This bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community's life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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The Liturgical Year: Its Story
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Emil Telizyn: p. 207
St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, Toronto: p. 228

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About This Issue

Building on the Past

In 1975 Patrick Byrne drew together, from a number of rich and valuable sources, a concise history of the liturgical year and the calendar in Bulletin #47 “Year of Praise.” Considering the volume of material available, that task must have been quite a challenge to say the least. History does not get simpler with the passage of time, but Msgr. Byrne’s work twenty-five years ago has made the compilation of this issue—in celebration of the long awaited approval of our National Calendar for Canada—considerably easier.

Much of the content of this issue is based on the work of Msgr. Byrne; it has, however, been augmented, reordered and updated to reflect current needs. Amid the new material are helpful announcements for reprinting in the parish Sunday bulletin to help parishioners make their way through the Church year, as well as an outline for an annual meeting to begin preparations for the whole liturgical year.

The Importance of the Liturgical Year

The liturgical year is not simply a series of Sundays and feasts, or even a series of seasons; it is a unity. The ebb and flow of the year shapes the lives of Christians and nuances the meaning of the individual moments. The pacing of life from one Advent to the next provides a healthy, though often tenuous, counter-balance to the rhythm of the January–December and school year calendars of life in the society we are called to transform.

At the same time, the liturgical year has become an instrument of the Church’s formation process, as well as a means of giving greater praise for God’s wonderful saving acts among us. A thorough grounding in the cycle of the Church’s year is a necessary part of the formation of those seeking to enter into the life of the eucharistic community through the sacraments of initiation. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 75.1) Year-by-year the Church is drawn ever closer to the shape of the kingdom of God in the annual unfolding of the great story of our salvation in Christ, our journey into Trinitarian life.

Lord of All Ages

Human history is graced. (Dies domini, 74–75°) Time is, therefore, graced. In the fullness of time, God spoke through the Son, Jesus, the Word-made-flesh (Gal 4.4). By his dying and rising, exaltation and sending of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus has redeemed the world; humanity is reconciled with God. With this direct intervention into human history, God has brought us into the final age, the end times. Jesus, the Christ, the Lord of time, leads the people of God to their destiny. He is with us until he comes again in glory: he continually draws us to himself, uniting our voice with his in praise to the Father—a living sacrifice of praise.

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. At the same time, we look forward to their complete fulfilment in the messianic banquet in the age to come. To fully engage the power of the Church’s year of grace, however, each parish and community needs to take a careful look at each season and feast, and to understand what is being celebrated—and why.

Christian treatment of time, history, our week, and many basic ideas about celebrating sacred feasts have come to us through our roots in Judaism. At the same time, these have been adapted and changed to meet differing needs throughout twenty centuries of Christian worship.

Unlike their pagan neighbours, who saw time as a great unending circle repeating itself over and over again, the Hebrew people considered history as linear time—each event unique, never to happen again. For the ancient Hebrews, God’s interventions in history are real; they form the basis of later celebrations of these divine saving actions, and anticipate God’s final saving act in the last days.

Jesus was a Jew. His first disciples were Jews. The earliest Christian communities worshipped in the synagogue. These facts coloured liturgical expression in the early life of the Church. In the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council, a revived interest in biblical studies, and the drive for liturgical renewal have all contributed to a raised consciousness of the Jewish roots of Christianity. We have been invited to re-examine Christian feasts that 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.

**Seven-day Week**

We are inclined to take the week for granted, as though human society had always and everywhere 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 other origin can be traced for the seven-day cycle, it would appear that they adopted the week from the Jewish system. The Romans did not, however, name the other days of the week definitively until the third century of the Christian era.

Beginning as it did in a Jewish milieu, Christianity naturally adopted the week of seven days, but with a major change: the day chosen 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.1

Jews named 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 (i.e. preparation for the Sabbath—see Jn 19.31). A similar system is still used in Christian Latin down to the present: feria secunda, feria sexta....

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About the third century AD, the full planetary week became popular in the Roman Empire, naming the days in this fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planetary</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>samedi</td>
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<tr>
<td>the sun</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>dimanche</td>
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<td>the moon</td>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td>Mercury</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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(The final four days in the English names come from the equivalent Teutonic gods.)

Before Constantine, Christians used their own idiosyncratic names for the Lord's day. Even when they did use what became the civil name, “day of the Sun” (our Sunday), they kept in mind the idea of Christ as the sun of righteousness (Mal 4.2).

In 321, Constantine, the Roman emperor, decreed that the “venerable day of the Sun” was to be a day of rest. Under the influence of Christianity, Sunday eventually became the first day of the week even in civil life, as it has continued to the present.

The Jewish Sabbath and Sunday

There are several elements of meaning in the Sabbath. Together they form a full picture of its religious purpose and value.²

- **Day of Rest**: The main manifestation of the Sabbath is rest from work.
- **God's Day**: The Sabbath is a day for sacred assembly (Lev 23.3), a day for particular sacrifices (Num 28.9–10), a day belonging to God. God rested after creation, therefore God's people should rest from their labour on every seventh day (Gen 2.2–3; Ex 20.11).
- **Sign of Covenant**: Keeping the Sabbath is a sign of God's covenant (Ex 31.12–17). Observance of this day demonstrates membership in the people of God, and serves as a reminder of the sharing in the life of God's creation and in the holiness of God's chosen people.

While Sunday is not a transferred Sabbath, many of these concepts have influenced the Christian attitude toward the Lord's day. [T]

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² See ibid., 13–27.

