in sacred memory by the Church on fixed days throughout the course of the year. Each week on the day called the Lord's Day the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection. Once a year at Easter the Church honours the resurrection of the Lord and his blessed passion with the utmost solemnity. In fact through the yearly cycle the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ and keeps the anniversaries of the saints.'

(General Norms for the Liturgical Year 1)

The Liturgical Year begins on the First Sunday of Advent and runs through to the Solemnity of Christ the King.

LITURGICAL COLOURS

In order to help us to enter into the cycle of the year the Church uses different colours for different seasons. The practice of using different colours for vestments and other liturgical objects during the various seasons of the Church year was first noted amongst a clerical order in Jerusalem in the 12th century.

During the Middle Ages, the Church in Gaul emphasised those features of worship which appealed to the senses. The use of colours, along with frequent use of incense, became important. The liturgical colours were standardised throughout the Church in the period after the Council of Trent in the mid-16th century. They remain a tradition today with very little change.

The four basic liturgical colours are white, green, red and purple. The traditional symbolism of these colours is:

WHITE– innocence, purity, victory, joy, resurrection;

GREEN – hope, growth, increase, life, fidelity;

RED - sacrifice (particularly the sacrifice of life), charity, zeal, Holy Spirit;

PURPLE – sorrow, penitence, preparation.

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the purpose of the variety of colour of the sacred vestments is to 'express outwardly the specific character of the mysteries of faith being celebrated and to give a sense of the passage of the Christian life throughout the course of the liturgical year.' (GIRM 2000 - 345)

White is used:

- during the Easter and Christmas season;
- on Trinity Sunday,
- on celebrations of the Lord (other than his passion) such as Ascension, Corpus Christi, Christ the King,
- celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
- celebrations of the Holy Angels and of Saints who were not martyrs;
- on the feasts of All Saints, the Birth of John the Baptist, St John the Evangelist, the chair of St Peter and the Conversion of St Paul.

Red is used on

- Palm Sunday,
- Good Friday,
- Pentecost,
- on celebrations of the Lord's Passion,
- on the Feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists,
- on celebrations of martyr saints.

Purple or violet are used

- in Advent and Lent and
- may also be used in Masses for the Dead

Rose may be used

- on *Gaudete* Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent)
- and *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

Green is used

- throughout Ordinary Time

In the Eastern Church there are no definite rules about colours, although there is a natural tendency to use more sombre colours during penitential seasons, while white is used at all services, including funerals, during the Easter Season

(Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane)

ADVENT

Begins at Evening Prayer 1 of the Sunday falling on or closest to 30th November (the First Sunday of Advent) and ends before Evening Prayer of Christmas, on 24th December.

There are 4 Sundays in Advent

Advent has a twofold character:

- *as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered;*
- *as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time.*

Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation

Since the tenth century the First Sunday of Advent has always marked the beginning of the Church's year in the Catholic Church. (In the Orthodox Church the season begins earlier in November). The beginning of Advent always follows the Feast of Christ the King, so this year, (2012) the First Sunday of Advent falls on 2nd December .

- The earliest suggestion of a period of preparation for the birth of Jesus was towards the end of the 5th Century when St Perpetuus decreed a fast three times a week

from the feast of St Martin, 11th November, until Christmas. It became a period of penance and fasting of 43 days, not unlike Lent, although somewhat less strict. It was commonly called St Martin's Lent. By the tenth century this period of time became the four Sundays, as we have now, and the rules of fasting were relaxed.

The overall theme of Advent blends together a penitential spirit, a liturgical theme of preparation for the Second and Final Coming of the Lord, called the Parousia, and a joyful theme of getting ready for the Bethlehem event

- Week 1 Stay Awake and Watch
- Week 2 Prepare a Way for the Lord
- Week 3 Gaudete Sunday – Rejoice!
- Week 4 Mary Will Have a Child

CHRISTMAS

- From evening prayer 1 of Christmas, (celebrated on the evening of 24 December, the beginning of the liturgical day of 25 December - Birth of the Lord) to Baptism of the Lord (Sunday after the Solemnity of the Epiphany).

Next to the yearly celebration of the paschal mystery, the Church holds most sacred the memorial of Christ's birth and early manifestations. This is the purpose of the Christmas season.

The Nativity of the Lord

- Vigil Mass
- Midnight Mass
- Dawn Mass
- Mass during the day

The Holy Family

Mary, Mother of God

Second Sunday after Christmas

The Epiphany of the Lord

The Baptism of the Lord

ORDINARY TIME

- From the Monday following the Baptism of the Lord to the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The Sundays in Ordinary Time are numbered consecutively from the Baptism of the Lord.

