

IMPRIMATUR

+ Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, s.t.d.
Bishop of Worcester
December 24, 2019


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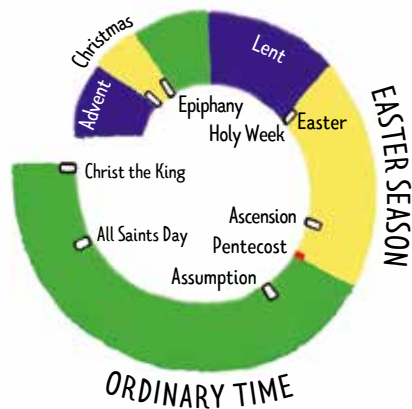
Illustrations by Charlotte Roederer

Feasts of the Church Year

CELEBRATING OUR FAITH TOGETHER



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SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION



There are four major periods of the Church Year:

- **Advent:** four weeks when we prepare for Christmas
- **Christmas:** the time between Christmas and Epiphany when we celebrate the birth of Jesus
- **Lent:** the forty days when we prepare for Easter
- **Easter:** fifty days between Easter and Pentecost when we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus

The rest of the Church Year is called “Ordinary Time.” This term doesn’t mean “ordinary” as if it is not important. It comes from the word *ordinal*, which means “counted time.”

Each period of the Church Year has its own color:

White (or gold or yellow) is used for the joyful feasts that recall the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Violet (or purple) is used for periods of **penance** and preparation such as Advent and Lent.


Red is used for Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, and for feasts of martyred saints (those who died in the name of Jesus and the Church).


Green is used during Ordinary Time.

Each feast in this book is marked with a banner that shows the date, how long it lasts, and its color.

The holy days observed by **Catholics** are marked with .

Two other signs indicate that the feast is shared by other Christians, even if they celebrate it differently:

The holy days observed by Protestants are marked with .

The holy days observed by Orthodox Christians are marked with .

Words in **bold** are key words and are defined on pages 60-61.



Advent

CHRISTIANS PREPARE FOR THE BIRTH OF JESUS

John the Baptist was a prophet who was born just before Jesus. He encouraged those he met to convert—that is, to turn to God with confidence. He told them to prepare for the coming of God by making peace with each other and with God.

During Advent, we recall the days before Jesus' birth, prepare to celebrate his coming that first Christmas, and welcome him into our hearts and lives today and tomorrow.

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Advent means “coming” in Latin.

Happy New Year! At school, the year begins in August or September. On the calendars, it’s in January. And for Christians? At the beginning of Advent!

Be ready! “God is like someone coming home from travel,” said Jesus. You never know when it will happen! Jesus asks his **disciples** to watch; that is, to be ready to meet God. It is also what we do during Advent.

Living Lent at Church

On Ash Wednesday we gather at church to celebrate the first day of Lent.

With the ashes, the priest, deacon, or lay minister traces a cross on the forehead of each person and says, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

Ashes are a sign of penance, of regret, and our distance from God and others. Putting ashes on your forehead is an ancient gesture. This sign shows you are sorry for the ways you have separated yourself from God.



Living Lent at Home

Prayer

During Lent, we take more time to pray. We **meditate** on the Word of God in the Bible.

Reading

Lent is a great time to read books about God and to think about how we can become better followers of Jesus every day.

Sacrifice

We pay attention to eating and living more simply so that we can focus on making sure God has first place in our lives.

Sharing

During Lent, we try to give of our time and to share our money. We do this to help the less fortunate.



Palm Sunday



Christians remember Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, the city of King David. Jesus was welcomed as the Messiah, the messenger of God. People made a carpet with their coats, and put branches on the ground, just as they did for an important person. They celebrated Jesus as a king, but did they really understand who he was?



On Palm Sunday, the last Sunday before Easter, Mass begins outside of the church. As a sign of celebration, we then process inside the church carrying **blessed** palm branches that we will take home with us.

Holy Week

starts on Palm Sunday. It is the last week of Lent. Christians remember the last days of Jesus' life.

Palm Sunday

has other names in other countries. Sometimes it is called *Passion Sunday*, *Flower Sunday*, or *Easter Flower Sunday*.

Other Feasts

Immaculate Conception, December 8th

Catholics Celebrate Mary, who was conceived without sin.



The Baptism of Jesus, early January (January 6th)

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist to show us the sign of those who want to become friends with God.



International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18–25

During this week, Catholics, Protestant Christians, and Orthodox Christians pray together, get to know each other better, and work toward unity.



Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, February 2nd

We celebrate the day that Jesus was presented to the Temple, as all Jewish newborns were at his time. This feast is also called Candlemas.



The Annunciation, March 25th

Mary learned from the Angel Gabriel that God was asking her to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.