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E Unum Pluribus: A Timeline

No, it's not a misprint—though it is most definitely very bad Latin grammar; the title of this section is, however, a thumbnail description of the history of the liturgical year. Unlike the United States of America, whose motto, “E pluribus unum,” (from the many, one) inspired the above title and whose evolution has been toward homogeneity, the history of our liturgical year has been a process of the opening up of a single feast into what has been, at some points, a dangerous degree of fragmentation. As we have it today, the liturgical year seems to have some planned unity and order. Actually, its development has been a veritable roller-coaster ride throughout the course of history, reflecting the various twists and turns in the life of the Church, yet kept basically “on track” under the guidance of the Spirit. The following notes give a very brief outline of some of the stages in the development of the liturgical year in the Western Church.
First Three Centuries (AD 30–300): early developments and creativity

- **Sunday**: the original feast day celebrating the paschal mystery of the Lord's death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation and sending of the Spirit; dates from the time of the apostles
- **Pascha**: the annual celebration of the paschal mystery linked with the historical dates of events that revealed the resurrection (from the 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 annual paschal fast, as old as the paschal feast, gradually grew to two, six or more days
- **Pentecost**: the "great fifty days" following the Pascha were one great joyous feast without fasting or kneeling (these being penitential acts, unbecoming the feast), concluding on Pentecost
- **Saints' Days**: martyrs feast observed on the anniversary of death, mainly by local Church communities in the place where they died

Fourth century (300–400): texts fixed and feasts developed, especially after Constantine's Edict of Toleration in 313

- **Epiphany**: developed in the East, and from there came to Gaul, Spain and Northern Italy
- **Lent**: developed out of the paschal fast and the period of final preparation of the catechumens for baptism during the night of Pascha
- **Christmas**: developed first in reaction against Arianism and pagan sun worship, around 336
- **Advent**: first mentioned in Gaul a generation after the establishment of Christmas, but seen as a time of preparation for Epiphany baptisms
- **Holy Week**: developed around the holy places of Jerusalem, and spread, copied or adapted in other countries by Christians returning from pilgrimage
- **Pentecost and Ascension**: originally with a unitive focus on both the Lord's ascension and his sending of the Spirit (Pentecost) to end the 50-day Easter festival; toward the end of the fourth century the Ascension became a distinct celebration
- **Saints' Days**: martyrs from other places celebrated in local communities (after the persecutions ended); the dedication day of new church buildings observed as saints' feasts

Fifth to seventh centuries (400–700): further development of temporal and sanctoral cycles:

- **Evolution of Existing Feasts**: further development and modification of the fourth century celebrations
- **Marian Feasts**: originally one single feast in Rome (January 1, now restored in the universal calendar); February 2 (Presentation), March 25 (Annunciation), August 15 (Assumption), September 8 (Birth) came to Rome from the East

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 a single universal form of liturgy led to gradual extinction of local rites
Liturgical Year • Overview

- Sacramentary divided into pontifical, ritual and missal; breviary evolved
- Trinity and Corpus Christi (now the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ) established as feasts (A now-suppressed separate feast of the Precious Blood was established by Pius IX in 1849.)

Thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (1200–1500): reform and codification
- Sanctoral Cycle blossomed; Marian feasts developed further
- Missal, Ritual, Breviary spread by mendicant orders

Sixteenth century (1500–1600): Protestant and Catholic reformations
- Sanctoral Cycle cut back in Protestant and Anglican churches
- Fixed Form of Catholic Liturgical Year: lasted until twentieth century; fewer feast days; Sunday more prominent
- Council of Trent: missal (1570) and breviary (1568)

Seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (1600–1900): stagnation
- Martyrology issued
- Sanctoral Cycle reformed
- Holy Week Ceremonies simplified in smaller parishes
- Saints' Days multiplied, interfered with Sunday celebrations

Twentieth century (1900–1962): beginnings of renewal
- Sunday and Temporal Cycles given precedence (St. Pius X, 1913)
- Sundays and Weekdays of Lent restored (St. Pius X, 1913)
- 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)
- Rubrics of Roman Breviary and Missal revised, simplifying the calendar and the titles and number of feasts (John XXIII, 1960)
- Second Vatican Council opens (John XXIII, 1962)

Twentieth century (1963–2000 and beyond): the age of renewal
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: promulgated, outlining goals and directions of renewal and reform, December 1963
- Liturgical Year and Calendar revised, 1969
- Second editio typica of Roman Missal, (including fourth edition of General Instruction), additional feasts and celebrations since last edition, 1975
- Second editio typica of Lectionary, completes the 3-year cycle of readings for Sundays and solemnities of the Lord, 1981
- Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of Easter Feasts, revisions to Holy Week, 1988
- Confirmation of National Calendar for Canada, 1999

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Heartbeat of the Year

Sunday

Sunday is the original feast day of the Christian liturgical year, the heartbeat of the calendar (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 106). Standing in the forefront in some centuries, obscured in others, the Lord's day is the basis and the nucleus of the liturgical year.¹

Day of the Resurrection

Though 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 chose to appear to his disciples. Some of these Sunday appearances were: to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20.11-18), to Peter (Lk 24.34), to the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24.13-35), and to the apostles (Lk 24.36-49, and Jn 20.19-23). On the Sunday following the day of resurrection, 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

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Pentecost, celebrated on the first day of the eighth week after Passover, is the day when the Lord poured out his Spirit upon his Church, and called all nations to form the new Israel (2.1-41).