The Sundays of this season do not celebrate a specific aspect of the mystery of Christ. Instead they are devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects. Ordinary Time continues after the season of Easter.

LENT

- From Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday. There are 6 Sundays of Lent.

Lent is a preparation for the celebration of Easter. For the Lenten liturgy disposes both catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery: catechumens, through the several stages of Christian initiation; the faithful, through reminders of their own baptism and through penitential practices.

THE DATE OF EASTER

In the early days of the Church, just as today, there were many different beliefs. Society was very agricultural, and many religions used the seasons to celebrate special feasts. It was important, in teaching about Jesus, to have people connect the gospel message to their daily lives.

Since Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of a whole new life and occurred so near the spring feasts the Council of Nicaea, in 325AD, determined that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox – the first day of Spring.

To determine the beginning of Lent, count back six Sundays before Easter. The Wednesday before the first of these Sundays is Ash Wednesday.

Towards the end of Lent, if possible, encourage children to observe the changing moon. If you attend the Easter Vigil, take a moment before it begins, gathered around the fire, to look up at the sky and see the moon entering its last quarter.

Earliest date for Ash Wednesday – 5 February

Latest date for Ash Wednesday – 10 March

Earliest date for Easter – 22 March

Latest date for Easter – 25 April

Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection. The forty days of Lent follow Jesus' forty days of fasting while in the desert. During his stay in the wilderness, Jesus is tempted by the devil three times: each time Jesus, though weary with hunger, rejects the devil's false promises.

The word 'Lent' is from the Anglo-Saxon 'lencten' (spring), the time during which the days begin to lengthen.

Historically, Lent was the retreat-like period of final preparation for catechumens – those preparing for initiation into the Church at Easter. During Lent in our parishes today we will be aware of those preparing to be received into the Church as they are brought forward at Sunday Masses. The whole community supports them in prayer – for we, too, are going through a period of preparation.

In 2013 Lent begins on 13th February (Ash Wednesday) and ends at sundown on 28th March (Holy Thursday), with the beginning of the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days.

In many countries, the last day before Lent (called Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday, Carnival, or Fasching) has become a last fling before the solemnity of Lent. For centuries, it was customary to fast by abstaining from meat during Lent, which is why some people call the festival Carnival, from the Latin for 'farewell to meat'.

Fasting and Abstinence

The Church asks that we observe Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as days of fasting and abstinence. Each Friday of the year, because it recalls Christ's crucifixion are also to be observed as penitential days. The Bishops of England and Wales give the following instruction:

The law of the Church requires Catholics on Fridays to abstain from meat, or some other form of food, or to observe some other form of penance laid down by the Bishops' Conference. The Bishops have decided to re-establish the practice that this penance should be fulfilled simply by abstaining from meat and by uniting this to prayer. Those who cannot or choose not to eat meat as part of their normal diet should abstain from some other food of which they regularly partake. This decision came into effect from Friday 16 September 2011.

(A document giving further explanation, 'Catholic Witness – Friday Penance, Question & Answer' has been published by the Bishops of England and Wales and is posted on this website.)

Ash Wednesday is the official start of the Season of Lent, a season for penance, reflection and fasting in order to prepare ourselves for Christ's Resurrection and for our Redemption.

Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church to help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice.

The custom is from an old ceremony. Christians who had committed grave faults were obliged to do public penance. On Ash Wednesday the Bishop blessed the hair shirts which they were to wear during the forty days, and sprinkled over them ashes made from the palms from the previous year.

Then, while the faithful recited the Seven Penitential Psalms, the penitents were turned out of the holy place because of their sins, as Adam, the first man was turned out of paradise on account of his disobedience. They did not enter the Church again until Holy Thursday after having won reconciliation by the toil of forty days' penance and sacramental absolution. Later on, all Christians, either public or secret penitents, came out of devotion to receive ashes.

The ashes are made from the previous years blessed palms from Palm Sunday.

Lent is seen as a time of intense concentration on renewal which culminates in the joy of Resurrection at Easter, new life, the high point of God's love. That love is celebrated in the lighting of the Easter Fire, the Easter (Paschal) Candle that will burn all year; for the seven weeks of Easter, for Baptisms and for funerals. We Christians need time to go from ashes to fire. Lent gives us that time.

- From the Gospel of Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18) we take the three challenges for growth during Lent. We are called to
- PRAY – to devote more time to our relationship to God;
- FAST – to try to concentrate less on the luxuries of life, those things we do not really need, and to concentrate more on God and on the needs of others;
- GIVE ALMS – to give of what we have to those who are in need.

