

Cycles of Celebration – Part 2

CATHOLIC LITURGICAL CALENDAR

- In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount Jesus says "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.*"
- **Advent**
 - ⇒ Marks the beginning of the liturgical year on the 1st Sunday of Advent
 - ⇒ Daylight grows shorter; dark of night grows longer ... a spirit of expectation gains momentum.
 - ⇒ Advent is a season of desire, passion and hope.
 - ⇒ Violet vestments and simpler church environment clash with the red, green and sparkling silver & gold everywhere around us. Violet represents Expectation, Purification, and Penance
 - ⇒ The tension of Advent places us between memory and hope – the beginning and end times meet. We live between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ.
 - ⇒ Advent scriptures are filled with poetry, prophecy and challenge preparing us for this reign of God – and for the 2nd coming of Christ which brings all things to fulfillment.
- **Christmas**
 - ⇒ The message of Christmas is that God's only son was born among us in order to save the world.
 - ⇒ In the "outside" world Christmas usually ends quickly. But WE celebrate it for 12 days. The Church encourages us to keep observing the season until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (soon after Epiphany).
 - ⇒ The colors of white and red and the church filled with flowers and living things remind us of the life God has sent to dwell among us.
 - ⇒ Epiphany means "a shadowing, appearance, revelation, manifestation". In ancient Greece *epiphanein* was used to describe the appearance of a god among the people.
 - ⇒ Christmas celebrates the Word Made Flesh, birth of the true light → Epiphany extols the manifestation of that Light to the whole world, in the person of Jesus.
- **Lent**
 - ⇒ FYI - The early Church's annual calendar began and ended with the celebration of **Pascha** (Easter).
 - ⇒ The Easter cycle consists of 6 Sundays of Lent, 7 Sundays of Easter and Pentecost Sunday.
 - ⇒ Lent, the preparation period of the Easter cycle, was initially time of preparation for Baptism. Today we use Lent in anticipation of the Resurrection and we celebrate the Easter weeks remembering the cost of the victory of the cross. Penitence and reconciliation become the prominent theme of our liturgies
 - ⇒ Violet vestments are used which represent Expectation, Purification, and Penance. Banners, bulletin and altar covers are some of the many symbols of this season. The church environment is that of emptiness, sparse, absence of flowers and other living things. Violet
- **Triduum** (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday)
 - ⇒ Our Jewish brothers and sisters annually retell the exodus story within the context of a communal meal (the Seder). By telling their children, year after

Cycles of Celebration – Part 2

year, the story of exodus – the story of affliction, suffering, sorrow, struggle and finally freedom – Jews find faith in a future promise of God's love and care for them.

- ⇒ It begins with HOLY THURSDAY. In this story we recall the celebration of the Jewish Passover and the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper.
 - In ritual we wash feet to symbolically remember our ministry of service as the priesthood of all believers.
 - It's interesting to note that in the early Church, repentant sinners were absolved on this day (after the Lenten season of penance).
 - In most diocese the bishop consecrates the holy oils on this day (Oil of Catechumens/Oil of the Sick/Sacred Chrism)
- ⇒ GOOD FRIDAY – the anniversary of the death of Jesus. We spend the day in quietness and yet we gather in the evening as a celebration of the hope-filled good news of the cross which proclaims new life in Christ beyond the power of death.
- ⇒ Holy Saturday – White (or Gold) vestments are used which represents Joy and Triumph.
 - The Easter (Paschal) Candle is lit from the new fire, carried into the midst of the assembly, and we begin to tell the story of who we have been and are becoming. Easter water is blessed. Catechumens approach the water and pronounce their baptismal vows. With them we renew our baptismal identity.
 - Bells ring out; flowers and joyful banners replace our empty churches. It is the night of all nights.

- **Pentecost**

- ⇒ For 7 weeks we observe and celebrate the resurrection of Christ by the power of God. Pentecost concludes the Easter Season.

- **Transfiguration of the Lord**

- ⇒ Jesus transformed Himself into a beautiful and magnificent light in front of Peter, James, and John. Jesus stood talking with Moses and Elijah. Moses symbolized the Law and Elijah symbolized prophecies that had been said through the centuries.
- ⇒ This feast became widespread in the West in the 11th century and was introduced into the Roman calendar in 1457 to commemorate the victory over Islam in Belgrade. Prior to that, the Transfiguration of the Lord was celebrated in the Syrian, Byzantine, and Coptic rites.
- ⇒ The Transfiguration foretells the glory of the Lord as God, and His Ascension into Heaven. The Transfiguration helps us to anticipate the glory of Heaven, where we will be able to see God face to face.