Day for Eucharist

The first day of the week has been observed since New Testament times as the day of the breaking of the bread: an early homily for the Sunday eucharist (a long one by Paul) is recorded in Acts 20.7-12. In 1 Cor 16.2, Paul urged the Christians of Corinth to set aside alms for the poor of Jerusalem, on the first day of each week, presumably at the weekly eucharist.

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 AD.²

Fulfilment of the Sabbath

The early Church held that, by his rest in the tomb on the Saturday after his crucifixion, Christ has fulfilled the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath. For Christians, the Sunday gathering for the eucharist replaced the Sabbath observances. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his letter to the Magnesians, describes Christians as those who keep the Lord's day, not the Sabbath.³

Moving from the Jewish Sabbath, which was primarily a day of rest, to the Christian Sunday, the early Church placed 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 eucharist 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 were more recent relics of such attitudes.

The true rest and liberation, of course, is from sin, not from work. (The baptismal commitment to die with Christ to sin and to live with him for God binds each Christian.) 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.

Many Meanings, Many Names
Throughout its history the Church has had many names for Sunday.

First Day of the Week
"The first day of the week" was the normal Jewish name for the day following the Sabbath, which was the seventh and final day. Mentioned often in the New Testament (see above), the phrase "the first day" also names the day of creation, the day when God is described as beginning the work of making the universe (Gen 1.16). This theme is developed further in the early Christian use of "the eighth day" as another title for Sunday, the first day of the new creation in Christ.

Lord's Day
This most enduring and descriptive title for Sunday is found in Rev 1.10. The same Greek word, kuriaké (Lord), 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. The eighth day takes us beyond perfection (which is symbolized by the number seven), beyond time into a unique dimension. A new age, a new day has dawned, one that knows no evening. Risen in baptism with Christ, and seeking the things that are above, Christians cast off sin and live with Christ for God. With the Lord, they work to manifest a new creation, and with the Spirit, to renew and recreate the face of the earth. This day will end with the final or second coming of the Lord in majesty and glory, presumably, also on a Sunday.

As the eighth day, 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 glorious 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. As “light of the world”, Christ is the risen Sun, and Sun of righteousness.

Day of Joy
According to the account in Genesis 1, after each of the days of creation, God saw that everything created was good. We, the royal priesthood of his visible creation, rejoice in the world God has created, and we offer praise on behalf of all creation, 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 God wants to shower upon us, and to work to develop those already given us for the life of the world.

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 that follows the present time. 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 Pentecost, our Easter season.

Ordinary Time
Helping 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 and parish liturgy committees. Experience tends to remind one of Moses, always faced with people wandering off on 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 feast of the Baptism of the Lord and the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday; the other follows Pentecost, and lasts until it is time for Advent to begin again.

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.
Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter season, Pentecost: 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 stational masses on certain Sundays and feasts. Alcuin, an English monk who served as liturgical advisor to Charlemagne, 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 the celebrations of Holy Week. In about 950, the Church at Mainz wove the old and new rites together into a form that came into use in Rome and elsewhere.

Then, from the time of Gregory VII in 1073, Rome began once more to exert leadership in liturgy. When the Council of Trent ended in 1563, it left to the pope the work of reforming the liturgical books. The missal of St. Pius V in 1570 is based on the first printed edition of 1474. Before that, massals were always copied out by hand. The 1474 edition of the missal uses the same text as in the time of Innocent III (1198–1216). With this first printed edition of the missal, Pius V established the texts that 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 cohesion or connection among 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 that were not saints' days.

**Problems**

Over the centuries, both before and after Trent, several 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 considered to be of high rank, many saints' feasts, external solemnities and octaves also replaced the Sunday mass. By the time of 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. Pius XII and John XXIII reformed the rubrics in 1955 and 1960.

**The Reform**

In 1963 Vatican II called for proper respect for the status of Sunday, and stated that Sunday is the nucleus and basis of the liturgical year (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 106).

Several major points should be noted about Sundays in Ordinary Time in the present liturgical books:

- **One System**: Thirty-four formulas cover the Sundays of Ordinary Time that follow Epiphany and Pentecost.
- **Three Years**: The Sunday readings are in a three-year cycle.
- **Three Readings**: The first reading, from the Old Testament, is chosen for its relationship to the gospel text, and the responsorial psalm is related to the Old Testament reading. The second reading is independent, being chosen from a semicontinuous reading of the New Testament.
Testament books; if it happens to relate to the other texts of that Sunday, it is by chance.5

• Prayers: A 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.

• Character: The main theme of the Sundays is always the paschal mystery, which unfolds through the semicontinuous 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 colour to these cycles.

• Replacing Ordinary Sundays: A number of Sundays in Ordinary Time are replaced by permanent feasts (Baptism of the Lord, Trinity, Christ the King), by solemnities, or by feasts of the Lord when these occur on Sundays. Epiphany, Ascension, and the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, which in the general calendar are holydays of obligation, are transferred to Sunday and celebrated as solemnities in countries where there is no obligation (e.g., Canada).

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 same gospel passages, also chosen from semi-continuous texts, are used in every year. There is no attempt to relate the first reading to 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; it may choose the various mass prayers from the thirty-four formularies, from the masses for various needs, or from the votive texts. Six weekday prefaces, five solemn blessings and a variety of prayers over the people are also provided.

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. The primitive feast Pascha (ancestor of our present Paschal Triduum or Easter Triduum) developed in the latter half of the second century, and became the occasion for the baptism of catechumens.