HOLY WEEK

Holy Week, which begins on the 6th Sunday of Lent, Passion (Palm) Sunday has as its purpose the remembrance of Christ's passion, beginning with his Messianic entrance into Jerusalem.

PALM SUNDAY

On this day we hear two Gospels, the first telling of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the second the Passion and Death of Jesus, preparing us for the week ahead. The procession with palms at the beginning of Mass recalls entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey.

THE MASS OF CHRISM, which in this Diocese takes place in the Cathedral on the Tuesday of Holy Week, is the liturgy at which oils are blessed for the coming year and sent out to each of the parishes.

The three oils (of the sick, of catechumens, and chrism) are publicly received at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, witnessed by the whole assembly. Oils remaining from the previous year will not be used again.

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

Meaning simply 'the three days', begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday and is the culmination – and the highest point - of the Church's year.

HOLY THURSDAY - Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

This is the only Mass celebrated in the parish on this day. The documents of the Church tell us this – for its importance is such that the whole parish community should be together at the one celebration, as they are at the Vigil on Holy Saturday night.

This first gathering is dominated by a feeling for our identity as Church, how our ‘passing over’ from death to life in Jesus is known in our service to each other and to the world. This Mass is a memorial of the institution of the eucharist, and a memorial of the institution of the priesthood.

The link between Christ’s Passover from death to resurrection, and our Passover in which we die to sin in order to rise to new life in Jesus – is highlighted in the Mass of Holy Thursday by the reading from the Book of Exodus of the Passover of the Israelites – the night the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the Israelites so that they could escape from Egypt into the freedom of the Promised Land.

The Gospel gives John’s description of the moment at the Last Supper when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples to show them how they are to behave with others. He gives them what we call the ‘Mandatum’ the command to ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ It is from this word ‘Mandatum’ that we have the name ‘Maundy’ Thursday – the time when the Church re-enacted the command by the celebrant of the Mass washing the feet of members of the congregation – a symbol of our mission to humble ourselves to serve others.

At the end of Mass we enter into another event of the night of the Last Supper – the time Jesus spent with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The tabernacle is emptied, and the Blessed Sacrament is carried in procession to the Altar of Repose in the Weekday Chapel. The altars are stripped, leaving a bare sanctuary, votive candles and plants are removed, the holy water fonts and the Baptismal font will be emptied before morning; a symbol of the hours that follow, in which Jesus was sent, with nothing to his death.

And now we enter into the Garden. We are given the opportunity to ‘watch and pray’ at the Altar of Repose until midnight; to ‘stay awake’ and be with the Lord – not to fail as did the disciples. ‘Could you not watch with me one hour?’ asked Jesus

GOOD FRIDAY

The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy noted: ‘Let the paschal (*Easter*) fast be kept sacred. It should be observed everywhere on Good Friday, and, where possible, on Holy Saturday.’

‘There is a time in every human life when we turn from food because we are so filled with something else. Perhaps we are in mourning, or in love, utterly involved in decorating the house, painting a picture, absorbed in a wonderful novel. We fast because we are no longer hungry, but are utterly filled with something else. The paschal fast is being so filled with God that nothing else counts. And other things could only distract.’ (*James Field - ‘The Paschal Fast’*)

The fast unites the whole Church, those baptised are fasting with the catechumens who will be baptised on Holy Saturday night, ‘foregoing all nourishment but God’s presence.’ The Church encourages us to continue our fast throughout Holy Saturday also, sharing with the catechumens the anticipation as the Vigil comes closer.

Good Friday - The Celebration of the Lord’s Passion

This is the only day in the year when Mass is not celebrated, although Holy Communion is received.

The Church is bare, the focus is on the Cross.

There is no opening hymn. The celebration begins with silent prayer and submission to God as the celebrants prostrate themselves at the foot of the sanctuary.

The liturgy of the Word begins with a reading from Isaiah, the fourth of the Songs of the Servant of the Lord, who suffers to atone for the sins of his people, written in about the 6th century before Christ. In it is seen the prophecy of all that we know of Jesus in those last days.

‘Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes; a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.....’

The psalm in response is Psalm 30, with the antiphon, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’

The reading of the Passion is preceded by a passage from the Letter to the Hebrews, where we hear how Jesus ‘learnt to obey through suffering.’

The Passion of Christ from the Gospel of John follows. This telling of Jesus’ final hours is quite different in tone from the Passion that we hear on Palm Sunday. In the Gospel of John Jesus reigns from the cross; the cross is a manifestation of God. Here is proclaimed triumph in the death of Jesus.

