National Bulletin on Liturgy
A review published by the Canadian Catholic Conference

This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, teachers, religious and clergy, and all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

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As we begin a new calendar year, we take a fresh look at the liturgical year, at the times and feasts we celebrate, and at the reasons why we celebrate them. In this issue, the Bulletin considers:

- *The origins and development* of the Church’s liturgical year from the time of first Christians to the present.

- *The meaning, importance, and celebration* of the liturgical year in today’s Church, and suggestions for helping your community in these celebrations.

- *The directions and needs of the future Church* as we complete this century and prepare to begin the third Christian millennium.

The liturgical year has become an instrument of the Church’s formation and a means of giving greater praise to God for his wonderful saving acts among us. By dedicating seasons and days to God, we are also led into closer contact with his Spirit, and are able to grow in his grace with Christ before God and man.
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*A SIMPLE TOUR: This special issue of the Bulletin provides a simplified picture of the development of the liturgical year in the Western Church, especially in the Roman rite.*
EDITORIAL

LORD OF ALL AGES

Alpha and omega, first and last, beginning and end. In the fullness of time, God has spoken to us through his Son. By his dying and rising, the Lord Jesus has redeemed the world. With this direct intervention into human history, God has brought us into the final age of mankind.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of time, leads the people of God back to the Father. With us until he comes again, he continues to guide us in our prayer and living, and to stand with us in offering our living sacrifice to the Father.

The Church uses the liturgical year as an instrument for leading God’s sons and daughters along the pathways of the Lord, guided and illumined by his Spirit. Throughout the year, we are helped to hear and reflect on the scriptures, to give praise, to ask for and receive the gifts God offers his children. As the people of prayer, we are able to offer intercessions on behalf of the world, and to offer the glory of creation to its maker. In obedience to the Lord’s command, we act in his memory: each Lord’s day we eat the bread of life and drink the cup of everlasting salvation, and proclaim his death until he comes.

The Church year is not limited to a tourist’s view of history: it remembers God’s wonderful works shown in the past, and celebrates them as continuing to take place among us. And at the same time, we are looking forward to their complete fulfillment in the messianic banquet in the age to come.

By following Christ in the spirit of the liturgy, Christians die to sin and are raised with him to new life for God. Day by day we are to continue to grow in wisdom, age and strength before God and man, preparing for the Lord’s second coming in majesty and glory.

To do this, however, each parish and community needs to take a fresh look at each season and feast, and to understand what we are celebrating, and why. We should also be prepared to consider areas of further purification or reform, the possibility of different calendars in different parts of the Church, and the desirability of making sure that any new celebrations harmonize with the liturgy. In this way the liturgical year will continue to reflect the Church at prayer in each age.

Through the liturgical year, we are able to redeem the time we live in, and to continue praising God in the name of his creation until his Son knocks and invites us to enter the joy of the Lord of ages.
CELEBRATING IN TIME

SACRED TIME

When a Christian community celebrates a festive occasion, it looks back to the past, around at the present, and forward to the future. All three dimensions are required in Christian festivity.

Past events are celebrated as divine interventions in human history. In many ways and on many occasions, God has perceptibly touched the life of his people. Many of these great moments are recorded in the scriptures, and greatest of all was the coming of his Son to be man: he came to save us by leading us in love, and to help us become like him through sharing in his dying and rising. In the liturgy, we look back to these events and take part in them, and praise God for his wonderful deeds.

God is at work among us: If we were to concentrate only on God’s past deeds, we would be blind to the wonderful works he continues to do in our midst today. Salvation is not to be considered in the past tense, for God is working at this moment. It is his saving work now, both in this assembly and throughout the world, that we praise and thank him for. Sealed by his spirit, guided by his word, encouraged by the community, and nourished by the food of heaven, we are going forward in our pilgrimage, to continue his work by our love and our witness each day.

Looking forward with eagerness: In its life and worship, the Church is also directed toward the future, which is, in some way, already beginning and present among us now. To ignore this eschatological aspect of Christian life is to undermine the nature of Christ’s kingdom and the glory of his people.

The Church of God is looking forward with eagerness to the fulfillment of the signs and the final coming of his kingdom. While we do not expect this to take place as soon as did the first Christians (although who is to say we are correct in this?), we know with the confidence of faith that God will enable his people to complete his plan by bringing all things to Christ. Our Father is faithful to his covenant.

The Lord who is to come in glory is already among us as we hear his word and share in his messianic banquet. In the breaking of bread we recognize our savior, crucified and risen and coming again. We believe that he has conquered sin. Through our faith, we share in his victory while yet in time. The eucharist is the food of eternal life as we continue, in hope and love, to live here in his service.

Expressed in worship: Our liturgy expresses our faith in celebration. The calendar of celebrations in the liturgical year is the way the Church is leading us to share more fully in the mystery of Christ. Though situated in here and now in space and time, we are sharers with all God’s people in the mystery of the king of time, the Lord of all ages. While this work of the Lord continues, we will be called one by one to enter the joy of the Lord, but the Church — ever young in God’s service — will continue at the task until the Lord comes again in glory.
FESTIVITY

Thinking about why we celebrate festivals helps us to understand the underlying human desire and even need for a calendar of feasts. This article describes a study of festivity by Joseph Pieper.¹

What Is Festivity?

Bringing together ideas from various parts of Pieper's book, one could describe festivity as:

- a spirit of public celebration by the community,
- expressed in ritual form on particular occasions,
- and filled with rejoicing
- because God has made the universe, including man,
- and continues to give us his gifts in abundance.

Elements of Festivity

Many elements go together to bring about festivity. Every festival is seen to be:

- A special day: A feast is an exceptional interruption of routine daily work, letting the other enter life. Such time for celebration means giving up or sacrificing the rewards of the day's labor, and is done from love as a means of preparing for the divine gifts available through the festival.

- A call to contemplation: On the occasion of a festival, members of the community are called to step out of daily cares, into sacred time; to turn to God, to contemplate creation from a wider perspective; to see reality as a whole, to appreciate (i.e., see the value of) the universe.

- A day of rejoicing: Joy and celebration are natural concomitants of festivity. We rejoice on a feast because we love and are loved, because we are receiving divine gifts, because the occasion of our celebration is still affecting us now and here. We celebrate because it is good for us to be, because we accept and approve of our existence. We respond in joy to creation and reality, to God's continuing creative power. As Pieper notes, "It is the joy of being a creature whom God has created out of joy."²

- Permeating all aspects of life: Every phase of life — mental and physical, social and spiritual, individual, family and community, institutional and official — is touched by true festivity, for we are celebrating the goodness of all life and reality.

- Based on ritual worship: Man gives his deepest affirmation to creation by praising and thanking its creator. Ritual festivity, handed down from one generation to the next, is the highest and best form of festive celebration, for it is real

² Ibid., page 36.
asent to and affirmation of God and his creation, of life and reality. This need for celebration expressed through traditional ritual is confirmed by Margaret Mead.¹

- **Closely allied with the arts:** Festivity and the arts are related in a number of ways. Music, dancing, singing, art are necessary for true celebration, to lift people out of the regular rhythm of daily living. The arts enhance the festival, for both the arts and festivity spring from a loving response to the reality and beauty of the universe.

- **Sharing in the eternal festival:** Each festive event is a manifestation of the eternal festival. Even when festivity seems impossible, the occasion for festivity remains: God still guarantees the world and our salvation, and therefore the unending festival continues. This eternal celebration is manifested for us from time to time in our festivals, when we open the door to such reality. But even if some refuse to celebrate, the source and core of festivity remains; its occasion is present in our ritual worship — for this worship is our festival of creation, our essentially festive praise to God for the mighty deeds he does among us.

### Elements Militating Against Festivity

On the negative side, Pieper points out elements that weaken or destroy festivity in man. Rejection of creation and life as good, particularly of one's own life, deprives a person of the basis for celebrating. Artificial and man-made festivals are shallow and sham; in totalitarian states, their 'celebration' is enforced rather than free and spontaneous.

In our day, festivals seem to be swamped by superficial commercialism and trite phrases which signify little, with the result that many have lost sight of the true purpose of these celebrations. Other people seem bored by festivals, and seek other and fruitless ways of replacing them. The basis in reality for celebration is not readily visible, and few seem to recognize it: some react to this by frenzied activity and more pseudofestivals, others by quiet resignation, withdrawal, or even despair.

Though contemporary man seems to have lost his sense of celebration, the occasion for celebration and the real reason for festivity remains: God still cares in Christ for his creation. This is our call to true rejoicing, to praise and festivity. At this point in the world's development, we can reject the trend toward the antifestival, and work to glimpse and share the eternal festival in our lives.

* * *

Some Consequences for Liturgy

In our liturgy today, we often seem to be aimless, wondering why and what we celebrate, being tempted to replace familiar ritual with novel forms. At times it seems that we do not know how to celebrate or rejoice, or how to accept what we celebrate as having any real meaning for or connection with our daily life in today's world.

Pieper's book suggests a good number of areas for our concern, study and development, areas in which his ideas can make a valid and valued contribution toward resolving some current dilemmas:

- **Accepting life and creation** as valuable, as something to sing about. This is particularly true in an age which passes laws against life, while fostering pollution and destructive or wasteful consumption of natural resources while the rest of the world goes in want. 4

- **Deepening our understanding** of why we celebrate various festivals, and seeing their intrinsic connection with life and their continuing impact today; seeing the divine origin and nature of festivals; one need is for more contemplation on the divine things these festivals celebrate.

- **Realizing more fully** the meaning of Sunday and Easter as the primary Christian festivals of what God is doing in us now.

- **Understanding the role of prayer in celebration**: Pieper frequently mentions ritual as praise, but except for one reference to “hoped-for gifts,” he seems to pass over the role of petition in celebration and in life — though a religious festival cannot be understood without the gifts which God offers for our seeking.

- **Growing in our appreciation for ritual** as the best way of celebrating festivals; hence, growing in our ability to celebrate as well as we are able.

- **Allowing all aspects of life to be permeated** once more by our festivals, instead of restricting them to home and church.

- **Restoring neglected values** to religious festivals: these should become celebrations by the whole community once more; therefore, we have to help people to see them again as festivals of joy over creation. The spirit of peace, equality and brotherhood should permeate both preparation and celebration of festivals, and be among their gifts.

Though only sketched here, these are areas of serious concern to all involved in celebrating festivity. Pieper helps us to have a clearer picture of some of the goals we should be seeking, and suggests some urgent areas of work for the years ahead. In this way, we can help bring about the manifestation of the true and eternal festival in the life of our world.

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OUR LITURGICAL YEAR

JEWISH ORIGINS

Our attitudes toward time and history, our week, and many basic ideas about celebrating sacred feasts have come to us in the Christian Church through our Jewish background. At the same time, these have been adapted and changed to meet differing needs through twenty centuries of Christian worship.

Attitude toward time: Unlike their pagan neighbors, who saw time as a great unending circle, repeating itself over and over, the Hebrew people considered history as linear time: each event is unique, and will never happen again. God’s interventions in their history are real, and are the basis of their later celebrations of his saving actions, while looking forward to his final judgment and act of salvation. We Christians have adopted the same approach to time and history and celebration.

Jesus was a Jew: His first disciples were Jews; the earliest Christian communities worshipped in the synagogue. These facts colored liturgical expression in the early life of the Church. The Second Vatican Council and the contemporary liturgical renewal both invite a lived consciousness of the Jewish roots of Christianity. We are invited to reconsider those Christian feasts which originated in the Jewish holy days that Jesus celebrated, and to which he opened new facets of meaning through the eschatological dimension of his ministry.

Keep Holy the Sabbath Day

There are several elements of meaning in the Sabbath. Together they form a full picture of its religious purpose and value:

- **Day of rest:** The main idea of the Sabbath is rest from work. This was attached to the desert sojourn in Exod. 16:21-30 (they were not to gather manna on that day); gradually, the day was spiritualized by additional elements.

- **Day of liberation:** The rest was extended to all — slaves, aliens, animals — in Deut. 5:12-15, because the Hebrews were once slaves in Egypt. This is extended in meaning to proclaim their liberation by God from slavery; at the same time, an eschatological element is added (see Jer. 17:21-27).

- **God’s day:** The Sabbath became a day for sacred assembly (Lev. 23:3), a day for particular sacrifices (Num. 28:9-10), a day belonging to the Lord. A theological reason for the day of rest was proposed: God himself rested after creation, and therefore his people should rest (Gen. 2:2-3; Exod. 20:11).

- **Sign of covenant:** Keeping the Sabbath became a sign of God’s covenant (Exod. 31:12-17). Their observance of this day showed their membership in the people of God, and reminded them that they should bless the Lord for letting them share in the life of his creation and in the holiness of his chosen people Israel.

*While Sunday is not a transferred Sabbath, many of these ideas have influenced the Christian attitude toward the Lord’s day.*
Seven-Day Week

We are inclined to take the week for granted, as though mankind had always observed a seven-day cycle in counting time. Obscure in its origins, the week first appears in Judaism, especially after the exile in Babylon. From that period on, the Sabbath was kept every seven days as the last or final day of the week, a day of rest. The seven-day week appears to be a uniquely Jewish contribution to human culture.

From before the time of Christ, the Graeco-Roman world kept Saturn’s day (on what we now call Saturday) as the first day of the week. Since no origin can be traced for the seven-day cycle, it would appear that they took the week from the Jewish system. Until the third century of the Christian era, however, the Romans did not name the other days of the week definitively.

Beginning as it did in a Jewish milieu, Christianity naturally adopted the week of seven days, but with a major change: their day for assembling in community worship was the first day of the Jewish week. Christians called this day by several titles: the first day of the week, the Lord’s day, the eighth day. (These titles are described in Heart of the year, in this issue.)

Naming the days: The Jews called the days by their order in the week: the first, second . . . fifth day of the week. Friday, the sixth day, was sometimes known as the day of preparation (for the Sabbath — see Jn. 19:31). A similar system has continued to be used in Christian Latin down to the present: feria secunda . . . feria sexta.

About the third century A.D., the full planetary week became popular in the Roman empire, naming the days in this fashion:

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<tr>
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<td>Sun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jove, Jupiter</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>jeudi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>vendredi</td>
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In Italian and Spanish also, the names of the days are derived from the Latin planetary week. The final four days in the English names come from the equivalent Teutonic gods.

Before Constantine, Christians used their own names for the Lord’s day; even when they sometimes used what became the civil name, day of the Sun (our Sun-day), they kept in mind the idea of Christ as the sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). In 321, Constantine decreed that the ‘venerable day of the Sun’ was to be a day of rest.

Under the influence of Christianity, however, Sunday became the first day of the week in civil life, as it has continued to the present.
Jewish and Christian Feasts

Some relationships between Christian celebrations and Jewish feasts are described briefly in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — Liturgical Calendar 1975*, pastoral note 26, pages 44-45. Three major feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Booths (Tabernacles) are discussed further in articles in this issue.

The Jewish mother had an important role in teaching and leading her family in liturgical observances at the opening of the Sabbath, in initiating her children in the liturgical year, and in the wedding rite.*

Pius XI's remark that we are "spiritually Semites" becomes more evident as we grow in our knowledge of the origins and celebrations of the liturgical year.


HELP AVAILABLE

Some are saying: "Our parish liturgy committee has run out of ideas. Is there anything else we should be doing?" Others ask: "Are there any resources that we can share with our liturgy committee members?"

*Help is available!* Each issue of the Bulletin is filled with ideas for your committee: attitudes and ideas for discussion, suggestions for fuller participation and celebration, news of changes and other resources. The Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, musicians, singers, teachers, religious and clergy, and for all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

In many parishes, the worship committee has its own subscription to the Bulletin; in others, the pastor shares his copy with them after he reads it. But there are still some places where the Bulletin never gets out of the rectory.

Make sure that your parish or community liturgy committee is up to date by receiving and reading the Bulletin. Subscription information is on the inside front cover. And don't forget that Bulletin 35 is devoted entirely to the work of the committee.
STORY OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR

As we have it today, the liturgical year seems to have some planned unity and order. Actually, its development was irregular and almost by chance — yet under the guidance of the Spirit, various elements and traditions have brought us to the present arrangement. The following notes give a very brief outline of some of the stages as they developed in the Western Church. Each of them is described in more detail in the articles on the main parts of the Church year.

a) First three centuries (A.D. 30-300): Early developments and creativity:

- Sunday: the original feast day, celebrating the Lord’s death and resurrection, dates from the time of the apostles.
- Pascha: the annual celebration of the death-resurrection: second century in the West, earlier in the East.
- Fast days: Wednesday and Friday observed each week as station days, devotional days of fasting; the paschal fast, as old as the feast, gradually grew to two, six or more days before the Pascha.
- Pentecost: the “great fifty days” following the Christian Pasch were one great feast, without fasting or kneeling, and concluded on the feast of Pentecost.
- Martyrs’ feasts were kept by the local Church on the anniversary of death in the place where they died.

b) Fourth century (300-400): Fixed texts and feasts developed, especially after Constantine’s Edict of Toleration in 313:

- Epiphany developed in the East, and came to Gaul, Spain and Northern Italy.
- Lent developed from the final preparation of the catechumens for their baptism during the paschal night.
- Christmas: Reaction against Arianism and pagan sun worship led to the establishment of Christmas around 336.
- Advent was first mentioned a generation later in Gaul, but was seen as a time of preparation for Epiphany.
- Holy Week developed around the holy places of Jerusalem, and was copied or adapted in other countries.

- Pentecost and Ascension: At first Pentecost included both the Lord’s ascension and his sending of the Spirit, but toward the end of the fourth century the ascension became a distinct celebration.

- Saints’ days: After the persecutions ended, local churches began celebrating martyrs from other places; the dedication days of new church buildings began to be observed as saints’ feasts.

- Ember days are days of prayer and fasting to mark the seasons of the year.
c) **Fifth to seventh centuries (400-700):** further development of temporal and sanctoral cycles:

- Further development and modification of the fourth century celebrations continued during this period.

- **Rogation days:** The major litanies began by Christianization of a pagan procession at Rome on April 25; the minor litanies before the ascension come from Gaul, and eventually were accepted centuries later in Rome.

- **Marian feasts:** The Romans had one, on January 1 (now restored in the universal calendar). Four major feasts of Mary came to Rome from the East: Feb. 2, March 25, Aug. 15, Sept. 8.

d) **Eighth to twelfth centuries (700-1200):** liturgical texts are collected and adapted:

- **Temporal cycle:** Proper texts developed for the Sundays of ordinary time.

- **Sanctoral cycle:** Large increase in number of universal feasts; All Saints day established.

- **Days of Lent and Holy Week** organized more completely.

- **Unification:** Several attempts to have one form of liturgy led to gradual extinction of local rites.

- **Sacramentary** divided into pontifical, ritual and missal; breviary evolved.

- **Trinity and Corpus Christi** (solemnity of the body and blood of Christ) established as feasts.

e) **Thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (1200-1500):** reform and codification:

- **Sanctoral cycle** increases; Marian feasts developed further.

- Mendicant orders spread missal, ritual, breviary.

f) **Sixteenth century (1500-1600):** Protestant and Catholic reformation:

- **Sanctoral cycles** cut back in Protestant and Anglican churches.

- **Fixed form** of Catholic liturgical year lasted until twentieth century. The feast days were fewer, and Sunday had a more prominent place in the calendar.

- New missal (1570) and breviary (1568) issued after the Council of Trent.

g) **Seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (1600-1900):** deepfreeze.

- **Martyrology** issued; sanctoral cycle reformed.

- **Simplified ceremonies** for Holy Week in smaller parishes.

- Saints' feasts continued to multiply and to interfere with Sunday celebrations.
h) Twentieth century (1900-1962): Beginnings of renewal:

- *Sunday and temporal cycles* given precedence (St. Pius X — 1913).
- *Restoration* of Sundays and weekdays of Lent; sanctoral cycle reformed (St. Pius X — 1913).
- *Easter vigil* restored (Pius XII — 1951).
- *Holy Week* revised (Pius XII — 1955).
- *Sundays of Lent and Advent* strengthened in new rubrics (Pius XII — 1956).

i) Twentieth century (1963- ): A new age begins:

- *Constitution on the liturgy* promulgated in December 1963, outlining goals and directions of renewal and reform.