The season of Lent evolved from the final preparation of catechumens for their baptism at the Easter Vigil. It 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 the form of present day celebrations of Holy Week and the Triduum.

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

Overview of Primitive Pascha

In Rome, a celebration of the death and rising of Christ—beyond that of the normal Sunday—began 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 a commemoration of the Lord’s passion distinct from the Easter Sunday celebration of the resurrection was unknown until late in the third century.

First-Century Development

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

Did Pascha, the annual celebration of the passover of Christ 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 (“our paschal lamb, Christ”), 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 Developments

Several elements seem to have brought about the establishment of the Pascha at Rome.

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 passover at an all-night vigil ending in a memorial meal or agape. This feast is to be celebrated annually 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 community at least.
Irenaeus states that the Church in Asia Minor, which was centred around Ephesus, celebrated the Pascha on the 14th day of Nisan on the Jewish calendar (the date 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; the eucharistic breaking of the bread replaced the Passover meal. Because this practice was dated according to the lunar calendar, this meant 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; moreover, in some years the fast might be observed on a Sunday, which the rest of the Church never did.

The popes from Sixtus I to Anicetus (i.e. 115–166) did not permit Rome or other Western Churches to follow this Eastern custom. Anicetus 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.
Pascha
Established at Rome
From the fact that Justin the martyr makes no mention of the Pascha in his writings (circa 150), and from Irenaeus' comments to Pope Victor (189–199) with regard to the Quartodeciman controversy, it would seem that the celebration of the Pascha was begun in Rome by Pope Soter (166–175).

The Roman practice was rooted in the Asian ("Quartodeciman," from the Latin for the 14th day [of Nisan]) custom, but severed the feast from the strict observance of the lunar date, choosing instead to preserve the link between Sunday and resurrection. It also avoided the two previously mentioned 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 at a very early time because of the sacrament's connection with the death and rising of the Lord Jesus.

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 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
The paschal fast consisted of a total fast. The duration of the fast has varied in different times and places: 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 that Saturday was observed as a fast day; and this Saturday fast was more important than Friday's (in contrast to today's norm, under which the Good Friday fast is to be prolonged, where possible, through Holy Saturday until the vigil). Further developments on Good Friday and Holy Saturday are described under Triduum.

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:** This festival was an annual commemoration of Christ's passover (death ending in victory), and came at the end of a solemn paschal fast. It consisted of an all-night vigil celebration, during which baptism was celebrated, concluding 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, 20–23.)

- **Sunday:** On the other hand, Sunday was a weekly gathering for the eucharist, without fasting, vigil or baptism. It was a celebration of the resurrection (without ignoring the passion).

Third- and Fourth-Century Developments
During the third century the paschal fast stretched 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 required that Christians not eat any food at all, except in case of great necessity. This extended observance led gradually to two developments in the fourth century: Lent grew out of the fasting; Holy Week and the Triduum celebrations developed from the efforts of the Church at Jerusalem to hold special celebrations for pilgrims during the fast.
Overview of Development

For the past sixteen centuries Lent has been seen as a yearly time of renewal among the people of God, a period of grace, a time for sharing more fully in the paschal mystery of the Lord Jesus. It developed out of the period of final preparation for catechumens. By the time of Sixtus III (432–440), Lent was a time for preparing the catechumens for their baptism, the penitents for reconciliation, and all members of the Church for salvation. The Second Vatican Council describes Lent as both a time of recalling baptism or preparing for it, and a period of repentance (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 109).

Period of Final Preparation for Catechumens

Rome

Apostolic Tradition

Hippolytus described the Roman practice around 217. After being carefully screened, candidates were admitted to a three-year period as "hearers of the word." As well as attending their own sessions 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), participation in which is the privilege of the baptized members of the community.

Sometime before the Easter of their baptism, their lives were examined again. Following this examination of life, they were separated from the rest of the catechumens who were not ready. 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 yet (II, 20:1–4).

Later

In the fourth and fifth centuries, a three-week Lent was the time of preparation for Easter baptisms. On the Sundays of this three-week 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 third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent, using the same important readings of water, light and life.¹

Jerusalem

At the beginning of Lent in Jerusalem, those who wished to enrol for the three-year catechumenate were examined and received. (This rite has now been restored in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.) In 348, Cyril, then a presbyter, was appointed to do the final preparation of candidates for baptism. He gave some twenty instructions over a period of time, concluding a few days before Easter. Forty-five years later, after the Holy Week rites had developed under Cyril's rule as bishop, a Lenten period of eight weeks had evolved, and the catechumens received three hours of instruction per day for seven weeks. The final week of Lent was reserved for the celebrations leading up to Easter.

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 the practice was dying out; according to Gregory the Great (590–604) reconciliation was mainly a matter of a deathbed confession. Eventually though, the theme of repentance was extended to all the faithful as one of the main thrusts of the Lenten season.

¹ Lectionary 28, 31, 34; Sacramentary 75, 82, 89, 436–438; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 21–26, 152–182.
The problem of the reconciliation of penitents seems to have arisen in the time of Constantine with the end of the persecutions. 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 following 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 at some time on Holy Thursday, in order that they might take a full part in the Paschal Triduum.

In the sixth century, this reconciliation was celebrated during 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 completely, the concept of cleansing being transferred to the church buildings, which were washed and cleaned on this day in preparation for the paschal feast.