The Visitation, May 31st

Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. Elizabeth and her child, John the Baptist, were full of joy because Jesus would soon be born.



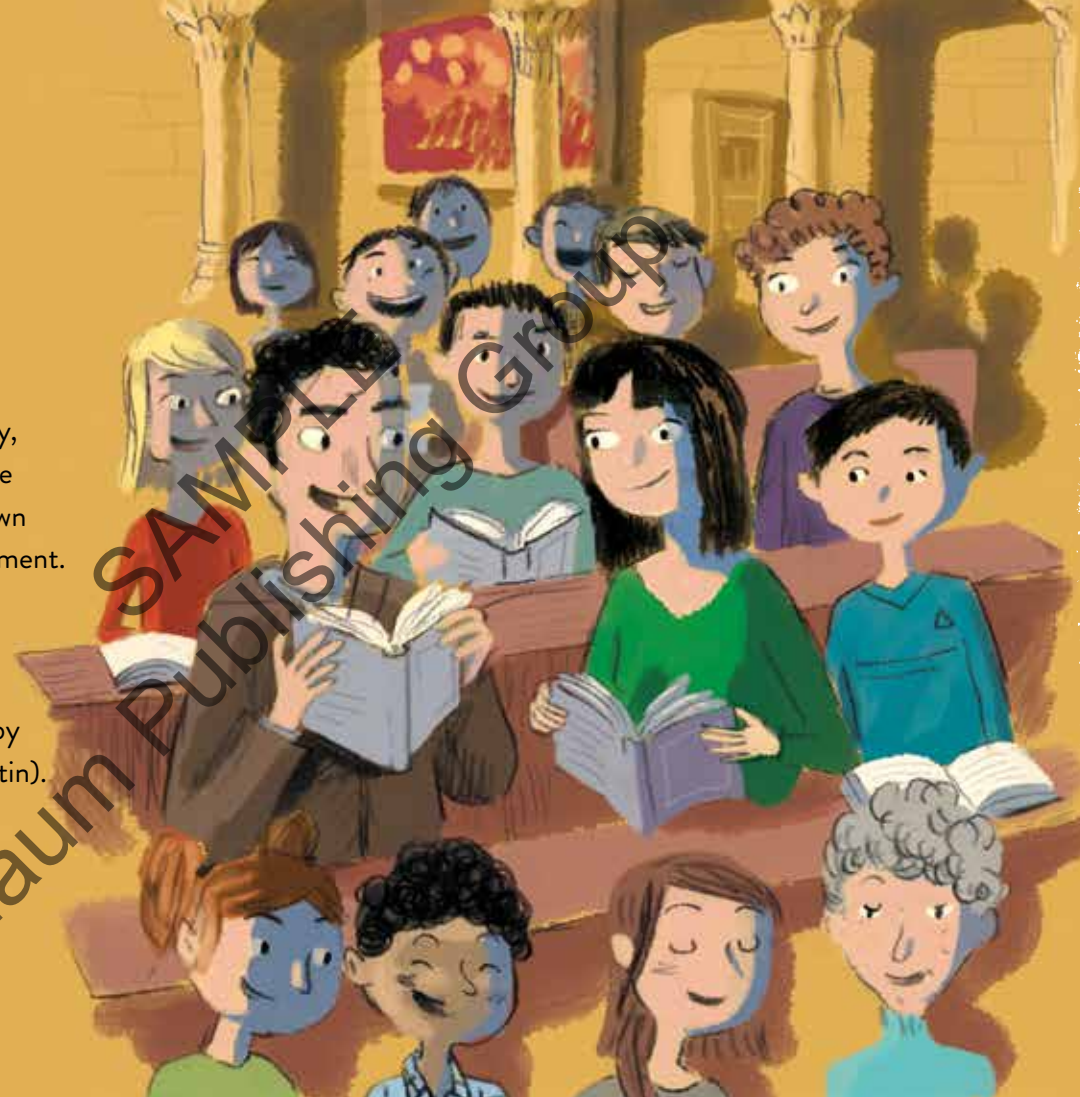


Sunday

CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST

From the beginning, the first Christians decided to meet each Sunday, the day of the Resurrection. Together we read the Word of God in the Bible and share the Body and Blood of Jesus. The life of the first known Christians is written in the Acts of Apostles, a book in the New Testament.

Today we still celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Sundays. For us it is the first day of the week and a day of celebration. We go to Mass. We listen to the Word of God. We declare our **faith** by reciting the Creed (the name comes from “credo” or “I believe” in Latin). We celebrate the Eucharist, the great prayer of thanksgiving to God, and we receive Holy Communion.



Sunday all Christians celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Protestant Christians go to their churches; Orthodox Christians go to the Orthodox church.