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MONTREAL AREA

In the Montreal area, copies of all CCC publications in English and French may now be purchased at the recently established office:

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HEART OF THE YEAR: SUNDAY

Sunday is the first day in the Christian liturgical year. It is the *original feast day* (Constitution on the liturgy, no. 106), the heart of the calendar. Standing in the fore in some centuries, obscured in others, the Lord’s day is the *basis* and the *nucleus* of the liturgical year.

Created by the Christian Church

The first generation of Christians chose the first day of the week (our Sunday) as the Lord’s day, and in this way, made it the foundation of the liturgical calendar as it developed through the next twenty centuries.

**Day of the resurrection:** Though the gospel accounts of the resurrection disagree in many minor details, they are one in affirming that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the Jewish week, the day we now know as Sunday.

**Day of Christ’s appearances:** Sunday is also the day the Lord chooses to appear to his disciples when they are gathered together. Some of these Sunday appearances are to Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:11-18); to Peter (Lk. 24:34); to the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35); to the apostles (Lk. 24:36-49, and Jn. 20:19-23). On the following Sunday, he appeared to Thomas and the other apostles (Jn. 20:26-29). The last appearance of the Lord mentioned in the New Testament is also on a Sunday (Rev. 1:9-20).

**Day of the outpouring of the Spirit:** Pentecost, celebrated seven weeks after the Lord’s resurrection, is the day when the Lord poured his Spirit upon his Church, and called all nations to form the new Israel (Acts 2:1-41).

*It is evident that... primitive Christian tradition looked on Sunday as the normal day for the Lord to appear, just as in the Old Testament it had been the normal day for God to appear to the prophets. To show that Christ was continuing Yahweh’s prophetic apparitions is one way of saying that he is Lord and God. To the first Christians, Sunday was therefore the day when the Lord was still in their midst.*

**Fulfills the Sabbath:** By his rest in the tomb on the Saturday after his crucifixion, the early Church held that Christ has fulfilled the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath, and had abrogated it along with the rest of the Old Testament ceremonial laws. For Christians, the Sunday gathering for the eucharist replaced the Sabbath observances. *Christians are those who keep the Lord’s day, not the Sabbath,* writes St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Magnesians.

**Day for eucharist:** The first day of the week was observed from New Testament times as the day of worship in the breaking of bread: an early eucharistic sermon — a long one — by Paul is recorded in Acts 20:7-12. The first day of each week was the time he urged the Christians of Corinth to set aside alms for the poor of Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:2), presumably at the weekly eucharist. (As Lk. 24:30-31 notes, Christians recognized the Lord in the breaking of bread.)

The custom of gathering for eucharist on the Lord's day is evident in the Didache, a document describing Christian practices near the end of the first century A.D. (Some of these texts are quoted in Bulletin 43, pages 80-81.)

Three Main Titles

The early Church had three main names for Sunday:

First day of the week: This was the normal Jewish name for the day following the Sabbath, which was the seventh and final day of their week. Mentioned often in the New Testament (see above), the first day is also the day of creation, the day when God is described as beginning his work of making the universe (Gen. 1:1-6). This theme is developed further in the early Christian use of the eighth day as another title for Sunday.

Lord's day: The most enduring and descriptive title for Sunday is found in Rev. 1:10. The same Greek word, kuriake, is used for the Lord's supper in 1 Cor. 11:20. (It is interesting to note that these two references are the only times this word is used in the New Testament; scholars and tradition agree in connecting them: the Lord's day is the eucharistic day, the day when the believing community celebrated the Lord's supper.)

Eighth day: This title, first found in the Epistle of Barnabas, intrigued the Fathers of the Church; numerology was quite a plaything in the ancient world. Simply understood, this title keeps the eschatological meaning of Sunday before our eyes.

Christ died on the sixth day of the week (Friday), and rested in the tomb on the seventh day, the Sabbath. On the eighth day — our Sunday — he was raised from the dead. A new age, a new day dawned, one which would know no evening. Risen in baptism with Christ, and seeking the things that are above, Christians cast out the old leaven of sin, and live with Christ for God. With the Lord, they work to bring about a new creation, to renew and re-create the face of the earth. This day will end with the final or second coming of the Lord in majesty and glory — also on a Sunday, the early Christians thought.

Sunday is a different day; it is not like the other six. It belongs to a different order, and is related to the weekdays as eternity is to time. Sunday is a breakthrough of the eternal into the temporal, a strong and weekly reminder of eternity. The Lord's day reminds us that the day of the Lord is coming, and through the eucharistic celebration, brings us into the messianic banquet of the kingdom.

Day of the Sun: Our English term Sunday comes from the Latin, dies solis, its name in the planetary week. St. Justin the martyr uses this term around the year 150, when explaining Christian customs to pagans.

Day of joy: After each of the days of creation, God saw that everything he had made was good, according to the account in Genesis 1. As described in the hymn, "On this day, the first of days" (CBW, no. 320), God was pleased with his work. We, the high priests of his visible creation, rejoice in the world he has created, and offer its praises through Christ, the Word through whom all things were made. Each Sunday helps us to look around at the wonderful works of
God in nature and grace, to look forward to receiving all the gifts he wants to shower upon us, and to work to develop those he has given us for the sake of his people. Sunday is a day of striving for the peace of Christ, obtainable in part in this world, and in full in the world to come.

*No fasting or kneeling:* Because Sunday is a day of joy, the early Church had a strong tradition of forbidding both fasting and kneeling on the Lord’s day, and during the Easter season (called “the great Sunday”). On these days of joy, the people of God do not kneel, for kneeling is a sign of penance and mourning. Augustine says that we stand instead in memory of and in reverence for the Lord’s resurrection. St. Basil notes that we do not kneel on Sunday because we are risen with Christ; the day is the image of the eternal day which follows the present time. For these reasons, we pray standing, remembering eternal life and continuing to use the means which lead us to it.

Similar notes are found in Tertullian and Cassian. In 325, the Council of Nicaea repeated the prohibition against kneeling on the Lord’s day and during the days of Pentecôte, our Easter season.

*In today’s Church,* we retain some vestiges of these early practices: we stand for the Angelus or Regina coeli on Sundays and during the Easter season; the Church never keeps Sunday as a day of penance (see Bulletin 42, page 18: “Never on Sunday”). The present General Instruction (no. 21) in the sacramentary allows any reasonable cause to do away with kneeling at the consecration.

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**Day of rest?** The Vatican Council suggests that Sunday should be treated as a day of freedom from work (Liturgy, no. 106).

- Moving from the Jewish Sabbath, which was primarily a day of rest, to the Christian Sunday, the early Church placed the emphasis on the gathering of the community to hear the word and to break the bread in eucharist. Because the first day of the Christian week was a working day in the Roman empire (like a Monday morning in our culture), they gathered before dawn for Mass, and then went off to their daily tasks; their only holidays were those observed by all.

- In 321, Constantine declared that Sunday would henceforth be a holiday for courts and craftsmen. Before long, Christian teachers were applying sabbatarian laws to Sunday. Puritan blue laws and Lord’s Day Acts are current relics of such attitudes.

- *The true rest is from sin,* not from work. This attitude was clearly described by Pliny the Younger in the year 112, when he wrote to the Emperor Trajan that Christians bound themselves to avoid all deeds of wickedness such as fraud, theft, adultery and falsehood. The baptismal commitment to die with Christ to sin and to live with him for God binds each Christian. (See Bulletin 42, pages 20-21, for a similar approach to Lent: *Giving up sin.*)
CHRISTMAS CYCLE

In the Eastern Church, the Epiphany on January 6 celebrated the Lord’s baptism as the manifestation of God’s presence in Christ among men; it was a unitive feast, celebrating all aspects of the incarnation. Christmas, the commemoration of Christ’s birth, began in Rome around the year 336. Both these feasts seem to have replaced pagan feasts of lights surrounding the winter solstice.

Between the fourth and sixth centuries, Advent developed gradually as a season of preparation for Christmas, yet always keeping in mind the eschatological dimension of his second coming.

For the clearest picture of these three distinct celebrations, we suggest that they be read in this order: Epiphany, then Christmas, and finally Advent.

ADVENT: READY FOR HIS COMING

Though we celebrate Advent before Christmas and Epiphany, this season actually developed a little later in history. When we understand what the Church was celebrating in Christmas and Epiphany, we are better able to appreciate its season of preparation for these feasts.

The season of Advent is not limited to preparation for the celebration of the Lord’s birth. It is rather a season reminding us of our redemption and of the second coming of the Lord Jesus in power and majesty as judge of all. From the beginning, Advent has been eschatological, looking forward to the day of the Lord.

First development: Advent is a three-week period observed in Gaul, leading to the celebration of Epiphany. It was probably considered as a time of preparation for baptisms at Epiphany, similar to the lenten practice.

The season of Advent developed in the Western Church. In the second half of the fourth century, around 360, Hilary of Poitiers provides the first mention of a three-week preparation for the coming (adventus) of the savior. Though this is but a generation after Christmas began in Rome, Advent is seen in Gaul as a time of preparation for the Epiphany. Opening on December 17, the season begins to give a Christian form to the pagan Saturnalia festival. By 380 in Spain, the Council of Saragossa required attendance at church every day during this period of three weeks, thus linking both liturgical and disciplinary preparation.

Eschatological emphasis: In the fifth century, a fuller development took place. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) keeps the eschatological viewpoint prominent in his December ember day sermons, encouraging his people to look forward both to the coming of the savior at Christmas and to the final day when the Lord will come again.

Lenten approach: By the end of this century, Gaul was moving toward a more lenten approach to Advent, with six weeks (40 days) parallel to Lent. In 490, Advent begins on Martinmas, November 11, and goes on to Epiphany. Caesarius of Arles moves for 40 days of fasting in the first half of the sixth century, as in Lent (St. Martin’s Lent). Others began Advent on November 1. A six-week period
to be observed before Christmas is mentioned by the Councils of Tours (565) and Mâcon (581): Monday, Wednesday and Friday were kept as fast days in this form of Advent.

Various lectionaries in Spain, Gaul and Northern Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries show five or six Advent Sundays. In the first quarter of the seventh century (Gregory the Great died in 604), Rome seems to have had a five-Sunday Advent: the Sunday before Christmas was vacant because of the Saturday night vigil Mass for the ember week ordinations. The December ember days in Rome began before the feast of Christmas or the season of Advent came into their liturgical calendar.

In a way this five-Sunday Advent survived until 1969: the last Sunday after Pentecost was quite similar in its readings and prayers to the first Sunday of Advent. The current lectionary presents eschatological themes in the final Sundays of ordinary time, leading from Christ the King into Advent and the second coming of Christ and his kingdom.

**Beginning of the liturgical year?** The earliest books used the civil year (January-December) as their basis. Some began with Christmas (closest feast before January 1), others with Epiphany. Advent began as a preparation for Epiphany, and later was moved back to focus on Christmas instead. Since about the tenth century, it has been customary to place Advent in the liturgical books before Christmas. Advent is seen as the beginning of the year when the emphasis is more on Christ's first coming than his second coming, the *parousia*.

Instead of asking when the liturgical year begins, perhaps we should be more concerned with living it season by season.

**Advent today**

*First Sunday:* The second coming of Christ. This Sunday continues the eschatological theme of the final Sundays in ordinary time; November's celebrations are strongly influenced by the theme of the second coming and our waiting in joy.

*Second Sunday:* John the Baptist comes onto the scene. He and Isaiah are the main characters in the Roman Advent, and they share the theme, "Prepare the way of the Lord." The emphasis is still on the second coming.

*Third Sunday:* John the Baptist proclaims that the Messiah has come and the time is at hand for a change of heart. There is a subtle change of emphasis from the eschatological note, and a movement toward the Lord's earthly ministry.

A similar development is seen in the present weekday lectionary: during the first part of the season, the first reading presents important messianic passages from Isaiah, and the gospel is related to the first reading. From December 17, the mood changes: the gospel texts speak of the events leading up to the birth of Jesus; the first reading contains important prophecies about the Messiah.

*Fourth Sunday:* Abandoning the former readings about the Baptist, this Sunday has adopted the Ambrosian rite's emphasis on Marian themes. It is an obvious prelude to the birth of the Lord.
Meaning of Advent: This season is not penitential in tone, and was never considered a time for the solemn reconciliation of penitents as in Lent. The main concern of Advent is to help the Christian community to banish preoccupations in order to prepare for a fuller celebration of Christmas and for a deeper awareness of the second coming of the Lord at the end of time, the Lord whose presence among us we continue to recognize when we meet for the breaking of bread.

CHRISTMAS

While less complicated than Epiphany, the history of the celebration of the Lord's birth has gone through several stages in its development.

Pagan background: Sun worship was strong in the last days of the pagan Roman empire. Aurelian established a temple to the unconquered sun in 274. The sun god's feast was the winter solstice, December 25 at that time, when the sun's power stops decreasing, and begins to increase or be reborn; the day also begins to be longer once more. This feast was called Natalis (solis) invicti, the birthday of the unconquered sun. During this period, the sun-worshipping religion of Mithras, the Persian sun god, was strong in Rome.

Christian Feast Established

One of the frustrations in studying early Christian liturgy is the seemingly casual way in which momentous developments were left unrecorded and unexplained for posterity, meaning us. Actually, we have inherited a theological record in the feasts themselves — in their prayers, readings, chants and ceremonies; in the homilies of the Fathers on these occasions; and in the way the Church promoted these celebrations or suppressed other rites. And the fact that these feasts have penetrated our way of life today is a sign of the effectiveness of the early Christians' approach.

Established in Rome: The first Christmas celebration we can date is 336 in Rome, but this is determined only by internal evidence in a martyrology (calendar of celebrations) prepared by Philocalus in 354, nearly 20 years later. According to this list, Christmas appears at the beginning of what we now call the liturgical year.
Factors which seem to be involved in the establishment of Christmas include:

- Theological emphasis on the incarnation, celebrating the Nicene doctrine in a most practical and tangible manner.

- Christ the light: A festival in honor of Christ, the sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) is prepared to replace the pagan feast of the unconquered sun god. It would seem that Constantine, who was a sun-worshipper before becoming a catechumen, would be in accord with this move.

- Vatican basilica: It may be possible that the establishment of Christmas is also related to the building of a church by Constantine on the site of St. Peter's tomb. (Its construction involved moving half a hill — an engineering feat in those days, and certainly a sign of serious intent — in order to remain over the hallowed spot; some of the effort expended is still evident when one visits the excavations beneath St. Peter's main altar today.) A Mithraic sanctuary stood nearby, and the new feast may have been seen as a way of filling the vacuum and helping to overcome pagan rites.

Christmas and Epiphany

Several generations after it began in Rome, the feast of Christmas moved into the East, resulting in a breakdown of their unitive Epiphany celebration (of God's manifestation in his Son, through his incarnation, baptism, and sign at Cana). Further details are given in the following article, on Epiphany.

- Syria: Between 363-373, Ephrem the deacon wrote many hymns for Christmas and Epiphany, interchanging many elements back and forth, thus indicating that the theological ideas were not yet firmly attached to each feast during this period of transition.

- Constantinople: The feast of Christmas was first celebrated here in 380, and Gregory Nazianzen had to explain clearly the distinction between the meaning of Christmas (incarnation and birth of Jesus; the shepherds, angels, Simeon and Anna, and the wise men all receive honorable mention) and Epiphany (baptism of Jesus, light of the world). Since the city had just been freed from 40 years of Arian leadership, the establishment of the new feast is significant as a practical measure against heretical ideas.

- Antioch: In 386, St. John Chrysostom held the first Christmas celebration in that city, and had to explain its meaning in detail. He also mentioned that this feast was ancient in the West, and that it had been known in Antioch for about a decade, though not celebrated up to this time. Christmas in Antioch included the incarnation and birth of Christ and the adoration by the wise men; Epiphany is the day for celebrating Christ's baptism. The Apostolic Constitutions also mention this distinction between these two feasts.

- Egypt: The introduction of Christmas into Egypt took place by 432, at the time of a movement against the Nestorian heresy.

- Jerusalem: Christmas was established between 424 and 458, but fell into disuse a century later. It was introduced again in the third quarter of the sixth century.
In the West, the establishment of Christmas went slowly:

- Gaul, Spain, Northern Italy: Where the Eastern unitive feast of Epiphany was being celebrated before Christmas was established, Christmas came to be a celebration of the incarnation and birth of Christ; Epiphany continued as a feast of the wise men, the Lord's baptism and the miracle at Cana.

- In Africa in the fourth century, Christmas also included the wise men, but by Augustine's time, this was the theme of Epiphany. Augustine also considered Christmas as a commemoration of Christ's birth, quite different in approach from the celebration of his resurrection in the paschal liturgy.

Christmas Masses and Octave

Christmas Masses: The three Masses celebrated on Christmas developed over a period of time.

- Original Mass: The present Mass during the day was the original Mass celebrated at St. Peter's from the time the feast began around 336. The gospel text is John's prologue, Jn. 1:1-14, with its key words, The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The theme of light shining in darkness is appropriate to a feast of the triumph of the unconquered sun of justice at the winter solstice.

- Shepherds' Mass: The Mass at dawn was the second Mass to develop, and was also celebrated at St. Peter's from the end of the fourth century. For a while around 550, when the Byzantine court resided in Rome, this Mass gave way to the Mass of St. Anastasia, an Eastern martyr whose feast was on December 25 before the East developed Christmas. Later, the Shepherds' Mass was restored, with a commemoration of St. Anastasia (which lasted until recent calendar reforms).

- Night Mass: This celebration is the newest of the Christmas Masses. About the middle of the fifth century, Pope Sixtus III began this Mass, apparently with the dedication of St. Mary Major. The original Mass seems to have been at the end of an all-night vigil, and was celebrated at cockcrow (compare the Easter vigil). The theme of the feast has evolved from the incarnation (336) to a more detailed celebration of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Octave of Christmas: From the time of Julius Caesar's reform of the calendar, January 1 has been observed as the first day of the new year. In the fifth century, Rome celebrated its only Marian feast on this day, the Natale Sanctae Mariae. The feast of the circumcision arose in Spain and Gaul in the sixth century, because of the tendency to historicization, seeking to turn the liturgical year into a biographical tour of Christ's life. The feast of Mary was restored in the 1969 reform of the general calendar.

Presentation of the Lord: This feast, of Eastern origin, is first noted by Egeria in Jerusalem toward the end of the fourth century. It is celebrated as the fortieth day after Epiphany, on February 14, as a feast of the Lord. Later it became known as the purification of Mary, and was celebrated as a Marian feast, 40 days after Christmas, on February 2: Pope Sergius I, who died in 701, ordered a procession on this day. The 1969 reform restored it as a feast of the Lord. Though it is
connected with the Christmas events, it is actually celebrated in ordinary time, outside the Christmas season. The same events are mentioned in the ferial Mass on December 29-30, during the Christmas octave (lectionary, nos. 203-204).

The texts of this feast are concerned with light (candles, Christ as the light of the world), and with the mission of the Lord as savior of the world. These relate easily to Christmas (especially the Mass during the day) and Epiphany. The coming of the Lord into his temple has an eschatological tone, as in the opening weeks of Advent.

Christmas and Easter

Christmas and Epiphany commemorate a historical event, but under the aspect of "idea" feasts. Accepting the fact of the incarnation, the Church calls on us to celebrate the Father's gift to us in his Son. But the fact that Jesus is Savior is always presented, for it is by his death and resurrection that he saved us. The incarnation and birth of Christ prepared the way for the paschal mystery and made it possible. It is interesting to note that Jn. 3:16, when taken in context (14-17) refers to Christ's saving death and our share in it; the chapter begins with Christ's words to Nicodemus on baptism — a central part of the paschal vigil celebration.

