

## **Liturgy and Liturgical Year, RCIA**

Today, we are going to talk about the Liturgical Calendar----first we need to talk a little about Liturgy.

Liturgy is Jesus acting in modern times (our times) through his mystical body, just as He acted in Gospel times through His flesh and blood body.

The Liturgy is celebrating Mass.

It is celebrating Baptism.

It is celebrating Reconciliation.

In the words of the Second Vatican Council, the liturgy is Jesus continuing his work of redemption on earth.

Perhaps, these words from John Steinbeck in “the Winter of our Discontent will help explain what the Second Vatican Council was saying:

*Aunt Deborah read the Scripture to me  
like a daily newspaper and I suppose  
that's the way she thought of it,  
as something going on, happening eternally  
but always exciting and new.  
Every Easter,  
Jesus really rose from the dead,  
an explosion, expected but nonetheless new;  
it wasn't two thousand years ago to her;  
it was now!*

That is what Liturgy is----it is not something that happened two thousand years ago----it is something “expected but nonetheless new”----it happens now.

This brings us to the Liturgical Year.

Jesus' work of redemption is so vast that our infinite minds cannot grasp it all at once.

Can anyone tell me what “redemption” is?

“to deliver from sin and to fulfill a promise”.

We must break down Jesus' work of redemption to understand it.

This is what the Liturgical Year does---it breaks down the events of Jesus' life into bite-size units so that we can relive them and be nourished by them---it has no limits, each year we are nourished more and more by the events in Jesus' life.

It really makes these events ever present so that we can participate in them.

Pope Pius XII once wrote:

*The liturgical year.....  
is not a cold and lifeless representation  
of the events of the past.....  
It is rather Christ himself  
who is ever living in his Church.  
Here he continues the journey.....  
which he lovingly began his mortal life.*

The liturgical year revolves around two main feasts: Christmas and Easter. Each feast gives rise to it's own season: the Christmas season and the Easter season.

We should think of these seasons as being made up of three parts:

The main feast,  
The period of preparation,  
And the period of prolongation.

Let me explain:

The feast of "Christmas" celebrates God's entry into human history in the person of Jesus.

It is God living among us, as one of us.

The period of preparation for Christmas is called "Advent" (which means "coming").

The coming of Jesus that we prepare for is not just the liturgical celebration of Jesus' First Coming, but also the anticipation of Jesus' Second Coming at the end of time.

The season of Advent invites us to look toward the past, the gift of the birth of Jesus who came to save us----to look at the present, how God is present in our lives---- and to look to the future, how we will come to terms with our destiny to a life with Christ.

The period of prolongation is called “Ordinary Time”.

During Ordinary Time we come to grasp more deeply what it means to be a disciple and follower of the Word made flesh, who is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Ordinary Time takes two forms: the time that prolongs Christmas and the time that prolongs Easter.

Can anyone tell me what “prolong” means?  
“to lengthen or extend in time or space.”

The Ordinary Time that prolongs Christmas leads to the second and the most important season of the liturgical year: Easter.

The Easter season which includes the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost, is a time of praise, assurance, and mission.

We praise God for the new life that comes to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

We are assured of Jesus’ continuing presence, love, and care for us----we are the sheep he claims as his own.

And our sense of mission is renewed through the promises of the Father sending the Holy Spirit to help us live our lives to the fullest, both now and in the future.

The feast of Easter celebrates the “paschal mystery”.

Can anyone tell me what the “Paschal Mystery” is?  
“Jesus’ death and resurrection”.

This is the event that reversed the course of history.

The period of preparation for Easter is called Lent.  
It begins with Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days.

We as Catholics mark our foreheads with ashes on this day for two reasons:  
Do you know what those two reasons are?

“First the ashes remind us that, like Jesus, who died on Good Friday, we too shall die.”

“Second, they remind us that if we are to rise to a new life, as Jesus did on Easter, we must repent our sins and undergo a conversion of heart.”

Lent is a time to purify ourselves and a time to prepare ourselves for the renewal of our Baptismal vows where we reaffirm our basic beliefs that we recite at every Mass when we proclaim “Our Profession of Faith”.

We renew these vows during the Easter celebrations.

The Ordinary Time that prolongs Easter recalls the life and ministry of Jesus and inspires us to model our own lives after his.

The liturgical year ends with the celebration of the feast of Christ the King. This feast acts as a crowning reminder of our human mission as Catholics.

It is to complete the work of the Kingdom of God, or, in other words: the re-creation of all things----which Jesus began.

Our liturgical year begins four weeks before Christmas and ends the feast of Christ the King.

Does the Liturgical Calendar follow our regular calendars----Jan 1 through Dec 31?

No starts 4 weeks before Christmas day and ends the day before 4 weeks before Christmas. Usually the end of November or the start of December.

When does Advent start and end?

Begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends at Mid-afternoon prayer on Christmas Eve.

When does Christmas season start and end?

Begins with Evening prayer on Christmas Eve and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

When does Ordinary Time begin and end?

From the end of the Christmas season until Ash Wednesday and from the day after Pentecost until the Evening prayer of the First Sunday of Advent.

When does Lent begin and end?

Begins on Ash Wednesday and continues until the Evening Mass of

the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

When does the Paschal Triduum begin and end?

Begins on Holy Thursday with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and closes with Evening prayer on Easter Sunday.

When does the Easter season begin and end?

Begins on Easter Sunday and ends with evening prayer on Pentecost Sunday.

What are the colors of the Liturgical Year?

Advent?	Violet or Purple
Christmas?	White
Ordinary Time?	Green
Lent?	Violet or Purple
Triduum?	Red
Easter?	White

Do you have any questions?

You may break into teams and then make your own Liturgical Calendar.

It might be nice to hang this calendar in your room for reference.