Present-day penance celebrations in the closing days of Lent may be seen as a remote successor to this ancient practice of the reconciliation of penitents. The sacrament of penance should not be routinely scheduled once the Triduum has begun, except in cases of serious pastoral need.

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 actually strengthened the life of the Church; the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians. A vital liturgy and a long, meaningful catechumenate helped to maintain the Christian way as a vibrant 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, which had been a three-year process, was abbreviated to be totally encompassed in the six weeks of Lent.

As Christianity became easier, its fervour faded. Two things remained to counteract this tendency: monasticism, a new movement of the Spirit that called believers to a more fervent way of life, and the practice of Lent as a period of prayer and fasting in imitation of Christ's 40-day fast.

Lent Today

The Lenten masses in the sacramentary and lectionary form a rich liturgical experience inviting us each year to celebrate "this joyful season," and 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 communal and individual penance, and for celebrations of the word (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 109–110, 35.4).

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 actual length varied. The tradition of not fasting on Sundays was maintained by all; some also did not fast on Saturdays. Some Churches had six weeks of six days (Rome), some eight weeks of five days (Jerusalem). In Rome, the 36 days were seen as a

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2 Tertullian, Apology, 50.
4 Preface for Lent 1.
“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), a pre-Lenten period arose. Pope Hilary, who succeeded Leo, added 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 that week was included in the pre-Lent season and “Quinquagesima” (named for the five weeks before Easter) was thus established. “Sexagesima” (six weeks) came into being at Rome during the sixth century and “Septuagesima” (seven weeks) around the time of Gregory the Great.

- Enrolment of Penitents: Persons wishing to be reconciled solemnly on Holy Thursday were enrolled in the order of penitents at the beginning of Lent—at first on the Monday after the first Sunday, later on the Wednesday before. The name of the day derived from the ashes with which they were sprinkled as a sign of repentance. The present rite on Ash Wednesday brings out the penitential aspect of the day quite clearly.

### The Closing Days of Lent

#### Names

The final week of Lent has been called by many names. Some of these include Holy Week, 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, even though, strictly speaking, Lent ends when the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins. This means that the week commonly called Holy Week actually straddles the end of Lent and the beginning of the Triduum.

#### Origins

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 in order to re-enact the events of the final days of Jesus’ life on earth.

### Blossoming

Once Constantine had made it possible for the Church to worship openly, he also built churches in Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. With Sunday no longer a workday, liturgy could be pursued in a leisurely and unhurried manner. Pilgrims went in great numbers to the holy places, and naturally came to expect something special in the way of liturgy, particularly at the time of great feasts. (Compare this with tourists today going to Rome for the first time during the current holy jubilee year.)

### Historicization

In Jerusalem, the unitive paschal feast began to be divided 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 in Jerusalem in a form quite recognizable today. By suiting the 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 and Triduum. The enthusiasm of pilgrims and the zeal of believers in general soon led to its liturgical establishment in other parts of the Christian world.

Much of our knowledge of the Holy Week at Jerusalem comes to us from a Spanish nun, Egeria, who took part in the ceremonies during the closing years of the fourth century. Her descriptions have come down to us in the form of a traveller’s diary, and are clarified by the Armenian lectionary, which indicates the exact texts used at Jerusalem when Egeria was there.

#### Passion Sunday

This day carries two traditions: it is a celebration of the Lord’s triumphal entry into

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Jerusalem (Palm Sunday); it is also the opening of the final week of Lent, a time 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 celebrations are “normal” and the people are invited to take part in the special daily celebrations, which begin that afternoon. At 1:00 PM the people assemble with the bishop on the Mount of Olives for a liturgy of psalms, hymns and readings. At 3:00 PM they move higher up the hill to a shrine at the place of the Lord’s ascension, for a similar liturgy. Around 5:00 PM they listen to Matthew 21 (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.

Later

Since that time, various elements have been part of the liturgy of Passion Sunday:

- **Triumphal Entry**: Though the original event most probably took place in the fall, at the feast of tabernacles when people customarily carried branches and sang hosannas, all the gospel accounts have placed it just before the passion; John (12.1,12) dates it five days before the Passover.

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

In the middle ages, a solemn procession often went through each city, carrying lights, banners and incense, with stops (stations) at important points. Unveiled in triumph, the procession is also a reminder that Christ was present among his followers. The (liturgical) book of gospels (Rome, 11–12th centuries) or the blessed sacrament (England) was also carried in the procession as a further reminder of this presence in this procession. Red vestments were usually worn.

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

- **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. Beginning at the time of Leo the Great in the fifth century, until the Vatican II reform, the passion according to Matthew was read on Passion Sunday.

A custom of the three-part singing of this gospel, which has now died out, 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 ritual was done during the fourth week of Lent. The restored Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has now transferred the presentation of the creed to the third week of Lent, after the celebration of 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; the mass texts that follow become more sombre as we give our attention to his passion, through which he saves us and brings us to share in his glory. However, the triumphant spirit never diminishes.
Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week

Fourth-century Jerusalem
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. In addition to gathering for the usual celebration of morning prayer, the clergy and people assembled in the afternoon for a liturgy of hymns, psalms and antiphons, readings with prayers between them, and the lamp-lighting ritual. Processions and further prayers and blessings made the afternoon a full one.

Developments in Rome
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 reading of 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, the reading of the passion narrative throughout the Holy Week liturgy was arranged according to the following schedule: Palm Sunday – Matthew, Tuesday – Mark, Wednesday – Luke, Good Friday – John.

The present lectionary has arranged the synoptic narratives in a three-year cycle for Passion Sunday, and assigns John's account to Good Friday in every year.