St. Augustine notes that Easter is a sacrament (we take part in the Lord's death and resurrection), while Christmas is a memorial (we recall his incarnation and birth).

Christmas today: Instead of concentrating only on the historical aspects of the feast — the birth of the savior, the Son whom God sent in love — more emphasis is needed on the theological meaning of the feast. Some guidance in this direction is provided by the first six prefaces in the sacramentary, for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany: they concentrate almost exclusively on the theology of the coming of the Savior.

When we grasp once more the world's need of salvation, God's gift in Christ, and our responsibility as Church to celebrate and live our faith, then we can take the opportunities offered by the Christmas celebrations in our culture, and once more make them a means of helping more people accept Christ as Lord and savior.

PRAYER THROUGH THE YEAR

Prayer through the year in Bulletin 44, pages 160-162, explores the way individuals and families may pray in harmony with the varying seasons of the Church's year of grace. Many references for further reading are given in this article.
EPIPHANY

The development of the Epiphany celebration was long and slow and complicated. A simplified tour along its twisted route is offered here.

Feast in the East

Just when the Church in the East began to celebrate Epiphany is uncertain, but it seems to go back before Nicacea, (that is, before Christmas was observed in the West), probably as a Christian counter-festival in face of pagan celebrations.

What is celebrated: The name of the feast means manifestation or unveiling. It praises God for revealing himself to the world in his Son Jesus Christ.

In its origins, the celebration was not limited to Christ's manifestation to the pagan world. At the center of the feast have been a number of events which revealed God in his Son: the incarnation, the birth of Jesus, the adoration by the wise men, Jesus' baptism by John, and the miracle at Cana have shared in various combinations as the central point of Epiphany. (It is interesting to note that the incarnation, the Lord's baptism and the Cana story come together in the first two chapters of John's gospel.) Some examples of these combinations:

- Late fourth century in Egypt: birth and baptism.
- Toward the end of fourth century, Jerusalem: incarnation.

It is important to note the unitive nature of this feast, particularly in the light of its subsequent history: one feast celebrates the incarnation, birth and baptism of the Lord Jesus.

INFANCY NARRATIVES

When we look at the development of Christmas and Epiphany in the light of the infancy narratives, we are better able to appreciate the Church's purpose in establishing these feasts.

The first two chapters in the gospel according to Matthew and Luke are primarily theological in scope, rather than historical. The purpose of these narratives is not to give facts of history (in our sense of the word) as much as to teach the meaning of Christ's coming: to show who he is, to proclaim him as God's Son, our savior, the one who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and expectations of God's people.

In the liturgy of Christmas and Epiphany, the Church proclaims that the Son of God has become man to save us. This is the reason we rejoice, because our savior has come, and is to come again. God has shown us that he is faithful to his covenant, and he will continue to keep his promise to our generation as to our forefathers in faith.
Date chosen: The choice of January 6 for this feast seems to be based on pagan festivals (as described in the previous article, a similar source provided the date of Christmas):

- **Solstice festival:** At Alexandria in Egypt, Petra in Arabia, Alusa in Palestine, and other places, the birth of a pagan god from a virgin mother was being observed. Though the solstice was almost two weeks past, the date seems to be based on an uncorrected Egyptian calendar going back 2,000 years before Christ, when January 6 was the actual date of the solstice.

- **Nile festival:** In Egypt, a festival was celebrated at this time of year, as the Nile rose and irrigated the fields.

- **Festival of Dionysos:** In Greece, January 5 celebrated the god’s birth, and was involved with springs of water which produce wine on his feast.

**Christian origins:** Two further elements would contribute to the nature and development of both Epiphany and Christmas, especially during the fourth and fifth centuries:

- **Theological reflection** on the gospel image of Christ as the light which came into the world (see John, chapters 1, 8, 11, 12; also some of the early Christian hymns in the epistles).

- **Orthodoxy in faith** would be underlined and nourished by such celebrations, as they proclaim concretely the faith declared at the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon and Ephesus.

Some have noted the stress placed in the East on illumination (a feast of lights) and on water (blessing of water, celebration of baptism), and suggest that Epiphany comes from the Jewish feast of booths through the Johannine tradition. The fact that each celebration is close to the New Year festival in its calendar may be more than a coincidence.

**Epiphany in the West:** Epiphany is first mentioned in the West in Gaul in 360 and Spain in 380, where a three-week period of preparation for this feast began on December 17. Julian the Apostate visited a church in Vienne, Gaul, on the feast of Epiphany during his brief reign (361-363). At this time, the Roman feast of Christmas does not seem to have been celebrated in Gaul. By 426-428, however, John Cassian notes that the Lord’s birth and baptism are separate celebrations in the West.

**From One Feast to Two**

As described in the preceding article, Christmas developed in Rome about 336. Up to this time, and for some years after, the East continued to celebrate its unitive feast of God’s manifestation, including Christ’s birth and baptism, as Epiphany. Then Rome’s influence became more felt, and the various elements of the one feast were separated and celebrated individually. A few examples will describe the process:
• **Constantinople:** On December 25, 380, Gregory Nazianzen preached the meaning of Christmas as the theophany (God comes to man in Jesus) and the birthday of our Lord: this is the day we glorify him with the shepherds and angels, bring him our gifts with the wise men, and proclaim him with Simeon and Anna. A few weeks later, on Epiphany, 381, he calls the feast the holy day of lights, celebrating the baptism of Christ, the light of the world. (The teaching value of two separate feasts is more evident from the fact that the city had just been released from 40 years of Arian leadership in 379.)

• **Nyssa:** Gregory of Nyssa is preaching the same distinction in Asia Minor at this time.

• **Antioch:** At Pentecost, 386, John Chrysostom mentions Epiphany as the first Christian festival in the year, followed by Pascha and Pentecost. Epiphany celebrates the appearance of God among men because his Son came among us. But in December of that year, Christmas was celebrated for the first time in Antioch as the feast of Christ's birth. Epiphany or Theophany is now the day of Christ's baptism, when he was publicly manifested, and sanctified the waters.

**A day for Christian baptism:** During the fourth century in the East, Epiphany — the feast of the Lord's baptism — was considered a fitting time for Christian initiation, along with Easter and Pentecost. It is not certain if this took place before Christmas became an additional feast in the East, although the Gnostics observed the baptism of Jesus on January 6 with an all-night vigil back in 120-140.

• **Constantinople, 380-381:** Gregory Nazianzen speaks of Epiphany as the day when Jesus purifies the waters of the Jordan by his baptism. The following day, Gregory speaks about baptism and the benefits it brings us. The Epiphany theme of light is appropriate to the idea of enlightenment or illumination in the final stage of the preparation of catechumens.

• **Gregory of Nyssa** describes Epiphany as the day of the Lord's baptism and the day when the sacrament of baptism is celebrated.

• **Ephrem of Syria** mentions in his hymns that the celebration of baptism takes place on Epiphany, the day of the Lord's baptism.

**A day for announcing the year's feasts:** Describing the Egyptian customs at the end of the fourth century, John Cassian records that the bishop of Alexandria sends letters to all the cities and monasteries of the country, announcing the dates for the beginning of Lent and for Easter.

> *By the end of the fourth century, the East had two separate feasts: Christmas, the feast of the Lord’s birth, and Epiphany, which celebrated his manifestation in his baptism.*

**A Winding Path**

It would be simple if that were all to the story of the development of Epiphany. But at the same time as the clear growth already described, other elements entered to alter still further the meaning of the feast. Different rates of evolution in this period of transition help to confuse today's reader.
• Jerome, at Bethlehem for the last 24 years before the death in 420, considered that Epiphany was the celebration of the Lord’s baptism, and that Christmas was the feast of the Lord’s nativity.

• Jerusalem, 393-396, seems to present contradictory evidence at this same time. Egeria (see Holy Week, page 34) describes an eight-day celebration of the incarnation and birth of Christ at Epiphany, with a similar festivity at Bethlehem. There is no record of the Lord’s baptism being celebrated in Jerusalem at this time, and the feast of Christmas is not established until sometime between 424 and 458.

• Syria: Ephrem, famous for his hymns, spent his last ten years in Edessa, dying there in 373. He wrote 19 Christmas hymns and 15 for Epiphany:
  — His Christmas hymns speak of the adoration by the wise men as a normal part of the celebration of Christ’s birth.
  — In his Epiphany hymns, Christ is called the giver of light, and it is his baptism by John that is being celebrated at his manifestation to the world. But the theme of the wise men is also part of the Epiphany hymns.
  — Both Christmas and Epiphany hymns speak of the idea of the incarnation and baptism as a unitive event, as was the celebration of Epiphany before Christmas was introduced in the East.

In the West, as mentioned above, Epiphany was first noted in 360 in Gaul. But just how and when it reached Rome is not certain. By the middle of the fifth century, however, Leo the Great is preaching only on the wise men in his homilies.

• Gaul, Spain, Northern Italy: As the Roman Christmas (celebrating the incarnation) penetrated this region, it would seem that the wise men, the Lord’s baptism and Cana remained part of the Epiphany feast. Around 383, Northern Italy celebrated the wise men, the baptism and the transfiguration on Epiphany, and the incarnation at Christmas; Spain celebrated the wise men and the holy innocents on Epiphany. In the fifth century, Epiphany involved the wise men, Cana and the Lord’s baptism in both Gaul and Northern Italy. In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville mentions that Epiphany celebrates the wise men, the Lord’s baptism and Cana.

• Rome and Africa: In Africa, Christmas included the adoration by the wise men during the second half of the fourth century. At the beginning of the fifth century, Augustine speaks of the wise men theme as part of Epiphany, although the Donatists are complaining that it is an Eastern innovation.

Moving away from baptism at Epiphany: Though Epiphany was a baptismal day in the East, Rome continued to move against this in the west. In 385, Pope Siricius writes to Spain; Leo I (440-461) to the bishops of Sicily; Gelasius (492-496) to the bishops of Luconia. Their message is the same: baptize only at Easter and Pentecost. French councils around 585 continued to legislate against Epiphany baptisms. Yet provisions for baptism on the vigil of Epiphany are found in the Gellone sacramentary (late eighth century) and in Ordo Romanus XV, in 775.
Perhaps Rome tried to move the Lord's baptism out of the Epiphany celebration in order to avoid any appearance of adoptionism (which said that Jesus became the Son of God at the baptism). This could account for the Roman emphasis on Christ as the Son of God, manifested first of all to the wise men.

**Epiphany in the Roman rite today:** While the manifestation of Christ to the wise men is the most evident motif of the celebration now, a surprising number of other elements can be found in the texts of the Mass and hours of this feast. Among these we could mention: Christ is king of peace, of the nations; he is born before all ages; he is the light and savior of the world; God's mystery is now revealed; we become God's people; Christ enlightens us through his gospel; all nations come to praise him and to adore God.

Several texts link the Lord's baptism and the Cana event with this celebration, as in the first centuries of the Church:

- **Antiphon to the canticle of Zachary at morning prayer:** *Today the Church has been united to her heavenly spouse, because Christ has washed away her sins in the Jordan; the wise men hurry to the royal wedding with their gifts; and the guests rejoice with the wine which was made from water, alleluia!*

- **Antiphon to the canticle of Mary at evening prayer:** *We celebrate this day made splendid by three miraculous events: today the star led the wise men to the manger; today the water became wine at the wedding; today Christ willed to have John baptize him in the Jordan, in order that he might save us, alleluia!*

- The Lord’s baptism and the Cana event continue to be linked to the Epiphany by being among the gospels that proclaim the Lord’s manifestations on the first Sundays in ordinary time.

* * *

The short reading (Titus 3:4-5) used at evening prayer II on Epiphany is also part of the second reading at the dawn Mass on Christmas — a reminder that both Epiphany and Christmas celebrate the mercy and kindness of the Father in sending his Son to save us by cleansing us in baptism and by pouring out his Spirit upon us. This, rather than historical events, is the main point of these two feasts of the incarnate Son of God.

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**PREACHING AND THE LITURGICAL YEAR**

A picture of the Church year and its relationship to the homilist — the context within which he preaches and his people hear the word of God — is ably described by Dr. Reginald H. Fuller in “Preparing the Homily,” in *Worship*, vol. 48, no. 8, October 1974, pages 442-457, especially pages 451-456.
EASTER CYCLE

In the early Church, Sunday was the only feast, the weekly celebration of the death and rising of Christ, who was present in the eucharistic assembly. Then the primitive pascha (an ancestor of our present Good Friday and Easter) developed in the latter half of the second century, and became the occasion for the baptism of catechumens.

The fifty days of Pentecost (our Easter season) formed a time for the sacramental instruction of the newly baptized, culminating in the feast of Pentecost. Toward the end of the fourth century, the Ascension became a distinct feast.

The season of Lent evolved from the final preparation of catechumens for their baptism during the Easter vigil and also became a time for the Christian community to prepare to renew their own baptismal promises. The elaborate ceremonies at Jerusalem in the fourth century gave rise to our Holy Week.

PRIMITIVE PASCHA

A celebration of the death and rising of Christ — beyond that of the normal Sunday — began in Rome in the second half of the second century, and seems to have existed for some time before this in the East. For the next 200 years, the primitive pascha was a unitive feast, and did not separate the crucifixion from the resurrection: the idea of Good Friday distinct from Easter was unknown until late in the third century.

First Century

Sunday was the only day for eucharistic gathering in the early Church, when the believers in each community gathered to celebrate the death-resurrection of the Lord by hearing the word and breaking the bread of life together.

Did Easter begin in the first century? There is no direct evidence for this. Some have tried to find an allusion to a Christian liturgical observance in 1 Cor. 5:7-8 (Christ our passover), in Lk. 9:31 (the word exodus in the transfiguration account), or in paschal references in the book of Revelation, but it would seem that the evidence is too sketchy to show a first century celebration of the pascha.

Second Century Paschal Development

Putting into chronological order the events that seem to have brought about the establishment of the pascha at Rome, we find:

Eastern custom: The earliest mention of the paschal celebration is in Epistula apostolorum, a document from Asia Minor, dated about 130-140. It mentions the celebration of the Lord's death and passover at an all-night vigil ending in a memorial meal or agape. This feast is to be celebrated until the Lord comes again. The context accepts the celebration as a normal part of life, which would indicate that the feast is not something new in that Church, at least.
St. Irenaeus states that the Church in Asia Minor which centered around Ephesus, celebrated the pascha on the 14th day of Nisan (as indicated in John's gospel, rather than the 15th, as in the synoptic accounts). The celebration seems to have consisted of an all-day fast ending with the eucharist in the evening: the fast was in memory of the crucifixion, and the eucharist in place of the Passover meal. Because this practice followed the lunar calendar, this would mean that the paschal eucharist could take place on any day of the week, at a time when Sunday was the only day for eucharist in the rest of the Church; and the fast could be observed on a Sunday, which the rest of the Church never did.

The popes from Sixtus I to Anicetus (a period from 115 to 166) did not permit Rome or other Western churches to follow this Eastern custom. Anicetus (155-166) tried to persuade Polycarp of Smyrna to follow Rome's custom (no paschal celebration other than the weekly Lord's day), while Polycarp tried to persuade Anicetus to follow the custom he said was handed down by John the apostle. Neither could persuade the other to abandon his tradition, and they parted in peace.\(^1\)

**Pascha established at Rome:** From the fact that Justin the martyr makes no mention of the pascha in his writings around 150, and from Irenaeus' comments to Pope Victor (189-199) during the Quartodeciman controversy (below), it would seem that the celebration of the pascha was begun in Rome by Pope Soter (166-175). This feast, *the first annual feast celebrated throughout the entire Church*, was a Christian response to the Jewish Passover. The crucifixion and death of Christ were celebrated by an all-day fast on Saturday, ending in an all-night vigil, where the eucharist, early Sunday morning, took the place of the Passover meal.

This approach is based on the Asian ("Quartodeciman") arrangement, but transferred from the lunar date to Saturday-Sunday. It also avoids two serious clashes with tradition, which considered Sunday the only day for eucharist, and forbade fasting on the Lord's day.

It would appear that the celebration of baptism was attached to the paschal vigil very early, since this is the sacrament of the death and rising of the Lord Jesus.

**Another theory** suggests that the Western pascha goes back to the end of the first century, since it follows the lunar calendar — a sign of Jewish-Christian influence, which did not last long into the second century; this would also account for Irenaeus' reference to varying fasting practices which had existed a long time before he wrote — a term hardly applicable to only twenty-five or thirty years previously.\(^2\)

**Paschal controversy:** Around the last decade of the second century, the controversy between Rome and Asia seems to have flared up again. A series of synods agreed to celebrate the resurrection only on Sunday, when the paschal fasts would end. When Victor excommunicated the Asian churches for their defence of their contrary practice, Irenaeus reminded him that past popes had been able to live

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1 Polycarp's visit to Rome took place around 155. More details of Easter are found in Thomas J. Talley, "History and Eschatology in the Primitive Pascha," in *Worship*, volume 47, pages 212-221.
with different customs in various parts of the Church. (Unity in diversity continues to be a sign and need of true Christianity today, especially since the Second Vatican Council.)

**Paschal fast:** At the time of the paschal controversy, the fast was inevitably linked with the pascha, which is often referred to as the time when the fast comes to an end. The total fast is described as varying from one day (Saturday), to 40 consecutive hours (about the time Christ’s body lay in the tomb), to two days (Friday, Saturday), or more than two days. This was the only time in the year that Saturday was a fast day, and this Saturday fast was more important than Friday’s (just the opposite to today’s norm, where the Good Friday fast is to be prolonged, where possible, throughout Holy Saturday until the vigil).

Further developments on Good Friday and Holy Saturday are described under **Holy Week.**

**Differences between Sunday and pascha:** At the end of the second century, some clear distinctions were maintained between the weekly and annual celebrations:

- *The pascha* was an annual commemoration of Christ’s passion (death ending in victory), and came at the end of a solemn paschal fast; an all-night vigil service, during which baptism was celebrated, concluded with the Sunday eucharist. (A clear description of this celebration at the beginning of the third century is given in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, Part II, nos. 20-23.)
- *Sunday*, on the other hand, was a weekly gathering for the eucharist, without fasting, vigil or baptism. It was a celebration of the resurrection (without ignoring the passion).

**Third Century**

During this century, the paschal fast extended to six days. The days from Monday to Thursday were less severe when compared to the final two days. On the Friday and Saturday before Easter, the paschal fast meant that Christians did not eat any food at all, except in case of great necessity.

This extended fast led gradually to two developments in the fourth century: Lent grew out of the fasting, and Holy Week developed from the efforts of the Church at Jerusalem to hold special services for pilgrims. (See Development of Lent and Holy Week, below.)

*If you cannot be a star in the skies, be a lamp in your own home.*

Arabian proverb
DEVELOPMENT OF LENT

Lent developed from the period of final preparation for catechumens. It came to involve both the days of repentance for penitents who were to be reconciled before Easter, and a time of penance for all members of the Church. In this process of development, Lent eventually incorporated Holy Week and the expanded paschal fast as part of the preparation for the celebration of Easter. Though we are describing these elements separately, they were often occurring simultaneously.

By the time of Sixtus III (432-440), Lent was a time for preparing all members of the Church for salvation, the penitents for reconciliation, and the catechumens for their baptism. The Second Vatican Council describes Lent as a time of recalling baptism or preparing for it, and a period emphasizing a penitential spirit (Liturgy, no. 109).

Period of Final Preparation for Catechumens

Apostolic Tradition: Around 217, Hippolytus describes the Roman practice. After being carefully screened, candidates were admitted to a three-year period as hearers of the word. As well as their own periods of instruction, they were permitted to be present at the liturgy of the word, but not for the prayer of the faithful or for the eucharist (II, 16-19), which were the privilege of the baptized members of the community.

Sometime before the Easter of their baptism, their lives were examined again. Then they were separated from the rest of the catechumens. Daily exorcisms took place; as Easter drew near, the bishop himself exorcised them. Any who were not “good or pure” were not allowed to go on to baptism at this time (II, 20:1-4).