The homily is followed by the General Intercessions, essentially the Prayer of the Faithful that we pray at every Mass. Those used on Good Friday come down to us from ancient tradition.

The Veneration of the Cross

The celebrant carries the bare cross, flanked by two candles, through the church, halting three times to show the cross to the assembly.

We use a bare cross rather than a crucifix, for it is the cross that we focus on here, the ‘Tree’ on which Jesus died, perhaps seen as the tree of life, the link between heaven and earth..

We see the cross as the instrument of our redemption, the tree on which the evil one was defeated. The cross is brought to the sanctuary, and, one by one, the whole community come forward to venerate, touching the cross with their forehead or their lips.

This is a moment of great faith for us. The action of bowing and kissing the cross is one of submission, of humility, when we acknowledge the greatness of what God has done for us.

The final part of the Good Friday Liturgy is Communion. We have not celebrated Mass, so Blessed Sacrament consecrated on Holy Thursday is brought to the altar.

After Communion the priest takes the remaining hosts from the Church for the tabernacle remains empty until the Vigil on Holy Saturday night.

HOLY SATURDAY – THE EASTER VIGIL

The Vigil ‘must begin after darkness on Saturday and must conclude before daybreak’, so can be celebrated at any time between these hours.

Since the earliest Christian times Sunday has been kept as the Day of the Lord – renewing in the Eucharist the mystery of Christ’s passover, from death to life. But the Jewish Passover was never completely abandoned; it was to be an inspiration for the Christian passover.

In most languages there is no separate word for Easter. The name is derived from Pasch (Passover), hence Pacques in French and Pasquale in Italian. (Our English word ‘Easter’ probably comes from the name of a pagan goddess of Spring).

The yearly Pasch developed around the climax of the long initiation process for new members of the Church. Around these new members existing Christians renewed their lives. As Jesus passed through death to new life so would the catechumens; and every Christian would be renewed in the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection.

The readings from the Old Testament lead us to reflect on the history of salvation – our history – into the light of the Resurrection.

The Service of Light takes place outside where the Easter Fire is lit. As we gather round the fire the celebrant takes the Paschal Candle, and with a stylus cuts a cross into the wax. The he traces the Greek letters ‘Alpha’ (the beginning) and Omega (the end) above and below the cross, with the numerals of the current year between the arms of the cross, proclaiming ‘Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega...’ The candle is lit from the fire. The celebrant then leads the assembly into the darkened church with the single light of the Paschal Candle. As he enters he sings ‘Lumen Christi!’ (The Light of Christ) and we respond ‘Deo gratias’ (Thanks be to God). In the centre of the church all wait patiently for all the candles of the community to be lit from the Paschal Candle, the first light of the risen Lord.

On the sanctuary the candle is placed into its stand and the great Easter song of joy 'the Exsultet' is sung, beginning;

'Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

Exult all creation around God's throne!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Alleluia is the word that echoes through all our celebration, as we hear from the Gospel of Matthew of the discovery by Mary of Magdala that Christ has risen from the tomb.

We welcome new members into the Body of Christ through the sacraments of initiation; Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist and the baptised renew their Baptismal Promises.

Sundays of Easter

Easter Sunday

Second Sunday of Easter

Third Sunday of Easter

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Sixth Sunday of Easter

The Ascension of the Lord

Pentecost Sunday

PENTECOST

Pentecost was originally a Jewish feast that brought Jews from many places to Jerusalem. It is called in Hebrew 'Shavuot', the Feast of Weeks, and is the Jewish holiday celebrating the harvest season in Israel. Shavuot, which means "weeks", refers to the timing of the festival which is held exactly 7 weeks after Passover. The farmers of Israel would bring their first harvest to Jerusalem as a token of thanksgiving.

The name Pentecost comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and means 'fiftieth' as the Feast of Weeks is celebrated exactly 50 days after Passover. Pentecost would be the name by which Greek speaking Jews would have known the festival.

The Jewish feast drew large crowds from all over the Jewish world to Jerusalem – which is why Acts is able to say there were people in Jerusalem 'from every nation under heaven,' and the issue of many languages arises.

For us, as Christians, Pentecost refers to the fiftieth day after the Resurrection

We, as Christians, celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of gifts, the Church's foundation, and the beginning of its mission to all nations and peoples. It is a time to reflect on not only the story of that event and its effect on the first apostles but the effect of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

ORDINARY TIME

From the Monday following Pentecost Sunday until the Saturday before the 1st Sunday of Advent.

The last Sunday is the Solemnity of Christ the King, which is Sunday 34 in Ordinary Time.

The preceding Sundays are calculated to end with Sunday 34