Holy Thursday: the Last Day of Lent

Names
The first thought that comes to our minds about Holy Thursday is that this is the day (or evening) that commemorates the Lord's Supper: whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are proclaiming the death and rising of the Lord, until he comes again in glory (1 Cor 11.26, Memorial Acclamation III). However, Holy Thursday itself is a day of preparation for the Triduum, not part of it. First known as the Thursday in the last week of Lent (Augustine, 400), the Thursday before Easter, or Paschal Thursday, this day was later called the Thursday of the Lord's Supper, or the 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).

First Observances
When Holy Week was emerging in Jerusalem in the latter half of the fourth century, the Thursday celebration did not stress the Lord's Supper as we might expect. When Egeria describes the Holy Thursday observances in Jerusalem around 395, her writings provide us with a picture of a "marathon for the Lord." The day includes the regular morning prayer liturgy of Lent, an afternoon liturgy at 2:00 PM (a mass at which, it seems, no one communicates), and a visit to the church near the site of the crucifixion, including eucharist with communion. After a quick trip home for supper, the people gather again at 7:00 PM for an all-night vigil at the Mount of Olives, followed by a move to a second church at midnight, a procession early Friday morning to Gethsemene, and concluding at the place of the crucifixion.

Purification
Purification and cleansing from sin have been a constant theme on this day of preparation for the paschal celebration.

Bathing
Around the year 217, Hippolytus points out that catechumens making final preparation 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.

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Washing of Churches and Altars
The early Church did not celebrate eucharist every day. By the seventh century, however, mass was celebrated on each of the days in Lent. Good Friday and Holy Saturday, two days without mass, provided a suitable opportunity to prepare for the Easter celebration by a thorough spring-cleaning and washing of altars, walls and floors; in preparation for this, the altar cloths were removed. In medieval England the formal ceremony of stripping and washing the altar was quite elaborate. The present practice of stripping the altar on Holy Thursday evening and leaving the altar bare on Friday and Saturday are reminders of this custom.

Reconciliation of Penitents
In the Roman church, during the fourth to sixth centuries, those who had enrolled as penitents at the beginning of Lent were formally reconciled within 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.

Blessing Oil
Chrism and the Oil of Catechumens
The blessing of oil during the Easter Vigil celebration is described by Hippolytus in the early third century. Following the blessing, each person is exorcised, then anointed with the oil of exorcism (oil of catechumens). Next, the person is plunged into the baptismal waters, and anointed with the oil of thanksgiving (chrism). Having dried and dressed, the newly baptized return to the assembly in the church where the bishop anoints each of them again 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 and the full celebration of eucharist.

The blessing of chrism has always been reserved to the bishop. As local communities grew and other parishes were established, the blessing of oils was moved to Holy Thursday during the last eucharist 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.

In the early middle ages, however, the practice of having only one mass on this day meant that both the blessing of oils and the eucharistic procession took place in one overloaded celebration. In 1956, the separate Chrism Mass was restored; this may be celebrated on an earlier day near Easter.

Oil of the Sick
The New Testament records that Jesus sent his followers to anoint the sick (see Mk 6.13; Jas 5.14). Hippolytus gives a prayer for blessing the oil that will be used by the sick, both by tasting of it and by using it externally. This prayer of blessing and the blessings of cheese and olives, take place after the eucharistic prayer.

In 457, Pope Leo the Great speaks of the blessing of the oil of the sick on Holy Thursday. Even as late as the ninth century in Rome, the people brought their own containers of oil for this blessing, and took them home to their sick. The Church of Milan did not bless the oil

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8 Apostolic Tradition, II, 21.
9 Ceremonial of Bishops, 275.
10 Apostolic Tradition, I, 56.
of the sick on Holy Thursday until the eleventh century.

In 1973, the reformed rite for anointing the sick returned—at least on some restricted occasions—to the Eastern practice of permitting the priest to bless the oil during the celebration of the sacrament of anointing.\(^\text{11}\)

**The Chrism Mass Today**

The 1970 sacramentary considers the Chrism Mass as the commemoration of the institution of the priesthood, with 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. Experience has shown, however, that this shift in emphasis, brought on by turmoil within the presbyterate in the 1960’s, has created its own problems and has, in fact, weakened the bond between this celebration and the Triduum rites of initiation that it anticipates. We might look forward to a corrective balancing in future revisions of the sacramentary.

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**Triduum**

**Day One:  
Day of the Lord’s Death (Good Friday)**

The first day of the Triduum has been called by various names. Among these are the 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 for the day, Good Friday, expresses the Church’s positive attitude toward the full paschal mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection.

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, rather than as a completely separate feast. Although Hippolytus describes a practice of personal prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day connected with events of the Lord’s passion, the first three and a half centuries of Church history knew nothing about Good Friday as a distinct feast.\(^\text{12}\)

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11 See *Pastoral Care of the Sick* 21–22, 75; also 123, 140, 248, (Ottawa: CCCB), 1983.

12 See above, “Pascha.”
James II was the last to actually wash the feet of the poor, the tradition of giving "Maundy money" is still carried on by Queen Elizabeth II. Though the rite eventually became the task only of bishops and abbots, it has now been restored to the entire Church as part of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper in each community.

**Procession and Reposition**

The procession and reposition arose from the practice of reserving the consecrated elements for a communion rite on Good Friday. Communion from the reserved sacrament inside the church is first mentioned in Constantinople in 615, when it took place on most Lenten weekdays. When the practice came to Rome, it was adopted for Good Friday only, and at first with both species reserved.