Jerusalem: In 348, Cyril, a presbyter, was appointed to prepare candidates for baptism. He gave some twenty instructions over a period of time, concluding a few days before Easter. Some forty-five years later, after the Holy Week rites had developed under his rule as bishop, a lenten period of eight weeks had evolved, and the catechumens received three hours a day in instruction for seven weeks; the final week was reserved for the prayer services and ceremonies leading up to Easter.

At the beginning of Lent, those who wished to enroll for the three-year catechumenate were examined and received. This rite has now been restored.

Rome: In the fourth and fifth centuries, a three-week Lent was a time of preparation for the Easter baptisms. Then — on what we now call the third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent — the scrutinies and exorcisms of catechumens were held. Though these were later transferred to weekdays when only infants were being baptized, they have now been restored to the original Sundays, with the same important readings on water, light and life. (See cycle A: lectionary nos. 28, 31, 34; sacramentary nos. 75, 82, 89, 436-438; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nos. 21-26, 152-182.)
Period of Reconciliation of Penitents

The public reconciliation of sinners seems to have developed in Rome in the fourth century, and flourished in the fifth. By the sixth century it was dying out, and Gregory the Great (590-604) mentions that it was mainly a death-bed reconciliation. As we will see in the following section, the theme of repentance was extended to all the faithful as one of the main thrusts of the lenten season.

The problem of reconciliation of penitents seems to have arisen with the end of the persecutions in the time of Constantine. What was to be done with baptized Christians who had saved their lives by denying their faith? How could these apostates be readmitted to full eucharistic membership again? A form of reconciliation after a long period of public penance became the normal way. The penitents stood at the church door, or knelt among the faithful (who always stood and never knelt on Sundays); they asked for and received the prayers of the people. Their reconciliation normally took place on Holy Thursday, in order that they might take a full part in the sacred triduum.

In the sixth century, this reconciliation was celebrated during the Mass, after the homily. By the following century, it took place before the Holy Thursday Mass, which had become rather festal in nature. During the middle ages, the practice died out, but churches were washed and cleaned on this day in preparation for the paschal feast.

Present-day penance celebrations in the last few weeks of Lent could be seen as a remote successor to this aspect of our heritage.

Time of Renewal for God’s People

In the early centuries, membership in the Church was quite demanding. Persecutions at various times in the first centuries strengthened the life of the Church, for the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians. A vital liturgy and a long and meaningful catechumenate helped to maintain the Christian way as a life of faith.

After the time of Constantine, however, the Church found itself in a world that was less openly hostile. Converts flocked in. Gradually the strict discipline of the catechumenate lessened and soon was encompassed in the six weeks of Lent. As Christianity became easier, its fervor lessened.

Monasticism was one of the movements of the Spirit calling men to a more fervent way of life. The practice of Lent as a period of prayer and fasting in imitation of Christ’s 40-day fast was another.

As a yearly time of renewal among the people of God, Lent has been seen for sixteen centuries as a period of grace, a time for sharing more fully in the paschal mystery of the Lord Jesus.
Ash Wednesday

A number of developments led to the establishment of Ash Wednesday as the opening day of the Lenten season:

- **Various ways of computing Lent**: Though Lent was called a 40-day period (*Tesserakonte, quadragesima*) from the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325, its length varied. The tradition of not fasting on Sundays was maintained by all, but some also did not fast on Saturdays. Some churches therefore had six weeks of six days (Rome), some eight weeks of five days (Jerusalem). In Rome, the 36 days were seen as a tithe or tenth of the year given to God.

- **Septuagesima season**: Between the time of Leo the Great (440-461) and Gregory the Great (590-604), the pre-lenten period grew up gradually. Pope Hilary, who succeeded Leo, changed the Wednesday and Friday before the first Sunday of Lent: they became full liturgical days with Masses of their own (at that time, daily Mass was not customary, except during Lent). Within a few years, the rest of the week was included, and Quinquagesima was established. Sexagesima came into being at Rome during the sixth century, and Septuagesima around the time of Gregory the Great.

- **Enrollment of penitents**: Persons wishing to be reconciled solemnly on Holy Thursday were enrolled in the order of penitents at the beginning of Lent — first on the Monday after the first Sunday, and then later on the Wednesday before. The ashes with which they were sprinkled as a sign of repentance on that day led to its name. The present rite on Ash Wednesday brings out the penitential aspects of the day quite clearly. (As noted in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1975 Liturgical Calendar*, page 44, the same spirit of repentance, prayer and reconciliation is contained in the Jewish feast of *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement).

Lent Today

The lenten Masses in the sacramentary and lectionary form a rich liturgical experience, leading the people of God to repentance for sin and renewal of baptism. It is a time for more ardent prayer and for reading of the word of God, for social and individual penance, and for bible services (Liturgy constitution, nos. 109-110, 35:4). An aid to the celebration of Mass and to daily prayer and preaching is offered by *Homily Aids for Lent*, now available from CCC Publications.

Lent has a long and venerable history in the Church’s constant effort to follow Christ’s command, both to carry his cross daily and to fast after the bridegroom had left. It is in this tradition that the Church invites us each year to celebrate the season of prayer and penance.

* * *

*Lent and Holy Week are understood more fully when seen in their full context: they are a 40-day period of preparation for Easter, and the Easter season is a 50-day celebration. The baptismal theme, as a sharing in the death-resurrection of the Lord Jesus, shines forth from the readings and prayers of both lenten and paschal seasons.*
Holy Week

This week has been called by many names. Some of these include the week of the Pascha, the days of fasting, Passion week, the great week, the greater week. At present, Holy Week is the name in most common use.

Holy Week developed in the fourth century as a result of two distinct trends: one was the gradual lengthening of the preparatory fast before Easter; the other was the historicization of the days to re-enact the events of the final days of Jesus' life on earth.

Once Constantine had made it possible for the Church to worship openly, he also built churches in Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem. Now that Sunday was no longer a workday, liturgy could be leisurely and unhurried. Pilgrims went in great numbers to the holy places, and naturally would expect something special in the way of liturgy, particularly at the time of great feasts (compare someone going to Rome for the first time in the Holy Year of 1975).

Historicization: In Jerusalem, the unitive paschal feast began to be separated into separate but related aspects of commemorations of the crucifixion and resurrection; by the end of the fourth century, the days of Holy Week were established there in a form quite recognizable today. By suiting actions, readings and prayers to the places and the sacred events that took place there, the Jerusalem Church gave us the basic framework of our present Holy Week. The enthusiasm of pilgrims and the zeal of churchmen soon led to its liturgical establishment in other parts of the Christian world.

Much of our knowledge of the ceremonies of the greater week at Jerusalem come to us from a Spanish nun, Egeria, who took part in them in the closing years of the fourth century. Her descriptions * have come down to us, and are clarified by the Armenian lectionary, which indicates the exact texts used at Jerusalem when Egeria was there.

* See Egeria's Travels, by John Wilkinson, now available in paperback. See the Bibliography on pages 79-80 of this issue.
PALM SUNDAY

This Sunday carries two traditions: it is a celebration of the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday); it is also the opening of Holy Week, when the Church meditates on the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord (hence the Roman rite has restored the older name of Passion Sunday).

**Third century in Jerusalem:** Egeria describes the Sunday beginning the paschal week. The morning services are normal, and the people are invited to take part in the special daily services, beginning that afternoon. At 1:00 p.m., the people assemble with the bishop on the Mount of Olives for a service of psalms, hymns and readings. At 3:00, they move higher up the hill to a shrine at the place of the Lord's ascension, for a similar service. Around 5:00 p.m., they listen to Mt. 21 on the Lord's triumphal entry, and enact it by leading their bishop into the city. They go in procession, carrying branches and singing, to the church at the sepulchre, where they celebrate vespers.

Since that time, various elements have been part of the liturgy of this day:

**Triumphal entry:** Though the original event probably took place in the fall at the feast of tabernacles, when people carried branches (lulavs) and sang hosannas, all the gospel accounts have placed it just before the passion; John (12:1 and 12) dates it five days before the Passover. (See Jewish feasts, page 10.)

**Blessing of palms:** Formulas for their blessing are found from the eighth century, and vary greatly according to place and period. Where palm was not available, local substitutes were chosen: willow, yew and boxwood, as well as flowers, were used in England, for example.

**Procession:** The idea of a procession on this day spread quickly. By the sixth century, it was celebrated throughout the East. It spread to Africa and Gaul (seventh century), and to Rome by the tenth century. The blessing of palms and elaborate ceremonies for the procession were developed in Gaul.

In the middle ages, the solemn procession often went through each city, carrying lights, banners and incense, with stops (stations) at important points. Unveiled in triumph, the processional cross was also a reminder that Christ was present among his followers; other signs of this truth were the book of gospels (Rome, 11-12th centuries) or the blessed Sacrament (England) carried in the procession. Red vestments were usually worn.

**Mass:** While Gaul and Spain were developing the palm procession, Rome was celebrating this day as Passion Sunday. For this reason, the triumphal entry is not mentioned in the Mass itself: its prayers and readings speak only of the passion.

This Mass is the beginning of the Holy Week meditation on the paschal mystery, the saving death-resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Since the time of Leo the Great in the fifth century, the passion according to Matthew has been read. The three-part singing of this gospel dates back to about the twelfth or thirteenth century, and was adopted in Rome during the 1400's.
Other rites: In sixth century Spain and Gaul, this was the day for handing on the creed to the catechumens preparing for baptism at Easter. In Rome, this was done during the fourth week of Lent; the restored rite of Christian initiation of adults has now transferred this to the third week, after the first scrutiny.

* * *

In the Roman rite today, Palm Sunday begins with the messianic celebration of Christ entering his city as the king of glory; then the Mass texts become more somber as we give our attention to his passion, through which he saves us and brings us to share in his glory.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

In the late fourth century, the Jerusalem community assembled several times on each of these days in the churches Constantine built on the sites of Calvary and the Lord’s tomb. As well as the usual celebration of morning prayer, the clergy and people assembled in the afternoon for a service of hymns, psalms and antiphons, readings with prayers between them, and the lamp-lighting service, lucernarium. Processions and further prayers and blessings made the afternoon a full one.

Some fifty years later, in the time of Leo the Great (440-461), the Church at Rome did not celebrate Mass on Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, but included the passion according to Matthew in Wednesday’s Mass. By the sixth century, this was replaced by St. Luke’s narrative. From the ninth century until 1969, reading of the passion narrative in the Holy Week liturgy was arranged in this way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Account</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>John</td>
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</tbody>
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The present lectionary has arranged the first three narratives in a three-year cycle for Sunday (now renamed Passion Sunday, to indicate the dominant theme and mood of the liturgy once the palm procession is completed), and continues to proclaim John’s account on Good Friday.
HOLY THURSDAY

A number of distinct and unrelated elements have come together in various centers at different periods of history to provide the liturgical expression for the day we now call Holy Thursday. After looking at the different emphases this day has borne in its history, we will consider the way it is presently celebrated in the Latin rite.

Names: First known as the Thursday in the last week of Lent, the Thursday before Easter, or Paschal Thursday, this day was later called the Thursday of the Lord's supper, or birthday of the chalice. Some churches called it the day of forgiveness (when penitents were reconciled), or the day for cleansing or hair cutting (in preparation for Easter). Today the name Holy Thursday is commonly used.

Last supper: Did the last supper take place on Holy Thursday? In 1957, Mlle Annie Jaubert pointed out the possibility that this meal took place on the Tuesday evening before Christ died: a solar calendar, mentioned in the apocryphal book of Jubilees and known in the Qumran community, could have been used by Christ and his apostles as they celebrated the Passover meal.

First observances: When Holy Week was being developed in Jerusalem in the latter half of the fourth century, the celebration did not stress the Lord's supper as we might have expected. It is a day of prayer and rites. When Egeria describes the Holy Thursday observances there around 395, her writings provide us with a picture of a marathon for the Lord. The day included the regular morning prayer service of Lent; an afternoon service at 2:00, with a Mass at which no one communicated; a visit to the church near the site of the crucifixion; eucharist there, with communion.

After a quick trip home for supper, the people gathered again at 7:00 p.m. for an all-night vigil at the Mount of Olives, moving to a second church at midnight, a procession early Friday morning to Gethsemane, and then to the place of the crucifixion.

Purification

Purification and cleansing from sin are a continuing theme on this day of preparation for the paschal celebration:

Washing: Around the year 217, Hippolytus points out that catechumens preparing for baptism (at what we would now call the Easter vigil) go through a series of scrutinies and exorcisms so that they may be pure in their living of the gospel. On Thursday, they are to bathe and cleanse themselves from impurity.¹

Reconciliation of penitents: From the fourth to the sixth century, the Roman Church had a formal service of reconciliation for those who had enrolled as penitents at the beginning of Lent. It was done during the first of three Masses celebrated on Holy Thursday; later, when there was only one festal celebration, the chrism Mass, this reconciliation took place before the Mass. In this way, the penitents were able to participate fully in the complete paschal celebrations.

¹ Apostolic Tradition, II, 20.
Since Vatican II, Lent is seen more as a time for giving up sin (see Bulletin 42, pages 20-21) as a means of preparing for or renewing the baptismal promises. "Confession" has been renamed the sacrament of reconciliation with God, his Church and with all others. Especially toward the end of Lent, penance celebrations have now become part of the Easter preparations in most Christian communities.

**Washing of churches and altars:** The early Church did not celebrate the eucharist every day. By the seventh century, however, Mass was celebrated on each of the days in Lent, except Good Friday and during the day on Holy Saturday. These two days thus provided a suitable opportunity to prepare for the Easter celebration by a thorough spring cleaning and washing of altars, walls and floors; for this, the altar cloths were removed. In medieval England the ceremony of stripping and washing the altar was more elaborate. The present practice of stripping the altar on Holy Thursday evening and the bare altar on Friday and Saturday are reminders of this custom.

**Washing of feet:** John's gospel describes the way the Lord Jesus washed his apostles' feet at the last supper.² Carrying out this practice on Holy Thursday is first recorded in seventh century Spain. It is established in Rome by the eleventh century, and in Milan by the twelfth. It became an important function in Benedictine monasteries in medieval England. (Reigning monarchs also used to wash the feet of the poor on this day, and give them gifts; this tradition is still carried on by Queen Elizabeth II.) Though the rite gradually became the task of bishops and abbots, it has now been restored to the entire Church as part of the evening Mass in each community.

**Blessing Oil**

**Chrism:** The blessing of oil during the (Easter) vigil service is described by Hippolytus in the early third century.³ Each person is exorcised, then anointed with the oil of exorcism (our oil of catechumens). Then he is plunged into the baptismal waters, and anointed with the oil of thanksgiving (our chrism). Having dried and dressed, the newly baptized return to the church where the bishop anoints each of them with the oil of thanksgiving (confirmation). Finally, the new Christians join for the first time in the prayer of the faithful and the kiss of peace.

The blessing of chrism was always reserved to the bishop. As local communities grew and other parishes were established, the blessing of oils was moved back to Holy Thursday, the last eucharist celebrated before the Easter vigil. In this way, the priests in each parish could obtain the blessed oils, and have them on hand for the blessing of baptismal water and celebration of baptism during the Easter vigil. The tradition of blessing the oils on Thursday was well established in both East and West by the middle of the fifth century, and has continued down to the twentieth century.

² In England, the name of this day is Maundy Thursday, which comes from mandatum, commandment: "A new commandment I give you" (Jn. 13:34).
³ Apostolic Tradition, II, 21.
In the early middle ages, however, the practice of having only one Mass on this day meant that the blessing of oils and the eucharistic procession took place in one overloaded celebration. Since 1956, a separate chrism Mass has been restored, and this may be celebrated on an earlier day, near Easter.

The 1970 sacramentary considers this Mass as the commemoration of the institution of the priesthood, with a concelebration by the bishop and priests from all parts of the diocese, and including a renewal of their commitment to priestly service. Less emphasis is placed on the oils than in the 1956 texts.

Oil of the sick: The New Testament records that Jesus sent his followers to anoint the sick (see Mk. 6:13; James 5:14). Hippolytus gives a prayer for blessing oil which will be used by the sick, both by tasting it and by using it externally. This prayer, along with blessings of cheese and olives, took place after the eucharistic prayer. Before the doxology of the Roman canon, we still mention "all these gifts" which include the oil of the sick in the chrism Mass.

In 457, Pope Leo the Great speaks of the blessing of the oil of the sick on Holy Thursday. For a long time, even up to the ninth century in Rome, the people brought containers of oil for this blessing, and took them home to their sick. The Church of Milan did not bless the oil of the sick on Holy Thursday until it adopted the Roman custom in the eleventh century.

In 1973, the reformed rite for anointing the sick returned — at least on some occasions — to the Eastern practice of permitting the priest to bless the oil during the celebration of the sacrament of anointing.

Memorial of the Lord’s Supper

The first thought about Holy Thursday that comes to our minds is that this is the day (or evening) which commemorates the Lord’s supper: whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are making present once more the death and rising of the Lord, until he comes again in glory (see 1 Cor. 11:26, and third memorial acclamation). At first it seems strange to us that this association was not made until the late fourth century. Even in the year 400, Augustine called it simply “the Thursday of the last week of Lent.”

Perhaps the simplest explanation is that the Easter vigil — preceded by the solemn fast of Friday and Saturday — led into the paschal eucharist which was the Christian Passover. The one celebration commemorated both the death and rising of Jesus (see Primitive pascha, above), rather than spreading it over several days.

Originally there was no eucharistic celebration between (Palm) Sunday and Easter Sunday. As the Holy Week services evolved in Jerusalem in the second half of the fourth century, Jerusalem had two Masses on Thursday afternoon, one

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4 *Apostolic Tradition*, I, 5-6.
5 The rite of blessing the oils and consecrating chrism is presented in full in Bulletin 37, pages 46-53.
6 See *Pastoral Care of the Sick and Rite of Anointing*, nos. 21-22, 75; also nos. 85b, 126, 242. 1973, Canadian Catholic Conference, Ottawa.
(without communion!) at the cathedral church, and one at the place of the crucifixion — the only time in the year that Mass was celebrated there — with communion as usual. It is interesting to note that the Jerusalem Church did not have a station at the Cenacle on this day. Holy Thursday never seemed to be as popular a feast as the celebration of the body and blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), which was extended from France to the universal Church in 1264.

About the same time as Jerusalem, we also find Milan and North Africa with Mass on Holy Thursday as the anniversary of the Lord's supper.

**Procession and reposition:** Communion in church from the reserved sacrament is first mentioned in Constantinople in 615, when it took place on most lenten weekdays. When the practice came to Rome, it was adopted on Good Friday only, and at first with both species reserved. (Four hundred years earlier, Hippolytus⁷ mentioned the third-century practice of keeping the eucharist in private homes for daily communion between Sundays.)

**Holy Thursday Today**

The present arrangement of Holy Thursday presents a mixture of distinct elements, and still seems to cry out for further simplification. *We are trying to celebrate too many things at once.*

**a) Paschal triduum:** St. Augustine speaks of “these three most sacred days,” the time of the Lord’s crucifixion (Friday), his rest in the grave (Saturday), and his resurrection (Sunday). These three days — Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday — form the Easter triduum; Holy Thursday is a *day of preparation for the triduum*, not part of it. By beginning the triduum with the festal Mass on Thursday evening, does the present calendar strengthen or lessen the unity once seen in the primitive pascha? Should the paschal triduum begin with the Friday afternoon celebration of the passion? This is an area for forthright discussion.

**b) Relationship to Holy Week:** From Passion Sunday to the Easter vigil, the atmosphere of Holy Week is that of meditation on the suffering and death of Christ — the price of our salvation — seen in the context of his glory and resurrection. Holy Thursday is somewhat out of tune with this. The chrism Mass, really a matter of convenience more than suitability, has followed a further tangent on the priesthood. The festive evening Mass is more like an anticipated Easter Mass, with white vestments, bells, *Glory to God*, and other joyful notes. Would a return to a more somber note be desirable, keeping Holy Thursday closer to the general feeling of Holy Week? A simplification of the many themes now present on this day would certainly help the community to focus more clearly on its key points.