- **Triumph of the Cross**

- ⇒ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the holiest Christian site in Jerusalem and Israel. The Church contains the Chapel of Golgotha and three Stations of the Cross, as well as the place of Christ's burial and resurrection.
- ⇒ Today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands in the place where a temple dedicated to Aphrodite used to stand. This temple was built during the Roman Empire's time on the location where Christ was crucified and buried, so it will be forgotten. Ironically, the building of the temple actually preserved the exact burial site's location.

Cycles of Celebration – Part 2

- ⇒ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built by Constantine I the Great during the fourth century, after he became Christian, and turned Christianity to the official religion of the Roman empire. In the year 326, Constantine I sent his mother, Helena, to seek the Crucifixion location in Jerusalem. Helena found the place and also found the remains of the cross itself. In that same place, 7 years later, Constantine I founded the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the year 333. The church was almost totally destroyed in 614 and then rebuilt in 1099 by the Crusaders.
- ⇒ The date used for the feast marks the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 335. This was a two day festival: although the actual consecration of the church was on September 13, the cross itself was brought outside the church on September 14 so that the clergy and faithful could pray before it.

- **Incarnational – Christ Our Light**

- ⇒ Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord all form the Christ our Light theme.
- ⇒ John 8:12 – Jesus says “I am the light of the world”
- ⇒ What time of year does the light begin to increase? After the shortest day of the year – the Winter Solstice.
- ⇒ It is fitting that light would begin to increase immediately after His birth.

- **Resurrection – Christ our Life**

- ⇒ Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost form the Christ Our Life theme
- ⇒ We observe Lent in anticipation of the Resurrection and we celebrate the Easter weeks remembering the cost of the victory of the cross. Pentecost recalls the outpouring of the Spirit – God’s gift that empowers us to be impassioned witness to the crucified and risen Christ.

- **Ordinary Time**

- ⇒ Ordinary Time is the standard (not unimportant) time of the Church and the standard for worship is the ordinary time of Sunday in the week-to-week progression of time. It allows the special character of Sunday to have a prominent role in which week after week we gather to celebrate the Resurrection and the unfolding of the new creation.
- ⇒ 2x/year the ordinary time of the Church is made *extraordinary* by the Christmas and Easter cycles. That results in 2 segments of Ordinary Time: 1 in winter and the longest period in summer.
- ⇒ It’s interesting to note that the Feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist falls June 24th coinciding immediately after the Summer Solstice. Remember the Summer Solstice is the longest day ... and starting the next day the days begin to get shorter. Now think of what John says (John 3:30): “I must *decrease*, so He may *increase*.”

- **Liturgical Years**

- ⇒ For Sundays and other special days throughout the church year, there are **3** sets of readings assigned for the day. These readings are assigned to Liturgical Years A, B, and C.
- ⇒ Years which are evenly divisible by 3 are assigned year C, such as **2007**.

Cycles of Celebration – Part 2

- **Liturgical Cycles**

- ⇒ For weekdays in ordinary time there are 2 sets of readings for the day. These readings are assigned to Liturgical Cycles I and II.
- ⇒ Odd years are assigned cycle I, and even years are assigned cycle II. Bear in mind that Liturgical Cycles start on the first Sunday of Advent.

A BETTER SABBATH PREFIGURED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- **Feast of Booths/Tabernacles**

- ⇒ Celebrated to commemorate God leading the Jews through their desert journey and eventually into the Promised Land where they found REST and were blessed with bountiful harvests. Lev. 23:34-39, 42
- ⇒ St. Paul alludes to this desert journey in 2 Cor. 5 when he speaks to our bodies as "tents" or "tabernacles." The Feast of Booths prefigures our new day of rest in the New Covenant.
 - Moses led the Jews out of the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians, and through the desert to find rest in the Promised Land.
 - Similarly, Jesus leads us out of the bondage of slavery to sin, and through the deserts of our lives – the dying to ourselves (Luke 9:23) – to the promised land in the Heavenly Jerusalem where we find ultimate rest in God.
- ⇒ St. Augustine, *Confessions (Book 1, Chapter 1, Verse 1)* says: "... you (God) have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."
- ⇒ CCC – Part Three: Life in Christ : Article 3: The Third Commandment

The day of the Resurrection: the new creation

2174

Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week." (SUNDAY) Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath, (Sabbath – SATURDAY, the 8th day is Sunday) it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day.

Sunday—fulfillment of the sabbath

2175

Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God. For worship under the Law prepared for the mystery of Christ, and what was done there prefigured some aspects of Christ:

Reflection/Journal

- Read Leviticus 16:2-19
Why was the Day of Atonement so significant for ancient Israel? Why are rituals of reconciliation important for me?
- Read Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15
What can I do to sanctify a day of leisure, worship, and spiritual study in my life?
- Read Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 7:11-28
What does it mean to imagine Jesus as a priest? How does the fact that Jesus remains a priest forever make a difference in my trust before God?