**Celebration of the Lord's Passion**

First Beginnings

**Jerusalem**

In the second half of the fourth century, the Church at Jerusalem devised an elaborate series of celebrations for the week preceding Easter. On Friday morning, as previously described for Holy Thursday, the all-night vigil ended with a procession from Gethsemane to the place of the crucifixion. From 7:00 AM 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. Soon they all went to the nearby cathedral for prayer, then 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 all that night at the church of the resurrection.

**Rome**

Until the seventh century, the Roman Friday celebration consisted only of readings and prayers. It is certain that in the fifth century the passion according to John was being read. As described below, it was a day without mass; general communion from the reserved sacrament was first introduced in Rome in the seventh century.

**Historical Elements**

Various elements have come together to make up the present Celebration of the Lord's Passion.

**A Day without Mass**

Good Friday and Holy Saturday were days of absolute fast and 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 1 (402-417) notes that the Church abstains from celebrating the sacraments on the Friday and Saturday before Easter. These days without eucharist lead to the great eucharistic celebration at the end of the Easter Vigil.

During the seventh century, the Roman Church adopted an Eastern form of celebration, called the "Mass of the Pre-sanctified," for use on Good Friday. The celebration began with a procession in silence, two readings, the passion according to John (read by one deacon), and the solemn prayer. The relic of the cross—or simply a 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 presider placed a particle of reserved sacrament in a chalice of wine, and all received communion in silence. The custom of

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communion by all on Good Friday, begun in Rome in the seventh century, gradually died out in the middle ages and was actually forbidden by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1622. In 1955, Pius XII reintroduced communion for all from the reserved sacrament at the Good Friday liturgy.

Liturgy of the Word

From the seventh century until 1969, Hosea 6.1–6 and Exodus 12.1–11 were read in the Roman liturgy. John's passion has been proclaimed on this day since the fifth century.

The Solemn Prayers

The Roman custom was to have a solemn prayer of the faithful following the reading of the passion. The form in which it has been handed down to us seems to have been the normal form of the general intercessions in ancient times, rather than something special for this day. Each of the nine prayers was begun by the presider's invitation and a pause for silent prayer; this was followed by a collect sung by the priest. (Some scholars suggest that the extended invitation ("Let us pray for ...") was the normal way of introducing a collect; the present sacramentary has reintroduced this practice for the alternative opening prayers.)

Veneration of the Cross

The Jerusalem ceremony of veneration described by Egeria was adapted as part of the celebration in Rome following the solemn prayer. At some distance from the altar (there were no pews), two acolytes held the cross. At the celebration in Santa Croce church, this was a relic of the true cross, in other churches an ordinary cross. A kneeler was placed in front of the cross, and the pope, presbyters, deacons, other clerics, and people came up in order and kissed the cross. During the act of veneration, Psalm 118 was sung with "Behold the wood of the cross..." as an antiphon. The unveiling of the cross before the veneration was introduced at a later date.

The Reproaches

The reproaches developed in Spain or France (Gallican communities) around the ninth century; they were not adopted in Rome until the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The singing of the misagion ("O holy God"), originally in Greek and Latin, came to this Gallican liturgy from the East.

Tenebrae

This special morning office of matins and lauds (now known as the office of readings and morning prayer respectively) was celebrated solemnly in the final days of Holy Week. Until the reforms of 1955, when the liturgical celebrations were restored to their proper hours, tenebrae (darkness) was celebrated on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in anticipation of the following day (in other words Thursday's office on Wednesday evening, and so on).

Being an earlier, more primitive form of the office, it was free of later additions that appear in the monastic office. Matins had three nocturns of three psalms and three readings with their responses. Lauds, with five psalms and the canticle of Zechariah, followed immediately. As each psalm was sung, one candle on a special stand was extinguished; 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 ritual speaks of how the powers of evil and darkness seemed to have overcome the powers of good when Jesus was crucified, yet God's plan is fulfilled and evil is conquered by Jesus' saving death and resurrection.

Other Practices

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

- Penitential Acts: All 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: In some communities the altars were washed on Friday instead of on Holy Thursday.
- 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 fasted until this rite was over.

After several invitations to pray for pardon, the congregation repeated the acclamation “Indulgentia” (pardon) 300 times. After a prayer, the bishop led a brief litany, and the people made their acclamation after each line. Another prayer followed; then the people cried out their acclamation 200 times. Following another litany, prayer and psalm, they repeated the acclamation 100 times. After another litany, the veneration of the cross began.

Later Developments of Good Friday

As the Good Friday liturgy moved gradually to a morning hour, and general communion was no longer part of the rite, many communities filled the vacuum with various popular devotions.

• **Easter Sepulchre**: In England and parts of continental Europe, there was a practice of re-enacting Christ’s burial by “burying” the cross used during the veneration on Good Friday afternoon or evening. Some communities also “buried” the blessed sacrament along with the cross. The sepulchre, which was decorated with curtains, was either a permanent or a temporary structure somewhere inside the church. After a procession, the tomb was incensed and then closed. A lamp burned before it. People kept watch until Easter morning, when the cross and the blessed sacrament were carried back in a procession of joy and resurrection.