* * *

Holy Thursday continues to be a mixture of distinct elements, a day set apart from the rest of Holy Week. Pastoral thought, further studies, and prayer on the past and present meaning of this day’s liturgy — in cooperation with Anglicans and others who observe it with us — are needed to make this day fit in more closely with the rest of Holy Week.

⁷ *Apostolic Tradition*, III, 32; see also Tertullian, *To His Wife*, II, 5.
GOOD FRIDAY

To be understood fully, Good Friday must be seen as the first part of the triduum which celebrates the paschal mystery as a unitive celebration. For the early Church, the fasting on Friday and Saturday led to the all-night vigil service, which culminated in the Easter eucharist at cockcrow. Now that Good Friday celebrations are more fully developed, we need to observe them as a part of the full paschal celebration — of the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus — and not as a completely separate feast.

The first three and a half centuries of Church history knew nothing about Good Friday as a distinct feast: see The primitive pascha, above. Hippolytus, however, does relate personal prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day with events of the Lord’s passion.

Good Friday has been called by various names. Among these are Pasch of the crucifixion, Friday before Easter, Friday of the Lord’s passion, Friday of the cross-lesson, Friday of mourning, Great Friday, Holy Friday, Long Friday. Our name, Good Friday, expresses the Church’s positive attitude toward the full paschal mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection.

First Beginnings

Fourth century: At the beginning of this century, the Roman persecutions ended, and the Church was able, under Constantine’s rule and encouragement, to expand and develop its worship. New and larger churches and freedom for Christian cult led to more celebrations, and further developments in the liturgical year (see Christmas and Martyrs and saints). The paschal fast varied from two to six days, and a forty-day period was observed in some places in preparation for Easter.

Jerusalem develops Holy Week: In the second half of the fourth century, the Church at Jerusalem devised an elaborate series of celebrations for the greater week preceding Easter.

On Friday morning, as described for Holy Thursday, the all-night vigil ended with a procession from Gethsemane to the place of the crucifixion. From 7:00 a.m. to noon, the people came to venerate the wood and title of the cross, Solomon’s ring, and the horn (container for oil) used in anointing Jewish kings.

At noon, an open air service began, consisting of readings, hymns and prayers. The readings and psalms from the Old Testament were prophecies of the passion, and the NT readings were used to show their fulfillment in Jesus. The people groaned and lamented in sympathy for the sufferings of Christ. Around three o’clock, they read Jn. 19:30 (Jesus giving up the spirit), and concluded with a prayer and dismissal.

Then all went to the nearby cathedral for a prayer service and to the church of the resurrection for a brief reading on the Lord’s burial. This ended the day’s celebrations, but many of the clergy and laity kept a vigil that night at the church of the resurrection.
Beginnings in Rome: Until the seventh century, the Roman Good Friday service consisted of readings and prayers. In the fifth century, the passion according to John was being read. As described below, it was a day without Mass; general communion was introduced in the seventh century.

Historical Elements

Various elements have come together to make up the present Good Friday celebration. The development of a number of these is outlined below.

Liturgy of the word: From the seventh century to 1969, the Roman liturgy read Hosea 6:1-6 and Exodus 12:1-11; John’s passion has been proclaimed on this day since the fifth century, and continues to the present. (The development of three persons singing the passion narrative is described under Passion Sunday, above.)

The solemn prayers: After the reading from the passion, the Roman custom was to have the prayer of the faithful. (The form in which it has been handed down to us seems to have been the normal form of the general intercessions, not something special for this day.) Each of the nine prayers was begun by the celebrant’s invitation, a pause for silent prayer, and a collect sung by the priest. Some authors feel that the extended invitation (“Let us pray for . . .”) was the normal way of introducing a collect; the new sacramentary has reintroduced this practice for the alternative opening prayers. The priest is encouraged to create a similar form for the opening prayer (see Bulletin 46, page 285).

The present rite includes ten of these solemn prayers, under the heading of general intercessions. The texts are now more ecumenical in tone and wording. In case of special public need, the bishop may add a special intention. The Canadian sacramentary adds an acclamation before the priest’s prayer (see sacramentary, page 227, and hymnal, pew edition, page 54):

After the celebrant’s invitation to prayer, the deacon or cantor (or, if necessary, the celebrant) sings: We pray to the Lord.

All sing the acclamation: For the sake of your Son, have mercy, Lord. After a period of silent prayer by all, the celebrant sings the prayer. This method is followed for each of the ten intentions.

A day without Mass: Good Friday and Holy Saturday were days of absolute fast, and also days without Masses. The practice of not celebrating the eucharist on Good Friday seems to go back to the first observance of this day. Pope Innocent I (402-417) notes that the Church abstains from celebrating the sacraments on the Friday and Saturday before Easter. These days without eucharist prepare us for the great eucharistic celebration at the end of the Easter vigil.

During the seventh century, the Roman Church adopted an Eastern form of celebration (we knew this as the “Mass of the pre-sanctified”) for use on Good Friday. The service began with a procession in silence, two readings, the passion according to John (read by one deacon), the solemn prayer. The relic of the cross — or an ordinary cross — was venerated by all. Then the blessed Sacrament was brought in by two presbyters, and placed on the bare altar. After the Lord’s prayer, the celebrant placed the particle in a chalice of wine, and all received
communion in silence. The custom of communion by all on Good Friday, begun in Rome in the seventh century, gradually died out in the middle ages, and was even forbidden by the Congregation of Rites in 1622. It was restored by Pius XII in 1955.

**Veneration of the cross:** The Jerusalem ceremony described by Egeria was adapted as part of the service in Rome, following the solemn prayer. At some distance from the altar (there were no pews), two acolytes held the cross. This was a relic of the cross in Santa Croce church, an ordinary cross in other churches. A kneeler was placed in front of this, and the pope, presbyters, deacons, other clerics, and people came up in order, and kissed the cross. During this, Psalm 119 (118) was sung with “Behold the wood of the cross...” as an antiphon. (The unveiling of the cross was introduced later.) This veneration, known as “creeping to the cross,” was considered by the people of medieval England to be the most important part of the day's celebration.

*The reproaches* may be sung during the veneration of the cross. They were developed in Spain or France around the ninth century, but were not adopted in Rome until the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The singing of the *trisagion* (“O holy God”), originally in Greek and Latin, came to the Gallican liturgy from the East.

**Other Rites**

A number of rites have been celebrated on Good Friday in different places:

- **Penitential acts:** All the 150 psalms were said in many monasteries as a form of penance and devotion; in some places, this was done barefoot and in procession.

- **Washing of the altars:** Some churches washed the altars today instead of Holy Thursday, in preparation for the solemn vigil service.

- **Prayers of pardon:** In place of the general intercessions, seventh-century Spain had prayers of pardon. Originally used for the reconciliation of penitents on this day (Milan and Spain did this on Friday, not Thursday, as at Rome), the *Indulgentiae* gradually became a penitential rite for all. Everyone remained fasting until the rite was over.

After several invitations to pray for pardon, the congregation repeated the acclamation “Indulgentia” (pardon) three hundred times. After a prayer, the bishop led a brief litany, and the people made their acclamation after each line. Then another prayer, and the people cried out their acclamation two hundred times. Following another litany, prayer and psalm, they repeated the acclamation one hundred times. After another litany, the veneration of the cross began.

**Tenebrae:** The morning office of matins and lauds (now known as the office of readings and morning prayer) was celebrated solemnly in the final days of Holy Week. Until the reforms of 1955, when the liturgical services were restored to their proper afternoon or evening hours, tenebrae (darkness) was celebrated on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in anticipation for the following day.
An earlier form of the office, it was free of later additions. Matins had three nocturns of three psalms, and three lessons with their responses. Lauds followed immediately with five psalms and the canticle of Zechariah. As each psalm was sung, one candle was extinguished on a special stand, and at the final canticle, the last candle was taken away, leaving the church in total darkness. Then the candle and the lights were restored.

This little rite can be taken as a symbol for the way in which the powers of evil and darkness seemed to overcome the powers of good when Jesus was crucified, only to have God’s plan fulfilled and evil conquered by his saving death and resurrection. Gregory of Tours notes that sixth-century Gaul had an all-night prayer vigil on Good Friday night without any lights at all.

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When the Good Friday service moved gradually back to a morning hour, and general communion was no longer part of the rite, many churches filled the vacuum with various popular devotions:

- **Easter sepulcher:** On Good Friday afternoon or evening, there was a practice of re-enacting Christ’s burial by “burying” the cross used during the veneration. This was done in England and also in some places in continental Europe. The sepulcher was decorated with curtains, and could be either a permanent or a temporary structure somewhere inside the church. Some churches also “buried” the blessed Sacrament with the cross. After a procession, the tomb was incensed and then closed. A lamp burned before it, and people kept watch until Easter morning. Then the cross and the blessed Sacrament were carried back in a procession of joy and resurrection.

- **Tre ore:** As noted above, the Jerusalem Church celebrated a three-hour service from noon to 3:00 p.m. A similar practice has been common in the past few centuries. One form of it was observed in this manner: the priest placed the crucifix on the altar, and began the service of prayers, meditations or sermons on the seven last words of Christ, (sometimes by several preachers), concluding with prayers and acts of repentance.

- **Stations of the cross:** This devotion — a personal pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem — is based on events from the passion accounts, mixed in with imaginary ones. It seems to have developed after the crusades, when the holy land was of vivid interest to all Christendom: those who could not visit the holy places abroad were able to substitute a devotion such as this. The number and nature of the stations varied (some churches had up to 37!) and gradually were fixed at the present fourteen, ending with the slain Christ in the tomb. For a long time, the devotion was reserved to the Franciscans (custodians of the holy places), but by 1731, stations were permitted in ordinary parish churches. (See Bulletin 37, page 41, on necessary adaptations to reflect the fullness of the paschal mystery.)
**Good Friday Today**

The present arrangement of the celebration of the Lord's passion has taken good elements from the day's varied development through eighteen centuries. The bare altar, three o'clock celebration and silent procession are easily recognized, as well as the main outline and contents of the service. (See Bulletin 37, pages 40-42, for further notes on Good Friday, as well as the entry for this day in Canada's liturgical calendar.)

**Paschal fast:** The Church has restored the paschal fast. On the two days before Easter, the Church of God fasts in order to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and to prepare to share more deeply in the joy of his resurrection. In the early Church, the fast was originally on Saturday, and then extended back to Friday. Now the Church wants it observed everywhere on Good Friday, and where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, so that the joys of the Sunday of the resurrection may be received with uplifted and responsive spirits (see Constitution on the liturgy, no. 110).

**Liturgy of the word:** Two lessons, on Christ as the suffering servant (Is. 52:13-53:12) and the high priest who saved us (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9), lead up to the passion according to John. The general intercessions are sung in their solemn form, and conclude the liturgy of the word.

**Veneration of the cross:** several ways are suggested for the veneration. The various elements of this part of the service are easily recognized in the Jerusalem and early Roman practices. It is important that the veneration should not overshadow communion as the focal point of the day's celebration.

**Communion:** General communion has been restored as the climax of the service, and after this, the celebration ends quickly. The altar is then left bare until the Easter vigil. The rest of Friday and all day Saturday are to be times of recollection, prayer, and fasting.

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The Lord Jesus redeemed the human race and gave complete glory to God mainly by the paschal mystery of his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension: by his death, he destroyed our death, and by his rising, he restored our life (see Liturgy constitution, no. 5).

On Good Friday, it is important for us to maintain the unity of the paschal mystery by seeing the events of this day as the first part of the complete mystery of the saving death-resurrection of our Lord. *Good Friday and Easter are two aspects of the one mystery of our salvation.*
HOLY SATURDAY

Until Pope Pius XII restored the Easter vigil, we were really unable to see Holy Saturday in its correct perspective. The morning celebration of the first Mass of Easter and the ending of Lent at noon distorted our view, and made it difficult to appreciate this special day in the Church's liturgy. Now, with Augustine we are able to see it as the day when Christ was in the tomb, a solemn day of prayer and fasting in union with the Church throughout the world.

In the Eastern Church, Holy Saturday is known as Great Saturday. Both these names have been in use since the fourth century.

**Day of recollection:** On Holy Saturday, the people of God remain in recollection at the tomb of the Lord, meditating on his sufferings and death: salvation does not come to us through our own action, but through God's free and loving gift of grace (Eph. 2:8). Holy Saturday is not a day for shopping or TV or fun, but a day of preparation for the solemn Easter vigil. It is a day of silence, meditation and prayer to prepare us for the joy of the eighth day, the day of the Lord's glorious resurrection.

**Day of fasting:** Throughout this day, the faithful are invited to continue the solemn paschal fast which they began on Good Friday. In the early Church, this Saturday was the original and only day of obligatory fasting, but the fast was gradually extended back to Friday as well: *while the bridegroom has been taken away from us, we fast* (Lk. 5:35).

**Day of prayer:** The office of readings (formerly known as "tenebrae" — see Good Friday, above) and morning prayer should be restored as a normal part of the prayer life of Christian communities on this day. These hours are celebrated on Saturday morning.

**Day without eucharist:** The altar remains bare and undecorated from the end of the Good Friday service until the beginning of the Easter vigil. The Church refrains from celebrating the eucharist on this day, and communion may be given only in the form of viaticum.

**Day of preparation for baptism:** The work of Lent has been to prepare for baptism or for its renewal in the Easter vigil (Liturgy constitution, no. 109). This is a day of final preparation for the catechumens who have been preparing throughout Lent for their baptism:

- **Hippolytus:** In the year 217, Hippolytus notes that Saturday is the day when the bishop assembles those who are to be baptized. He has them kneel in prayer while he lays his hands on them and exorcises the evil spirits. He breathes on the catechumens, seals their foreheads, ears and noses. This is their preparation for the all-night vigil.\(^2\)

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1. It is interesting to note that the Forty Hours' devotion was first celebrated in memory of the period of about forty hours that Christ's body was in the tomb. This form of devotion began around 1534 in Milan, and came to Rome in 1551. Bulletin 48 will contain an article on celebrating this devotion, now known as solemn annual exposition, in the spirit of Vatican II.
• **Seventh-century Rome:** On this day, the catechumens repeated the apostles' creed to the priest. Then they were exorcised and anointed with the oil of catechumens. The “ephpheta” ceremony was performed to open their ears to hear God’s word, and they renounced Satan with the triple formula still familiar to us.

• **At present,** the newly restored rite for the Christian initiation of adults suggests that the elect, the catechumens who are to receive baptism at the vigil, should spend the day in prayer, recollection and fasting, and refrain from their usual work. If there is a meeting of the group on Holy Saturday, they may celebrate some of the preliminary rites — saying the creed, the “ephpheta” ceremony, the choosing of a Christian name, and anointing with the oil of catechumens. ³


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**COMING ISSUES**

• The next issue of the Bulletin, no. 48, will be ready at the beginning of March. Entitled “Liturgy and Life,” it will explore many of the ways that worship and daily life come together in a parish. Practical articles for priests, liturgy committee members, readers, singers and teachers provide helpful guidance for living the liturgy in your believing community.

This issue marks the beginning of the second decade for the Bulletin in the service of the Church.

• **Blessings** — a fresh and practical study of blessings is in store for you in the May-June issue, Bulletin 49. *Blessed be God and his creation* may prove to be one of the most useful Bulletins for parish and community growth.

• **The lectionary** and the reading of the word of God will be studied in Bulletin 50, the September-October issue. Practical and pastoral approaches will make this issue of value to every priest, reader and liturgy committee member.

• **Christian initiation** — a fresh look at the new rites and what they mean in parishes today — is the subject of the November-December issue, Bulletin 51.

*Subscription information is given on the inside front cover.*
EASTER: VIGIL AND SUNDAY

It is mainly through his paschal mystery — his death and resurrection — that Jesus Christ redeemed us and offered perfect glory to the Father. Every Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection, the people of God celebrate the paschal mystery of the Lord. The solemn observance of Easter is the Church's annual celebration of the Lord's resurrection as well as his passion. Easter is the culmination and climax of the liturgical year, in the same way that Sunday crowns the week.

The Easter vigil service is the high point of the Easter triduum. It is held during the night of the Lord's resurrection. Augustine calls this night the mother of all vigils, when the Church of God watches, with lamps burning brightly (see Lk. 12: 35-48). While waiting as faithful servants for our master's return, we celebrate and enter into his death and resurrection in the sacraments of Christian initiation. The vigil reaches its climax in the eucharistic banquet, where we recognize the Lord in the breaking of bread.

Easter Sunday is the continuation of the paschal celebrations, and concludes the paschal triduum at evening prayer. At the same time, Easter is the beginning of the fifty days of joy for the Church of God.¹

Ancient Vigil

The traditional manner of celebrating the Easter vigil is clearly described for us by Hippolytus. Writing around 217 in Rome, he tells us how the Roman Church celebrated this night:

Those who are to be baptized spend the entire night in a vigil, listening to the readings and the instruction. For the first time, they bring an offering (a vessel of wine) for the eucharist.

At cockcrow, prayer is offered over the water flowing through the baptismal tank, which is separated from the body of the church. The bishop gives thanks over the oil of thanksgiving (chrism) and exorcises the oil of exorcism (oil of catechumens).

The catechumens strip off all their clothes. Then each candidate renounces Satan and is anointed by a presbyter with the oil of exorcism. The presbyter places his hand on the person who goes down into the water, and asks him for the triple profession of faith (as now done at the vigil and the present rite of baptism). The children are baptized first, then the men, and finally the women.

A presbyter anoints them with the oil of thanksgiving. Each one dries himself, dresses, and then they go to the church, where the bishop lays his hand on them, prays over each one, and anoints him on the forehead with the oil of thanksgiving; he signs them with the cross, also on the forehead.

Then they take part in the prayer of the faithful, closing it with the kiss of peace. The offerings are brought, and the eucharist is celebrated. At communion,

¹ See Liturgy constitution, nos. 102 and 106; General Norms for the liturgical year, nos. 18-21 (in the Canadian sacramentary, page 69); Introduction to the Easter vigil, in the sacramentary, no. 103, page 245.
after receiving the bread of life, they receive from three cups, water, milk mixed with honey, and finally the precious blood.

Following the celebration they are to lead lives of good works. If there are further instructions necessary, the bishop is to teach them privately. 2

Easter Vigil Restored

Before Pope Pius XII restored the Easter vigil in 1951, the Mass was celebrated on Saturday morning, even though its texts referred to night and darkness. Celebrated on an experimental basis for five years, the Easter vigil became the cornerstone for the renewal of the calendar and the liturgy that we have experienced since then. In 1955, the entire Holy Week liturgy was renewed, and included the restored vigil as its climax. Revised and simplified during the 1960’s, the Easter vigil in the present sacramentary contains four main parts:

• A service of light
• Liturgy of the word
• Baptismal liturgy
• Eucharistic liturgy.

These parts of the vigil service are better understood when seen in the light of their gradual development down through the centuries.

Service of Light

Because the paschal vigil was celebrated at night, light was needed in the church. From the lamp-lighting service (lucernarium) and the gospel symbolism of light and darkness, the light service was gradually developed and elaborated. In the fourth century, Constantine had the entire city of Rome illuminated this night. St. Patrick is said to have lighted the paschal fire on the hill of Slane.

The Easter candle has been used since 520 at least, when Bishop Ennodius of Pavia composed two blessings for it. The ceremony was elaborated in the Gallican rite, and was reserved to the archdeacon or another deacon. Though Gregory the Great mentions the rite, it did not come to Rome for many centuries. In England, the paschal candle was decorated with flowers and inscriptions, including the date. At Westminster Abbey, the candle used in 1557 was 300 pounds in weight.

The Exsultet or Easter proclamation was used by the Gallican rite in the seventh and eighth centuries, and eventually entered the Roman missal. The five grains of incense and the practice of having the deacon carry the unlighted candle in procession are mentioned in the Ambrosian rite in the twelfth century. The Spanish rite was blessing both a lamp and the Easter candle on this evening as far back as 633.

2 Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition, II: 20-23.
Modern reforms of the Roman rite during the past twenty-five years have simplified the symbolism and celebration of the light service.³

Readings and Prayers

The reading of the word of God — with canticles and prayers between the lessons — has always been the basic and most important element of any vigil service. The Easter vigil has continued this central element. During the centuries and in different rites, the number of lessons has varied from four to twelve. The present Roman rite has nine lessons for use during this night.

While the prayers between the readings are in the form of collects in the Roman tradition, the Gallican and Spanish rites used a formula similar to our Good Friday intercessions. For some centuries in Rome, the readings and canticles were proclaimed in both Greek and Latin.

The litany of the saints, sung while the bishop or priest was going to bless the font and celebrate the baptisms (in a separate baptistry, not in the main part of the church), provided a form of devotion for the rest of the congregation, and prepared them for the eucharist which completed the vigil. In the old Spanish rite, where there was no litany, the bishop went during the third reading to bless the font, while the congregation remained in the church for the rest of the readings and canticles. At present, the Roman rite has moved the litany to the beginning of the baptismal rites, which follow the homily.

Baptismal Rites

From the time of Hippolytus at least, the vigil service has been the proper setting for the baptism of catechumens. This is now being restored to the present vigil through the rite of Christian initiation for adults. The present Roman service celebrates the baptismal rites after the homily, at the end of the liturgy of the word.

Baptismal water: In the early years of the third century, Hippolytus and Cyprian mention that the bishop prays over the water; normally this was a spring or font of running water. The Roman prayer of consecration that developed was modelled on the Greek eucharistic prayers. The present form is concluded with an acclamation by the people.

Breathing on the water, sprinkling it on the assembled community, and the people's practice of taking some of the blessed water home date back at least to the early middle ages. The use of chrism in preparing the baptismal water seems to come from the Gallican rite. St. Ambrose mentions the signing of the water with the sign of the cross in the fourth century.

Baptism and confirmation: As long as adult initiation was the normal way for entrance into the Church, the celebration of baptism was followed immediately by chrismation or confirmation, and led into the eucharist. This order has recently been restored through a number of rites in the revised liturgy: the Easter vigil in

³ An interesting and constructive critique of the present rites, along with suggestions for a more dramatic reform of the vigil service, can be read in an article by Seamus Ryan, “The Easter Vigil: An Alternative Model?” in The Furrow, May 1974, pages 239-245.
the Roman sacramentary (1970), the rite of confirmation (1971), and the rite of Christian initiation for adults (1972). The changes that these reforms will bring into the life of the Church in the next few decades are just beginning to be evident.

**Baptismal promises:** The renewal of baptism is one of the prime goals of the lenten period, and the work of prayer and penance during Lent leads the believing community to the Easter vigil. There the renewal of their baptismal promises is an emphatic conclusion to the baptismal rites of the restored service. After the people are sprinkled with the blessed Easter water, the **general intercessions** are said. For the first time, the newly baptized are able to take part in this prayer of the faithful, the prayer of God's people.

**Vigil Mass**

As already described in *Primitive pascha*, the eucharist concluded the vigil and marked the end of the paschal fast. This is seen as clearly in Hippolytus' description as in our present service.

During the early middle ages, the scripture readings and the blessing of the baptismal water concluded with the litany, which ended with the *Lord, have mercy*. This in turn led into the Mass. A similar format was used in the 1950's. In the middle ages, the Holy Saturday Mass, which had gradually crept back to the afternoon and eventually to the morning, omitted the *Lamb of God* and the kiss of peace. A brief form of vespers concluded the Mass. The 1955 rite made the same omissions, but celebrated lauds (morning prayer) as its conclusion.

In the present sacramentary, the last of the nine lessons proclaimed is the gospel, followed by the homily and the baptismal rites. The prayer of the faithful concludes this part of the celebration. Then the liturgy of the eucharist begins as usual with the preparation of the gifts, with the newly baptized members of the community bringing the gifts to the altar. The liturgy of the eucharist has no omissions or changes, and all are invited to receive communion under both forms. A proper solemn blessing (no. 6) is now provided.

The prayer after communion, which refers to the Spirit of love, recalls the original unitive celebration of the resurrection of the Lord and his sending of the Holy Spirit. This observance is now extended through the entire period from Good Friday to Pentecost Sunday.

**Easter Sunday**

The Sunday of the resurrection continues the celebration begun in the vigil Mass, the first eucharist of Easter. Originally, the eucharist concluding the all-night vigil was celebrated after cockcrow at Rome (about 3:00 a.m.), and no other Mass was offered that day. As adult baptisms became rarer and the Easter vigil seemed of lesser importance, a proper Mass came to be celebrated on Easter morning.

In the 1955 revision of Holy Week, no changes were made in the Easter Sunday Mass, so that one went back from the reformed celebrations throughout the week to the old prayers and the foot of the altar and repetitions on Easter Sunday morning.
In Canada and the United States, the sacramentary now contains a rite for the renewal of the baptismal promises after the homily. The triple profession of faith replaces the creed. The sprinkling with holy water as a reminder of baptism may be used at the beginning of Sunday Mass at any time of the year.

While some might feel concern that the Easter morning renewal of the baptismal promises could tend to lessen the uniqueness of the paschal vigil, the rite does meet the practical pastoral fact that most people are not present and taking part in the Easter vigil. As noted above, when new approaches to Christian initiation take hold in a community, this fact may change for the better.

EASTER SEASON: THE GREAT SUNDAY

Though the New Testament texts present a clear calendar of events — Jesus died on Friday, he rose on Sunday, he ascended forty days later, the Spirit was given on the fiftieth day after Easter — the early Church showed no interest in assigning these as separate events to specific days. Until the fourth century development of Holy Week, every Sunday (including Easter) celebrated the passion-death-resurrection-ascension of Christ, his giving of the Spirit, and his coming again at the end of time. The full celebration of Easter involved the paschal fast, the all-night vigil, and the seven weeks of the Pentecost season, concluding on Pentecost Sunday.

Fifty Days of Joy

The Easter season has been part of the liturgical year longer than the lenten season. In the early Church, the entire paschal season was called Pentecost (from the Greek for fifty): it is a week of weeks, a fifty-day period of joy. From the end of the paschal fast through to the day of Pentecost when the season of fifty days ended, the Church kept the feast of the Lord’s passover.

Christians celebrated these fifty days as one feast, called “the great Sunday” by St. Athanasius. Throughout this period of rest and gladness, kneeling and fasting were forbidden, and the Church rejoiced: Alleluia! was the song of the people of God. The entire season is one celebrating Christ’s triumph over death, and his gift of the Spirit to us.

When the days of Pentecost were fulfilled, the season was closed by a day also known as Pentecost, the fiftieth day. From the third century at least, this day was a unitive feast honoring the Lord’s ascension and his outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
Unitive festival: The idea of one day commemorating two aspects of Christ's redeeming work seems a little strange to us: we tend to see their distinction rather than their unity — as for Easter Sunday and Good Friday, and for Epiphany and Christmas. Yet we find a number of references to this unity in the early Church. Some examples:

- When Constantine died on Pentecost Sunday, 337, Eusebius noted that this day, which sealed the seven weeks, was the day when Christ ascended into heaven, and when the Holy Spirit came upon us.

- Jerusalem, 395: Egeria noted that fifty days after Easter, on the Lord's day, the Jerusalem Church celebrated the coming of the Spirit and the Lord's ascension in two separate ceremonies on the same day.

Gradual separation: The separation of these two feasts into distinct celebrations took place gradually, and occurred in different places at various dates:

- Pentecost Sunday: By the third century, Christians were beginning to look on Pentecost as the day of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, as well as the day which ended the paschal season, the period of fifty days of Easter joy. The Monday after Pentecost Sunday was the day for resuming the penitential practices of fasting and kneeling — both of which were forbidden during the great season of joy, as they were on every Sunday.

Some elements were borrowed from the Jewish feast of Pentecost. A one-day celebration sometimes called the Feast of Weeks — it was celebrated seven weeks after the Passover — it was a harvest festival that later came to commemorate the giving of the law on Sinai. Both Augustine and Leo the Great made the connection between the Christian celebration of Pentecost Sunday and the giving of the new law, written by the finger of God, the Holy Spirit.

- Ascension Thursday: At first, the ascension was celebrated as part of the total paschal mystery (as it is still described in the first eucharistic prayer, for example). But by the fourth century, the ascension began to emerge as a separate feast, as the unity of the paschal season began to lessen.

By 375, it was a distinct feast day in Antioch. In the 390's, it was observed in Brescia, Italy, but was preceded by three days of fast — in the Easter season! These days became the rogation days (see Days of prayer and penance in this issue).

A few years after Egeria's visit to Jerusalem, in the opening years of the fifth century, the ascension celebration of Jerusalem was moved back ten days before Pentecost, to what we now call Ascension Thursday.

Baptism and the Easter Season

The Easter season is intended by the Church to be a time of continuing growth in the baptismal spirit for the entire community, for both new and veteran members. Together they are called to meditate on the gospel, to take part in the eucharist, to practise the commandment of love more fully, and to enter more deeply into the paschal mystery. This participation in community growth is the final period of initiation, and was known as the time of mystagogia. It is accom-
plished in part through the Sunday Masses of the Easter season, especially those in year A, which provided lessons particularly suitable for new Christians.

**Easter octave:** The first week of the Easter season is a joyful celebration of the resurrection. Each of the weekdays is observed as a solemnity of the Lord. During the week, the Mass prayers speak frequently of baptism, new birth, new creation; the gospel readings speak of the appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples, and the selections from the Acts of the Apostles describe the early Church's preaching of the resurrection. The Church of today continues to recognize the Lord in the breaking of the bread, and to preach him in word and deed.

**Recent Reforms**

The calendar reform of 1969 has permitted the paschal season to stand out more clearly in the liturgical year.

- **Sundays:** The Sundays of the season reflect the great Easter themes. Nothing is to interfere with their celebration, and no feast is to replace them. (Having arranged that, the General Norms then blithely move the Ascension to replace the seventh Sunday in the Easter Season in countries that no longer observe Ascension Thursday as a holy day of obligation.)

- **Ends on Pentecost:** The Pentecost octave has been deleted, so that the paschal season now ends on Pentecost Sunday; Ordinary time resumes on the next day.

- **Daily Mass texts** have been provided in the sacramentary and lectionary for each of the days in the Easter season, permitting a fuller and steadier celebration of the paschal themes.

**Pastoral note:** If the liturgical renewal is to succeed, priests and people need to be able to understand more fully the baptismal theme of the Easter season and its relationship with the life of the ordinary Christian in a parish setting. The concern of all believers in the community for the neophytes and the growing need for a new approach — as outlined in the rite for Christian initiation of adults — will be well founded on the baptismal approach of this season, seen as the sequel to Lent and the Easter vigil.

For most people, the Ascension and Pentecost have little to do with the celebration of Lent and Easter. The unity of these two feasts with the whole paschal theme should become clearer, so that Christians may become more fully involved in the saving work of Christ and his Church, and less bogged down in peripheral matters of little value.

Helping people and priests to do this is the responsibility of diocesan liturgical commissions, and, to a lesser extent, parish liturgy committees.
OTHER CELEBRATIONS

ORDINARY TIME

Helping priests and people to understand the meaning and value of ordinary time as a positive part of the liturgical year (rather than just a vacant season) presents a great challenge to diocesan liturgical commissions. Experience tends to remind one of Moses, always faced with people wandering off at tangents instead of sticking with him as he led them on the path of faith through the wilderness. Perhaps we do not really understand ordinary time, and are too easily distracted by special days and events and occasions that seem to have greater glitter.

Ordinary time is the part of the liturgical year outside the “strong seasons” of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter time. It is the time of green vestments, with thirty-three or thirty-four weeks — almost two-thirds of the year. One part comes between the Lord’s baptism and Lent; the other follows Pentecost, and lasts until it is time for Advent to begin again. (In some Churches, these are two distinct seasons.) Despite its long history, this part of the Church year is still not well understood.

In a way, this season echoes the earliest days of the Church, when the Sunday eucharist was the only one in the week. There was no sign of Mass propers as we now have them: readings from the scriptures, the homily (compare Lk. 4: 16-22), and extemporaneous prayer by the celebrant are described in early documents. This format continued for a long time, although gradually set readings (often semi-continuous, as in the present ordinary Sundays) were established.

Historical Background

A brief review of the development of the Roman liturgy will help us to keep ordinary time in perspective.

From simple beginnings — Sunday as the Lord’s day, then the annual all-night celebration of Easter, along with the anniversaries of a few local martyrs — the Church began to develop its liturgical year. Lent, Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter season, Pentecost, Advent, ember days: gradually appropriate texts and readings were chosen. By the time of St. Gregory the Great (590-604), the main seasons had evolved at Rome, although not in their final form.

In 788, Charlemagne obtained a copy of the papal sacramentary (now known as the Gregorian sacramentary), containing prayers used by the pope at station Masses on certain Sundays and feasts. Alcuin, an English monk who served as liturgical advisor to the emperor, added an appendix of other Roman prayers (from the Gelasian sacramentary, the book used by the parishes of Rome) and some Gallican ceremonies, including the blessing of the Easter candle. He thus provided Mass formulas for the six Sundays after Theophany (Epiphany) and for the twenty-four after Pentecost, as well as the commons of the saints and Masses for the dead.
Between the eighth and tenth centuries, the creativity of the Frankish, Celtic and Germanic Churches led to a warmer and more symbolic liturgy than that used in Rome, including more fully developed rites for the sacraments and for Holy Week. About 950, the Church at Mainz wove the old and new rites together in a form which came into use in Rome and elsewhere. Then, from the time of Gregory VII in 1073, Rome began once more to give leadership in liturgy.

When the Council of Trent ended in 1563, it left to the pope the work of reforming the liturgical books according to the usage of the Church fathers. The missal of St. Pius V in 1570 is based on the first printed edition of 1474 (before that, they were always copied out by hand), which in turn is the text used in the time of Innocent III (1198-1216).* In this way, Pius V established the texts which prevailed throughout the Western Church for the next 400 years.

**Sundays in Ordinary Time**

In the missal of Pius V, texts were given for six Sundays after Epiphany and twenty-four Sundays after Pentecost (additional weeks being drawn from the time after Epiphany). There was little unity of theme in each Sunday's texts. No Masses were provided for the weekdays of ordinary time, and so celebrants could choose from the previous Sunday, votive Masses, Masses for the dead or other texts on days which were not saints' days.

Problems: Over the centuries, both before and after Trent, votive feasts came to replace Sundays on a permanent basis: Holy Trinity, Holy Family, and Christ the King are among these. Because Sundays were not of high rank, many saints' feasts, external solemnities and octaves could also replace the Sunday Mass. By the time of St. Pius X, the situation was such that the Sunday texts were rarely used. He gave more priority to the Sunday Masses, but the trend continued. Again, Pope Pius and Pope John reformed the rubrics in 1955 and 1960.

Vatican II called in 1963 for proper respect for the Sunday liturgy, and stated that Sunday is the nucleus and basis of the liturgical year (Liturgy constitution, no. 106). The new Missale Romanum of Pope Paul appeared in two distinct parts (thus returning to the earlier tradition of the Church, and emphasizing more clearly the distinction of roles in the liturgy): the lectionary came in 1969, and the sacramentary in 1970, both in Latin. These are now being used in the vernacular throughout the world.

Several major points should be noted about Sundays in ordinary time in the present liturgical books:

- One system of thirty-four formulas covers the Sundays after Epiphany and Pentecost.

- The Sunday readings are in a three-year cycle, with semi-continuous selections for the gospels and second readings. The first reading is chosen for its relationship to the gospel text, and the responsorial psalm as a meditation on the OT reading. The second lesson is independent, being chosen from a semi-continuous

* A brief history of the Roman Missal is given in the documents printed at the beginning of the Canadian sacramentary: see the apostolic constitution of Pope Paul, pages 7-9, and the introduction of the General Instruction, pages 12-14.
A reading of the NT books; if it happens to relate to the other texts of that Sunday, it is by chance. In this way, a second stream or theme is introduced (some would say to the confusion of all), for this reading reflects the way the early Christians understood the living of the gospel of Jesus.

- A new and generous selection of texts is now available. Alternative opening prayers are provided for each of the Sunday formularies in ordinary time, as well as eight prefaces, five forms of the solemn blessing, and twenty-four prayers over the people. As Ralph Keifer has pointed out, the petitions of the opening prayers are based on the phrases of the Lord's prayer.

- The season is deliberately low-key, in contrast to the strong liturgical seasons revolving around Easter and Christmas. Room is left for important local celebrations, provided these do not obscure the nature of Sunday as the original feast and foundation of the liturgical year. The main theme of the Sundays is provided through the semi-continuous reading of one gospel each year: Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B, Luke in Year C. The different styles and approaches of these evangelists lend color to these cycles.

- A number of Sundays in ordinary time are still replaced by permanent feasts (Baptism of the Lord, Trinity, Christ the King), by solemnities, or by feasts of the Lord when they occur on Sundays. Former holydays of obligation are transferred to Sundays: in Canada, there are three such days, Epiphany, Ascension day, and the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Weekdays in ordinary time:** For the first time in the history of the Western Church, we have a complete lectionary for the days of ordinary time. Weekday readings are arranged for each day of the thirty-four weeks in this season. The first reading and its responsorial psalm are provided in a two-year cycle of semi-continuous readings. The gospels, also chosen from semi-continuous texts, are used each year. There is no attempt to relate the first reading or the gospel texts, except in the final week of ordinary time, when the eschatological content of both readings leads naturally into the celebration of Advent.

On ferial days in ordinary time, the community is encouraged to use the ferial readings, while it may choose the other Mass prayers from the thirty-four formularies, from the Masses for various needs, or from the votives. Six ferial prefaces, five solemn blessings, and a variety of prayers over the people are also available.

**A Challenge**

To diocesan commissions: Ordinary time is an area of the liturgical year where more time and effort are needed, both in programs of liturgical education and in regular parish celebrations. Diocesan commissions could be of help to priests and people if they were to help them study this part of the liturgical year and its liturgical richness. Now that several other Churches are beginning to use our lectionary, there is room for ecumenical cooperation in prayer and preaching and study. As more studies and aids on the readings and other texts become available, commissions can help parishes to use them and benefit from them.
To parishes: The wealth of prayers and readings now available in both the Sundays and weekdays of ordinary time is a challenge to believing communities to share in the richness of God's word and the teaching power of the liturgy. With adequate preparation and good celebration, priest and people will be able to grow in their knowledge and love of God, and thus give him greater glory as they serve him in others.

And that is the purpose of the liturgy and the liturgical year: to honor God and to bring his salvation to all.

LITURGICAL YEAR AS ADULT CATECHESIS

An Ottawa pastor and chairman of the diocesan liturgical commission for the English parishes, Fr. Allan Charnon, OSA, proposes in a letter to the editor that a new arrangement of the liturgical year is needed.

The liturgical year: a pastoral catechism for adults

The very structure of the liturgical year should demonstrate explicitly that salvation history is the revelation. The liturgical year should therefore have a very definite opening and closing: it should begin with Lent-Easter and end with Advent-Christmas. The initial stages of salvation history are highlighted in the paschal mystery liturgies; the Advent-Christmas conclusion presents the future, the eschaton, the final coming.

With this arrangement, the liturgical year would be a concise summary of the Christian life, readily understandable and congenial to people. For it is in the Sunday liturgy, week by week, that most Christians are formed and reformed by the Spirit. The liturgical year would then patently become the adult pastoral catechism.

A catechism is one step further than the first proclamation of the kerygma: “Christ has died, Christ is risen.” A catechism is an initial attempt to put some order into the various mysteries and revelations of the whole Christ-mystery.

The catechism of the past used an implied pyramid model with God on top, Christ in the middle and the Church on the bottom. This was appropriate to a classical mentality in which reality was conceived as basically static. Today we have a more historical mentality because we perceive reality as very dynamic; hence, the image of a flowing river is more appropriate: with perhaps, as an example, Christ's redeeming as a past, the Church's sanctifying as a present, and God's ultimate justification as a future.

Because of our cultural emphasis on process and development, a popular adult catechism for our age should properly spell out the linearity of salvation history. By clearly and unambiguously arranging the liturgical year in this same linearity, the liturgical year would become the ever-renewed course in the catechism of God's work and love, from beginning to end.

A consequence of this idea might be that the liturgical books would have to be re-edited, but perhaps that can be left alone for now.

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MARTYRS AND SAINTS

Jesus promised his disciples that hatred, persecution and death could be the reward for following him (Mt. 24:9); he himself laid down his life for his friends, that we might live and enter his glory. Martyrdom — giving one’s life as a witness to the Lord — is recorded in the New Testament for Stephen and James, and hinted at for Peter. By the time the book of Revelation was written, the blood of many Christian martyrs had been shed, and the book spoke of their reward to encourage those who had yet to suffer.

Records in the second century tell us that some churches were celebrating their local martyrs by an annual observance. When Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred in mid-century, the people of his church began his cult, and wrote to other churches to tell them about his glorious death for Christ. The Roman cult of martyrs began in 258 when Sixtus II was martyred on August 6, and his seven deacons, including Lawrence, died four days later. Rome honored its martyrs by practices based on the folkways of non-Christians, who celebrated a family meal at the tomb on the birthday of deceased members; Christians began to celebrate the eucharist at the martyrs’ tombs on their anniversary (their “birthday” into heaven). A martyr’s death was seen as a full sharing in the death and rising of Christ, as baptism of blood, and as an epiphany or manifestation of Christ’s paschal mystery in his mystical body, the Church. Generally only local martyrs, not those from other churches, were celebrated.

The Philocalian calendar of 354 — which gave us the first mention of the feast of Christmas — listed nineteen anniversary celebrations for people martyred and buried in the area around Rome, plus two feasts of African martyrs, and two patronal feasts: St. Peter’s Chair on February 22 was based on the pagan practice of a family meal on this date in memory of their deceased relatives, with an empty chair representing the presence of the departed; the feast of Peter and Paul on June 29 was the anniversary of the transfer of their bones to safety in the violent persecution of 258.

Martyrologies

By the fourth century, when persecutions ended, churches could be built at the martyrs’ tombs. Various communities began to exchange the feasts of martyrs, and to celebrate those who were martyred elsewhere. Pilgrimages to various martyrs’ churches and foundation of new churches in their honor led to the export of relics, despite the protests of various popes. Lists of these various celebrations were known as martyrologies.

A number of martyrologies still survive from the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, listing local martyrs. Gradually, compilations appeared, listing all the known martyrs for each day of the year, gathered from various sources and places in the East and West. Different churches would copy these, adding local saints and founders of monasteries or churches. Later revisions added other feasts celebrated on fixed dates, and feasts on which the relics of some saint had been transferred to this area.
Martyrologies began to add short stories or eulogies about the martyrs. By the eighth century, monasteries began the custom of reading the list of saints for the following day. Bede the Venerable, who died in England in 735, wrote a classic martyrology, but left many blank days. Several ninth-century writers added other dates and celebrations to his work.

The tenth to sixteenth centuries included many legends in the martyrologies, and the invention of printing spread them far and wide. Gregory XIII attempted to reform the situation by producing an official Roman Martyrology in 1584, based on Bede and the ninth-century additions to his work. Revisions were made again in 1681 and 1748, but even the editions produced in the twentieth century have contained errors and the names of non-existent saints.

**Marian Feasts**

The Vatican Council pointed out the important place of Mary — always, of course, in union with her Son, our savior — in the annual celebration of the full mystery of Christ. We honor her as “the most excellent fruit of the redemption,” and see her as a model of what the Church wants to become.¹

Both East and West have long venerated Mary as the mother of God (*theotokos*). In Rome, the December ember days came to mention the annunciation and Mary’s visit to Elizabeth as part of the days of preparation for Christmas. January 1 was the *natale* or birthday of St. Mary before it was celebrated as the octave of Christmas or the feast of the circumcision (a Gallican feast). The church of St. Mary (now St. Mary Major, or the most important Marian church in Rome; its dedication is still observed on August 5) was named by Sixtus III (432-440), right after the Council of Ephesus, which declared that it is the Church’s tradition that Mary is the mother of God. Since the sixth century, the Christmas midnight Mass (the last of the three to be composed) has been celebrated at this station church. Gaul observed a feast of the “deposition” (burial) of Mary on January 18.

**Eastern Church**: In fourth-century Jerusalem, Egeria mentions that the Presentation was observed forty days after Epiphany. By the end of the sixth century, the Church at Constantinople celebrated August 15 as the “falling asleep” or “dormition” of Mary.

Four feasts came to Rome from the Eastern Church. Sergius, a Syrian who was pope from 687 to 701, ordered processions on these days:

- **February 2**, Purification. In the East, this was known as the *hypapante* or encounter of Jesus with Simeon. The procession with candles on this day replaced a pagan celebration.

- **March 25**, Annunciation. Even as far back as Hippolytus, mention was made of this day (the spring equinox of that time) as the date of the Lord’s conception and death, based on a curious reasoning: since Jesus was a perfect man, it was fitting that his life should begin and end on the same date.

¹ See Liturgy constitution, no. 103; the Constitution on the Church has a chapter on Mary, the mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and his Church: nos. 52-69; her veneration in the liturgy is described in nos. 66-67.
• August 15, Assumption.
• September 8, Nativity of Mary.

These feasts replaced the other Marian celebrations of January 1 and 18.

Alcuin, who edited the sacramentary for Charlemagne (see *Ordinary time*, above), also prepared votive Masses for each day of the week, including two Masses in honor of Mary on Saturday. The custom of such Masses in ordinary time (Our Lady's Saturday) continues in the present calendar.

**In the 1969 reform** of the general calendar, the feasts of February 2 and March 25 were changed to feasts of the Lord, and January 1 was restored as a feast of Mary as the mother of God. The present sacramentary and lectionary present a good selection of Mass prayers and readings in the common of the Blessed Virgin, and a number of votive Masses. Thirteen feasts of Mary are now observed in the universal calendar.

**Other Saints**

**Confessors:** In the third-century persecutions, Christians who suffered for the faith (through imprisonment, torture, or being sent to forced labor camps) were known as living martyrs or confessors. They claimed the right to pardon people who had denied their faith during persecutions, and acted at times as presbyters without being ordained. After the persecutions ended, the term confessor was applied to monks, and eventually to bishops. Pope Symmachus (498-514) dedicated a church to two confessors who were not martyrs, Pope Sylvester and Martin of Tours: these were the first non-martyrs honored as saints. In the years to come, the date when a church was dedicated often became the feast of that saint.

**Other feasts:** The feast of John the Baptist was observed at the summer solstice, and in the East, also at the autumnal equinox. The birth of Christ was celebrated near the winter solstice, and his resurrection around the spring equinox. The East also celebrated the feasts of great martyrs and apostles on December 26-28, before they began to observe the Roman Christmas: this explains the unusual location of these feasts in the midst of the Christmas octave.

**Middle ages:** Alcuin's arrangement of the sacramentary continued the Roman calendar of feasts, and added only a few local celebrations. No saints' days were observed during Lent. Gradually new feasts of saints were developed and added in later sacramentaries. These expanded calendars returned to Rome around the year 1000. Gregory VII (1073-1085) added many popes to the calendar. By the thirteenth century, Rome reserved the process of canonization to itself, and from that time, many more saints have been added. Pius V reduced the large number of feasts to 130 in 1570, but each century since then has added more. In 1570 also, St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, suppressed all feasts in Lent, including March 19 and 25, for the Ambrosian rite.

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New Universal Calendar

In response to the Vatican Council’s teaching on the liturgical year (Liturgy constitution, nos. 102-111), the Church revised the universal calendar in 1969. The General Norms governing the liturgical year and the calendar are printed in the Canadian sacramentary, pages 65-82, and an index of saints and celebrations is given on pages 1082-1087.

Some of the principles the new calendar seeks to maintain are the uniqueness of Sunday as the original feast day of the Church, the centrality of Easter (with its lenten preparation) in the year, and the importance of the temporal cycle over the sanctoral cycle. Many feasts of local interest are to be celebrated only by churches, nations or religious orders with particular devotion to them. Only feasts of universal importance were to be extended to the entire Church.

Saints are now celebrated, as far as possible, on their “birthday” into heaven, the date of their death (GN, no. 56). Local feasts should not be duplicates of others, nor may they be increased out of proportion (GN, no. 50). The feast of St. Joseph may be transferred from March 19 to a day outside Lent (GN, no. 56).

The new calendar of saints presents men and women from every Christian century, from all walks of life, and from every part of the world, in order that the Church’s universal call to holiness may become more evident in our day. A strong move toward authenticity is evident in the present calendar, which dropped obscure celebrations, or those based more on legend than on fact. Many memorials are optional, to be celebrated only where special devotion exists.

* * *

In reforming the calendar, the Church has renewed the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ, the principal mystery of our salvation, as it is unfolding throughout the year. Feasts of Mary and the saints are celebrated, for they are our leaders and models in the faith, and they share the messianic banquet for which we long. Their feasts proclaim the work of Christ in his followers, and renew his paschal mystery in our lives.

Sound devotion to Mary and the saints should lead us to follow Christ more fully when we base our devotion on the nature and perspective of the Church’s liturgy. With the inspiration of our blessed mother Mary and the saints, God is leading his people to deeper holiness, so that we may walk worthily in his sight, blameless and spotless. Sealed by the Spirit of promise, we are to be the light of the world and witnesses of the Son of God in our time.

Father,
grant that the example of your saints
may challenge us to live holier lives for you.
DAYS OF PRAYER AND Penance

**Ember days:** St. Leo the Great, who was pope from 440 to 461, said that the ember days came down to us from the apostles.¹ Three times a year, in June, September and December (the whole season of Lent formed the fourth period), the Church was called to prayer and fasting. Like a retreat or a brief version of Lent, the ember weeks led the people of God to fast and pray. As in the early Church, Wednesday and Fridays of ember weeks were days of fasting. Saturday was also a day of fast, ending in a vigil service and eucharist, somewhat along the lines of the Easter vigil.

Some authors consider that the ember weeks were organized by Pope Siricius (384-399) as a means of overcoming Jovinian’s attacks against the practice of fasting. By holding the ancient station days (Wednesday and Friday) as days of fast, and prolonging this throughout Saturday, the pope chose the middle course between St. Jerome (continual fasting) and Jovinian (no fasting at all).

Masses were provided for the Wednesdays and Fridays of the three ember weeks at a period when weekday Mass was not usual. The spring needed no ember week because Lent was already being celebrated by this time.

In Rome, the three ember weeks coincided with harvests of wheat, wine and oil, and the early texts reflected the thanksgiving theme. Pope Gelasius I decided in 494 that ordinations were to be conferred during ember weeks; the week of prayer and fasting was a suitable time of preparation for the entire community.

The original December ember days had been observed in Rome before Advent was celebrated there. Around the beginning of the sixth century, the December ember days were reorganized to focus on preparation for Christmas and the coming of the savior, and the ordinations were transferred to the new spring ember days (first full week in Lent).

The ember week around June, was the week following Pentecost Sunday (formerly called its octave). This week was the time when the Church returned to fasting and kneeling on weekdays after the great 50 days of paschal celebration.

**Rogation days:** The rogation days (the name means “days of prayer”) seem to have begun in 470 in Gaul, when Bishop Mamertius of Vienne asked his people to pray the litanies outdoors after earthquakes had hit the area. They were three days of prayer, with litanies and processions, and came to be celebrated on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday. These days were called the minor litanies.²

**Major litanies:** The procession and singing of the litany of the saints which was celebrated on April 25 was a Christian replacement of a pagan custom. Each year on this day, a procession was held in honor of the goddess Robigo, asking her to protect the wheat from wheat rust. The procession went through the fields

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¹ There seems to be no historical evidence to substantiate this. Zechariah 8:19 refers to fasts in specific months of the year. The Dead Sea scrolls mention special times of prayer at different times of the year.
² A description of an eighth century procession of the minor litanies celebrated by the people of seven villages surrounding St. Riguier’s Abbey in Gaul, is given in Gerald Ellard, *Christian Life and Worship*, (1956, Bruce, Milwaukee), pages 104-105.
and was called *maior* because it was a fairly lengthy route. Instead of going to
the grove of the goddess, the Christians ended their procession at St. Peter's.

**Reformed in 1969**

On February 14, 1969, Pope Paul issued new general norms for the liturgical
year and its calendar. In nos. 45-47 (reprinted in the sacramentary, page 71),
the following points are made:

**Purpose:** Ember days and rogation days are times when the Church offers
public thanks to God, and prays for the needs of mankind. Special prayers are
offered for good harvests and for the work that man performs (no. 45).

**Timing:** Each episcopal conference is to choose the time and manner in
which the people of God will observe these days of prayer in their country. The
bishops also determine the specific needs to be prayed for (no. 46).

**Mass texts** are chosen from suitable Masses for various needs, and adapted
as required (no. 47).

**In Canada,** the Canadian Catholic Conference issues guidelines for the time,
solemnity and celebrations of special days of prayer, so that the celebration may
lead to a deepening of the spiritual value of these days. The Canadian liturgical
calendar, *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy* indicates particular days of prayer,
including world day of peace, week of prayer for Christian unity, world day of
prayer, world day of prayer for vocations, mother's day, father's day, Canada day,
Labor day, respect for life week, Thanksgiving, world mission day, Remembrance
day, and a prayer vigil on December 31.

Suggestions are offered in the calendar for each of these celebrations in a way
that is *in harmony with good liturgy.* There are many ways of observing these
days, and their connection with the liturgy and the vigor of their celebration will
vary. Each believing community adapts the celebration to local needs and circum­
cstances, but always respecting the nature and priorities of the Church's
liturgy.

To avoid the problem of having these occasions replace or obscure the proper
Sunday celebrations, we need to remember that there are many ways of observing
these days: we should not limit ourselves by thinking that special days are to be
celebrated at Sunday Mass only. The more that other ways are developed, the
more meaning and impact these days will have on the minds and hearts of the
community. Then if a specific day is mentioned in the liturgy, it will have some
meaning for the assembly, and will truly be part of their celebration of prayer
and praise.

Parish councils and liturgy committees should be involved in planning ways
of developing these community celebrations. Many ideas, methods and suggestions
are outlined in Bulletin 38, page 88.

During the past year, the Church in Canada has been called back to the
spirit and practice of prayer (Bulletin 44, *People of prayer*) and penance (Bulletin
42, *Call to penance*).

The success of these reforms in these days of prayer depends on the priests
and people of each parish and community in response to the call of Christ and
his Church.
FUTURE OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR

In the past ten or fifteen years, ardent liturgists were often involved in reform of Church structures and in ecumenism as well as in liturgical renewal. Now, as these distinct disciplines continue to thrive, we need to take account of the ecumenical aspect of liturgical and organizational changes in our Church.

The following suggestions on the further development and reform are offered for discussion. The time has past when we Catholics can blithely change our seasons, Sundays, feasts and celebrations without thinking of the effect on other churches: if we are praying seriously for union, we have also to think seriously about some of its effects.

a) **Sunday:** As the first Christian feast, Sunday is the nucleus of the Christian year. A stronger emphasis on the Lord's day in itself is needed, and all attempts to attach other minor celebrations or causes firmly repelled. Particular feasts — Trinity, *Corpus Christi*, Christ the King — need to be studied thoroughly in the light of their origins and their meaning in today's liturgical needs.

b) **Advent:** The purpose of the season and its spirit need to be outlined clearly. The twofold spirit of eschatology and preparation for Christmas seems satisfactory. The sanctoral celebrations should be discussed as in paragraph (j), below.

c) **Christmas season:** The length of the season is a little blurred for us at present. While ending officially at the feast of the Lord's baptism, we continue the same idea of manifestation in the following Sundays, and then revert suddenly back to Jesus' childhood on February 2. With our present calendar, we also have the strange situation of totally omitting the feast of the baptism every few years, as in 1973, 1978 and 1979.

Perhaps it is possible for us to celebrate Epiphany on a Sunday while others retain January 6 (both are observed in the Catholic Church at present, varying from country to country). If Catholics wish to retain feasts such as the holy family on the Sunday after Christmas, other churches could keep other observances. The important principle is *unity in the major celebrations*. Sanctoral cycle: see (j), below.

d) **Weeks between Christmas season and Lent:** The idea of "ordinary time" — as compared to the "extraordinary or festive time" of the major seasons — is worthy of a second look. These weeks need not be in strict continuity with those following Pentecost. Septuagesima season, a pre-lenten warm up period, would not seem to be a positive need. This is one good period for celebrating saints' feasts, and a quiet time between Epiphany and Lent.

The unity of the time from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost Sunday would be strengthened by the following suggestions:

e) **Lent:** A strong lenten celebration in preparation for Easter baptism or baptismal renewal needs to continue. Cleansed of all distractions, (see paragraph (j), below), Lent should continue to be a time for ardent prayer, scripture reading, renewal. There is nothing to prevent local parish churches of various denominations from planning now for such cooperation for next Lent.
f) Holy Week and Easter Triduum: The final days of Lent are days of final preparation for the Easter vigil. The mixture of elements on Holy Thursday needs further study and simplification, but the rest of the days of the week are in reasonable shape now. Easter — the vigil leading into Sunday — is the culmination of the lenten program.

It is about time that our churches start once again — and continue — a strong push to stabilize the date of Easter, and therefore of all the celebrations from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost.*

g) Easter season: The meaning of the Easter season and the paschal mystery has been lost to many. By concentrating once more on the unitive celebration of Lent, Easter, Easter season and Pentecost, the Christian people can renew their baptismal dedication (or perhaps find it for the first time?) and begin to do the work the Father has sent us here to accomplish. Pentecost as the final day of the Easter celebration will increase this sense of mission. Discussion no doubt will be needed on the dating of the feast of the ascension; on the feasts of saints, see (j) below.

h) Ordinary time (between Pentecost and Advent): This long period of time is rather vague in most people’s minds. The Sunday cycles are based on the arrangement of episodes within the gospels, and the weekdays on a semi-continuous reading of the scriptures. This season is a good time for many of the feasts of the saints.

i) Eschatological ending and beginning: The value of the eschatology of the November Sundays and weekdays leading into Advent is worthy of exploration, and should be retained. Whether or not the year should begin in Advent, Lent, Easter or some other time is really a moot question, and not very important, since one cycle leads smoothly into another.

j) Sanctoral cycle: Saints have a place within the liturgical year, but one which should be subordinate to the temporal cycle, for this cycle celebrates the paschal mystery of Christ, our all-holy Lord. Saints’ feasts should be celebrated only on weekdays in ordinary time.

- Celebrating redemption: the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter should be “clean” — no saints’ days at all. The Church should concentrate on the mysteries of our redemption and renewal in these seasons.

- Local celebrations: Many saints should be celebrated where their patronage has some meaning. A few saints (St. Francis of Assisi, for example) would probably be universally celebrated, but only because each local church — diocesan or national — chose to observe their feasts.

- Marian celebrations: As Mary’s unique role in the Church of God is more appreciated, her feasts would be celebrated, but not perhaps on the day some church happened to have been dedicated in Jerusalem or Rome in the fourth or fifth century. Local observances should continue to be respected, but need not be universal.

* See the Vatican Council’s declaration on the revision of the calendar, given at the end of the Constitution on the Liturgy: America Press edition, pages 177-178.
• Apostles' feasts: The usual feastdays are based on the dates of various dedications of churches or transfers of relics (the bones of Peter and Paul were moved to safety on June 29, 258, during a time of persecution). Their feasts are observed by Anglicans and some Protestant churches. Further discussions are needed here, but again local options could solve problems as we work and pray toward unity.

• "Birthdays" of saints: The original feasts of martyrs were celebrations in the place where they died, observed on the anniversary of their "birthday" into heaven; the day of death was seen as their birth into eternal life (how does that accord with John 3?). Later saints were observed on the anniversary of death, or of the discovery or transfer of bodies, or on other suitable dates. The 1969 calendar tried to go back to the anniversary of death as a norm.

The conflict between temporal and sanctoral cycles occurs because the cult of martyrs — though local — antedates the liturgical year as we know it now. But because the temporal cycle is now considered more important than the sanctoral, it should take precedence, and the saints should make way for their king. There are many weekdays in ordinary time (between the Lord's baptism and Lent, and Pentecost and Advent) for these celebrations and more.

• Saints as heroes: If individuals and communities came to know their patron saints (changing over from unknown or mythical ones if necessary), their devotion could be more realistic. An effort to help people "know" one of their patrons or popular saints could be a good project once a year.

• "Nine-month" celebrations: Is there still a need or a place for March 25-December 25, December 8-September 8? The Roman Catholic Church has long included the incarnation and visitation in the December ember week. Is this a possible solution?

k) Days of prayer and penance: The Church is called to carry the cross daily, to be people of prayer and penance. Lent is the primary season for this, but it has also been a tradition in the Church since the earliest time to observe Friday as a day of voluntary penance (except during the rejoicing of the Easter season). Ember days at the beginning of each of the four seasons, and the major and minor litanies on April 25 and before ascension day were observed for many centuries. Now individual and national churches join in prayer for unity, for vocations, and on occasions such as Thanksgiving and civic anniversaries. What about days of penance and fasting?

l) Local celebrations: Like personal birthdays, local churches will have anniversaries of founding or dedication, and of bishops and patron saints. Within the general principles outlined above, these should continue, but perhaps transferred to ordinary time.

m) Liturgy of the hours: The Reformation churches retained and promoted daily prayer services in various ways and with varying degrees of success. The Second Vatican Council has encouraged pastors to invite the laity to partake once more in their Christian heritage, the liturgy of the hours. Happy successes have been noted here and there, such as Morning Praise and Evensong among Notre Dame students in Indiana. There is no need to wait for church unity to begin moving on this: sharing daily prayer together, however, would bring us all together much more quickly and effectively.
n) Lectionary: The present Catholic lectionary has embodied the ancient practice of semi-continuous readings. A three-year cycle is presented for Sundays, and a separate cycle for weekdays: in ordinary time, the first reading is on a two-year cycle. While the present lectionary is not perfect, it has already been accepted by Anglican and Lutheran churches in the U.S.A., and by one Anglican diocese in Canada. It forms a good basis for working out a lectionary acceptable to major churches.

* * *

The suggestions given here, derived from historical factors and present needs, could form a basis for discussion for future, integral growth and development of the liturgical year.

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REJOICE!
ALL IS NOT LOST

A study of the origins and development of the liturgical year can sometimes be a shock. Many people experience dismay or discomfort when they begin to feel they have lost their moorings; cynicism may be a temptation for others when they find that many dates they had thought significant have been chosen arbitrarily or by chance. A distinct lack of ease often accompanies the realization that the present calendar could be deemed a patchwork job, handed down and knocked about during the centuries. Confusion may result when they find out that other rites, countries and orders often follow separate systems and calendars.

Positive view: But there is a more encouraging way of looking at this. We can see the liturgical year as an expression of the Christian view of time, as a way of guiding our prayer and devotion, as a means of harmonizing the prayer of individual believers and that of the community of faith around the world. Our calendar is indeed a family calendar, “the days and seasons we celebrate in our house.” Other groups in the Church may observe other days and times, but we are together as we join with Christ in praising the Father.

As we sing in the preface of the Holy Spirit (preface no. 55):

Father,
you have given us the gifts of your grace
for all times and seasons,
and you continue to guide your Church
along the wonderful paths of your providence.
For this, we give you honor and glory, thanks and praise.
PENANCE CELEBRATION
Lent 1975

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

a) Purpose: Bible services are encouraged in a special way during Advent and Lent as one way of promoting a warm and living love for scripture among God’s people (Liturgy constitution, nos. 24; 35:4). Penance celebrations help the Christian community to deepen its spirit of penance, and assist individuals as they prepare to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.

Many members of a spiritual community may benefit from a bible service celebrating God’s gift of forgiveness. This service may be used at any time during Lent, but it is recommended for the final two weeks of the season. Preparations should begin well in advance of the date chosen.

During the final days of Lent, the Christian community is preparing for the celebration of the Easter vigil. This penance celebration should help them in making the choice with Christ of dying to sin and living for God.

b) Personal attention: When celebrating the sacrament of penance, the priest should help it become a personal meeting of the penitent with Christ. Individual attention in the form of instruction, advice, encouragement, should be given to each penitent by the priest. When the sacrament is celebrated after the bible service, as suggested in this outline, more time will be available for giving each penitent the individual attention he or she needs and desires.

c) A guide: The following outline is a guide, with suggested texts. While these may be used as printed, it is usually better to adapt them to the needs of the local congregation. Other suitable readings and psalms may be found in the lectionary for Lent (nos. 22-28 and 220-260; nos. 174-175, pages 406-407), or in the liturgy of the hours for this season. The liturgical index of the choir edition of Catholic Book of Worship suggests appropriate hymns.

The parish liturgy committee should be encouraged to develop this service as required to meet the spiritual needs of the community.

d) Proclamation: The readings suggested are contained in the lectionary, and should be proclaimed from it or from a dignified bible. Canada’s lectionary is richly bound in red and gold to signify our respect for the scriptures and to emphasize the place of God’s word in our spiritual growth.

Scripture references are to the Jerusalem Bible; in the case of the psalms, the second number refers to the Vulgate.

e) Participation: The Vatican Council suggests many ways of promoting active participation in the liturgy: pastors are to encourage people to take part by their acclamations and responses, and by singing psalms, antiphons and hymns, as well as by their actions and bodily postures. Reverent silence for reflection is also part of good participation (see Liturgy constitution, no. 30). An effort should be made to include many or all of these methods in this celebration.
f) **Music** should help the celebration to achieve its purpose. Hymns and songs are suggested from *Catholic Book of Worship*, the Canadian hymnal. Other ideas are given in the liturgical index of the choir edition (pages i-iv at the back of the book) under Lent, Passiontide, Christian vocation, community, penance celebrations, unity, word of God.

g) **Full celebration:** There should be a celebrant, a sufficient number of confessors, the reader carrying the lectionary, servers, choir, and thurifer. The celebrant presides from the chair, leads the prayers and preaches the message of conversion. His work will be more effective when he encourages others to assume their proper roles.

h) **Team work:** A number of smaller or scattered parishes may wish to pool their efforts in celebrating penitential services in each place. A team of priests going from parish to parish on several different days could bring the benefits of this celebration to more people.

i) **People’s leaflet:** Some parishes may prefer to encourage the people to use the Canadian hymnal as their response book; others may wish to prepare leaflets to help their people take a full part in the psalms and responses.

j) **Prayer for sinners:** The people of God are called to be people of prayer. The entire Church prays for sinners, asking God to bring them back in his mercy to full life in his family; this should be particularly true throughout the lenten season. During the penance celebration, the celebrant should invite and encourage the congregation to pray for sinners: for themselves, for members of the community, and for sinners throughout the world (see 1 Jn. 5:16).

k) **Prayer and fasting:** During the week before the penance celebration, members of the parish may be invited to prepare for it by prayer, fasting and penance on one or more lenten weekdays. By their communal prayer and fasting they will plead for God’s mercy on sinners and help for all his people in this community (see Bulletin 42, pages 16-18).

l) **Banners and posters** based on the theme, or reflecting the paschal mystery of Lent, may help to set the mood for this celebration.

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**Suitable days:** A weekday — especially Wednesday or Friday, the Church’s traditional days for fasting and penance — is more appropriate for a penance celebration than is the Lord’s day. In planning penitential services during Lent, pastors should continue to lead their people into greater accord with the practice of the universal Church through the centuries. (See pages 11, 32, 38 and 63 in this issue for a little background on this point.)
CELEBRATION OUTLINE

Theme

"Reconciliation with God." The theme may be explained in a few sentences before the service begins, after the greeting, or in any leaflet distributed to the congregation.

Entrance Rite

1. Song

Of the Father's love begotten (verses 1, 2, 4)  
Psalm 51 (50)  

or another seasonal hymn

2. Enthroning the word of God

The lectionary, the book of God's word, is carried in procession by the reader, accompanied by servers with lighted candles, and the others mentioned in (g) above. He places the book in a place of honor (reading stand or lectern; on the altar, if necessary), and the candles are placed nearby. The celebrant may incense the book after it has been enthroned.

3. Celebrant's greeting

After the sign of the cross, the celebrant greets the assembled community with one of the following, adapted as necessary: Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; or:

Celebrant  All happiness to you
          in God the Father and in Jesus Christ.
All             And also with you

The celebrant or one of his assistants may explain the theme briefly, if this has not already been done.

4. Opening prayer

The celebrant may choose a suitable prayer from the liturgy of Lent; he is encouraged to compose his own, based on the theme as developed in the readings chosen for this celebration. One example of this prayer:

Let us pray to our Father in heaven,  
and ask him to reconcile us and all his people:

All pause for silent prayer

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation:  
you have made us your beloved people.

Open our hearts to your loving mercy.  
Help us to turn away from sin  
and thus come back to your loving service.

Father, we give you praise and glory  
through Jesus Christ your Son.
Liturgy of the Word

5. Readings from the word of God
   The first reading is Eph. 2:4-10 (Lectionary, no. 32); or one of the N.T.
   readings from the Lenten Sundays (Lectionary, nos. 22, 24, 26, 31, 33); or 1 Tim.
   1:12-17 (Lectionary, no. 133).
   If a second reading is used, it may be chosen from one of the texts above.

6. Meditative silence
   A few moments of silence should follow the reading, allowing all to reflect
   and pray in response to the word they have heard in faith.

7. Psalm
   After silent prayer, a psalm (or hymn) is sung:
   Ps. 91(90): Lectionary, p. 407
   Ps. 130(129): Lectionary p. 407
   CBW, no. 177
   CBW, nos. 178, 245, 247

8. Gospel acclamation
   An acclamation may be sung in preparation for the gospel as a greeting to
   Christ the Lord:
   Third Sunday of Lent
   Fourth Sunday of Lent
   The people respond with CBW, no. 208 or 226.

9. Gospel reading
   Jn. 6:60-69
   Jn. 8:21-30
   Lk. 15:1-3, 11-32
   The deacon (or another priest, but not the celebrant) takes the gospel book
   and prays for God's help. After receiving the celebrant's blessing, he goes in
   solemn procession with candles and incense to the lectern. He incenses the book
   solemnly, and then proclaims the gospel.

10. Homily
    The celebrant proclaims the wonderful works and mercy of God as revealed
    in the scripture texts, and leads the community into the examination of conscience
    and to repentance.

11. Prayer for sinners
    The celebrant introduces this prayer; he may use ideas from introductory
    note (j). Then he invites all to pray:
    Let us pray for sinners
    and ask God to forgive them:
    All pause for silent prayer
    Heavenly Father,
    you do not want sinners to die,
    but to live in grace and serve you in love.
Look upon the people of the world
and reconcile them to yourself
by calling them back in Christ.
With him we pray:
Father, forgive them,
for they know not what they do!
Send your Spirit to soften hard hearts,
to bend rigid wills,
and to warm those who are indifferent to you.
Father,
forgive us our sins
and listen to our prayers for all sinners.
Bring them back to your love through our example,
so that with them we may praise you
and celebrate our thanks
through Christ our Lord.

Responsory

Reader  Praise to God our Father,
who has reconciled us
by the death and rising of his Son.

All  Praise to God our Father,
who has reconciled us
by the death and rising of his Son.

Reader  God our Father has blessed us with every spiritual gift,
choosing us in Christ to be his people,
holy and sinless in his sight. R.

Reader  He called us to be his sons and daughters.
He set us free by the death and rising of Christ,
and forgives us our sins.
He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness
and allowed us to share the joy of the saints in light. R.

Reader  Our Father has chosen us to be his own people.
He has marked us as his own by the seal of the Holy Spirit,
to assure us that he will make us free
with the freedom of the children of God. R.

12. Hymn
If desired, a hymn may be sung:

O crucified redeemer
From the depths of sin and sadness
O merciful redeemer

CBW, no. 277
no. 279
no. 283
Examination of Our Christian Living

The points below are suggestions. The liturgy committee may work on developing others. Care should be taken, however, not to omit the ones that disturb you or the community: these are probably the questions that most need to be asked.

A pause is made for reflection after each consideration, as noted in the text below the first point. The examination of conscience is the heart of the penance service; unless suitable time is given for reflection during it, however, it becomes a waste of everyone's time.

13. Examination of conscience

*Reader* Father, you have showered your love upon us in Christ, but we have failed to love you in return:

*Pause for silent reflection*

*Celebrant* Father, forgive us.

*All* Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from all evil.

*Reader* For our failure to pray, for our neglect of your saving word, for our laziness in your service, and our fear of living as your people should:

*Pause, and then response as above*

*Reader* For our lack of preparation for Mass, for our careless and worldly attitudes toward the Lord's day, for our sluggish hearing of your word:

*Pause, and then response as above*

*Reader* For failing to love you with our whole heart and strength, for putting so many things ahead of you, for not seeking your kingdom first, for our deliberate refusals to do your will:

*Pause, and then response as above*

*Reader* For our lack of concern for others, for neglecting the sick, the aged, the lonely, for failing to help people in their time of need, for our preoccupation with petty things:

*Pause, and then response as above*
Reader  For neglecting to exercise Christian responsibility
in our families and in our communities,
for failing to give Christian leadership,
for fearing to profess our faith in our daily tasks:

*Pause, and then response as above*

Reader  For feasting instead of fasting,
for begrudging the pittances we give in alms,
for putting our comforts ahead of the needs and lives of others,
for considering our pleasures more important than your kingdom:

*Pause, and then response as above*

Reader  For our unwillingness to forgive others
as generously as you forgive us,
for holding grudges and spite,
for bickering, back-biting, and gossip,
for failing to pray for others:

*Pause, and then response as above*

Reader  For our neglect of parish and community life,
for our failures at home,
for all the obstacles we have placed in the path of unity,
for our sins and faults and evil habits:

*Pause, and then response as above*

* * *

Celebrant  People of God,
Christ is calling you
to turn away from your sins,
to believe in him as your saving Lord,
to die with him to sin,
and to live with him for God.

14. Silent prayer

For about five minutes, all remain in silent prayer. Sitting or kneeling as they wish, they discuss their way of life with the Lord.

For those who wish it, the sacrament of reconciliation will be celebrated after this bible service.

15. Community act of sorrow

In this prayer, the “Lord, have mercy” may be sung from CBW, nos. 165-169, or using a tune familiar to the community.

Leader  Lord, you have called us to be your holy people:
forgive us for choosing the works of Satan.
Lord, have mercy.

All  Lord, have mercy.
Leader
Christ, you have chosen us to do good
and help others in your spirit of love:
forget us for preferring to serve ourselves.
Christ, have mercy.

All
Christ, have mercy.

Leader
Lord, you have reconciled us to God:
forget us for failing to live as his holy people.
Lord, have mercy.

All
Lord, have mercy.

16. Acclamation
A hymn may be sung:

Prayer of St. Francis  
Help us to help each other, Lord  
Forgive our sins as we forgive  
Awake, awake, fling off the night  

Or a brief prayer of the faithful may be based on the theme, ending with the  
Lord's prayer, no. 17.

Conclusion of the Rite

17. Lord's Prayer
This prayer is best sung by all, as at Mass (CBW, nos. 221-223). The celebrant may prepare an introduction to this prayer, based on the theme of the service. For example:

God has reconciled us to himself
through the death and resurrection of his Son.
Let us pray to him in union with the Lord Jesus:

Our Father . . .

18. Sacred action
The celebrant invites all to share the peace of Christ with one another. This may be done as at Sunday Mass, or less formally. He may introduce the rite in this way:

Jesus gives God's forgiveness and peace
to all who believe and repent.
Let us share his peace and love with one another.

19. Invitation to the sacrament
The celebrant invites all to receive the peace of Christ in the sacrament of penance, and to be reconciled fully with God and his people. A number of priests will be available for confession and spiritual guidance after the closing hymn.
20. Blessing

The celebrant may conclude with a simple blessing, or use this form:

One priest May the Father who has reconciled us in his love
continue to shower his blessings upon us.

All Amen.

Another priest May the Son who died and rose to save us
forgive us our sins,
and lead us in his footsteps.

All Amen.

Another priest May the Holy Spirit of God,
who makes us his temples of love and praise,
give us unending joy and peace.

All Amen.

Celebrant May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, † and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

21. Concluding hymn

Creator of the earth and skies

or another seasonal hymn may be chosen

CBW, no. 284

nos. 276-288

Sacrament of Penance

Those who wish to receive individual guidance and sacramental absolution
are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by the presence of a number of
confessors. The choir might sing meditative or seasonal hymns or psalms in a
quiet manner for the first five or ten minutes after the service.

BETWEEN THE CHAIRS

As calendars become part of life, they are often reflected in the wisdom
of sayings and folkways.

“The heart of the winter is between the chairs.” Between January 18 (for-
merly the feast of the Chair of Peter at Rome) and February 22 (Chair of Peter
at Antioch — see page 59; now the place names have been dropped from the
calendar), the coldest days hit Canada.

We would be pleased to have our readers share other sayings, their explana-
tion, and their location in the present or past calendars.
BOOK REVIEW


* * *

From 1971 to 1974, *Worship* magazine presented weekly notes on preaching the new lectionary, covering the entire three-year cycle of Sundays and major holy days. Dr. Fuller is an Anglican priest who is now professor of New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary. Author of twelve books on the new Testament, he is well qualified to analyze the Sunday texts and their meaning for today's Christians.

Those who use his articles week after week will benefit from his scholarship and prayerful insights into the text, with a minimum of two pages for each Sunday. From his Anglican background he gives us fresh references and historical background which are useful as we slowly come closer to one another. Frequent references to scriptural context and to recent weeks' readings help the homilist to maintain a fuller grasp of the texts and to share these with his community. A simple index of the scripture readings is provided.

Each Sunday's notes contain exegesis and background ideas on the three readings and the responsorial psalm, as well as suggestions for use by the homilist.

Outside margins are wide, and we would suggest they be used to mark in page references to such general indications as "Sixth Sunday of Easter in series C, above." If one marks in the exact page whenever such references are given, it will mean that he is more likely to read them — and they will be available when the cycle returns again in three years.

The foreword notes that, in order to make this book available at such a reasonable cost, it was necessary to print the pages in the order in which they appeared in *Worship*, starting with Lent of year C, and going on through years A and B, and the beginning of C again. This is really not a problem once you locate this week's texts; you simply move your bookmark ahead week by week.

By making this book available to the Church in America, the Benedictines of Collegeville have once again shown the leadership and concern for liturgical renewal that fostered the liturgical movement in the four decades before Vatican II.

We recommend this book highly to every priest, and suggest that a copy should also be available for readers, people in the choir, and members of the liturgy community, so that they too can prepare themselves more fully for the liturgy on the Lord's day.

National Bulletin on Liturgy, Canadian Catholic Conference, Ottawa, Canada:
- no. 36, November 1972: *Advent and Christmas*
- no. 37, January-February 1973: *Taking Lent Seriously*
- no. 41, November-December 1973: *Advent Unlimited*
- no. 42, January-February 1974: *Call to Penance*
- no. 43, March-April 1974: *Sunday Belongs to the Lord*


HELPFUL READING

Some of the works consulted during the preparation of this issue are listed below. Copies are often to be found in rectories and convents, and in the libraries of parishes, schools, colleges and universities. These books provide useful background and further reading on the various subjects discussed in this issue of the Bulletin.