• **Tre Ore**: As noted previously, the early Jerusalem Church celebrated a three-hour liturgy from noon to 3:00 PM. A similar practice was common throughout Europe in recent centuries. One form of it was observed in this manner: the priest placed the crucifix on the altar; then began a liturgy of prayers, meditations, or sermons on the seven last words of Christ (sometimes by several preachers), and finally concluded 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 events of legendary origin. 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 could make do with this devotion. The number and nature of the stations varied—some churches had up to 37!—but gradually the number was 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 since 1731 stations have been permitted in ordinary parish churches.

In 1976 the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship recommended that the traditional stations be revised to follow more precisely the biblical account of the passion and to include the resurrection. The revised list is as follows:

1. The Last Supper (Lk 22.15–20)
2. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26.36–38)
3. Before the Sanhedrin (Mk 14.53–55)
4. Before Pontius Pilate (Jn 18.28–30)
5. The Whipping and Crowning with Thorns (Jn 19.1–3)
6. The Carrying of the Cross (Jn 19.16–17)
7. Simon of Cyrene (Mk 15.21)
8. The Women of Jerusalem (Lk 23.27–31)
9. The Stripping and Crucifixion (Mt 27.33–35)
10. The Second Thief (Lk 23.39–43)
11. Mary and John (Jn 19.25–27)
12. Death on the Cross (Jn 19.33–34)
13. The New Sepulchre (Mt 27.57–60)
14. The Resurrection (Lk 24.1–3)
Good Friday Today
The present arrangement of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion has taken 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 content of the liturgy.

Paschal Fast
The Church has restored the paschal fast. On the two days before Easter, the Church of God fasts in order to honour 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 only kept on Saturday, and later was extended back to Friday. Now it is 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 Sacred Liturgy, 110).

Liturgy
The Celebration of the Lord's Passion was restored to the afternoon by Pius XII in the 1955 reform of Holy Week. The celebration is normally to be held at 3:00 PM.

• Opening Rite: A procession in silence—the only such entrance in the year—begins the celebration of the Lord's passion. The presider wears red mass vestments, as on Passion Sunday—a sign of the paschal mystery of the king of martyrs. After prostration or kneeling for silent prayer, there is a simple opening prayer.

• Liturgy of the Word: Two readings—Christ as both the suffering servant (Is. 52.13–53.12) and the high priest who saved us (Heb 4.14–16; 5.7–9)—lead to the proclamation of the passion according to John. The general intercessions are sung in their solemn form and conclude the liturgy of the word. The present rite includes ten general intercessions. In case of special public need, the bishop may add a special intention. After the presider's invitation to prayer, the deacon or cantor (or, if necessary, the presider) 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 presider sings the collect prayer. This method is followed for each of the ten intentions.

• Veneration of the Cross: Several options are provided for the veneration. The various elements of this ritual are easily recognized in the Jerusalem and early Roman practices.

• Communion: General communion has been restored to this celebration, following which the assembly disperses. The altar is then left bare until the Easter Vigil. The rest of Friday and all day Saturday are to be times of retreat, recollection, prayer, and fasting.

Day Two:
Day of the Lord's Entombment
(Holy Saturday)
In the Eastern Church, Holy Saturday is known as Great Saturday. Both these names have been in use since the fourth century. Until Pope Pius XII restored the Easter Vigil, we were really unable to see Holy Saturday in its correct perspective. The celebration of the first mass of Easter on the morning of Holy Saturday, and the ending of Lent at noon, made it difficult to appreciate this special day in the Church's liturgy. Now, as in the time of 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.

Day of Retreat, Fasting, and Prayer

Holy Saturday is not a day for shopping or TV or the usual weekend activities, but a day of preparation for the solemn Easter Vigil. The people of God remain in retreat and recollection at the tomb of the Lord, meditating on his self-giving for the life of the world: salvation does not come to us through our own action, but through God’s free and loving gift of grace (Eph 2.8).

Throughout this day, the faithful are invited to continue the solemn paschal fast that they began on Good Friday. It is a day of quiet, meditation, prayer and possibly even acts of charity and solidarity, to prepare us for the joy of the eighth day, the day of the Lord’s glorious resurrection. Local communities would do well to restore the celebration of the liturgy of the hours as a normal part of the prayer life on this day.

Day without Eucharist

The altar remains bare and undecorated from the end of the Good Friday liturgy 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

Holy Saturday is the day of final preparation for the elect 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 hands on them and performs exorcisms. He breathes on the elect and seals their foreheads, ears and noses. This is their preparation for the all-night vigil.

• Seventh-century Rome: On this day, the elect recite the “Apostles’ Creed” before the priest. They are exorcised and anointed with the oil of catechumens. The “ephpheta” rite of this day opens their ears to hear God’s word. The elect then renounce Satan with the triple formula that precedes the modern renewal of baptismal promises.

• Present: The newly restored Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults recommends that the elect, too, spend the day in prayer, recollection and fasting, and refrain from their usual work. If the elect are gathered on Holy Saturday, they may celebrate some of the preliminary rites: giving back the creed, the “ephpheta” rite, and an anointing with the oil of catechumens. 16

Day Three: Day of the Lord’s Resurrection (Easter Sunday)

Through his paschal mystery—his death and resurrection—Jesus Christ redeemed the world 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 celebration 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 also 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 Easter Vigil reaches its climax in the eucharistic banquet, where we celebrate the Lord’s victory over sin and death by dining at his banquet table.

15 Apostolic Tradition, 11: 20, 78.
16 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 172–197.
Easter Sunday is a continuation of the paschal celebrations: the Paschal Triduum concludes at evening prayer. At the same time, Easter is the beginning of the fifty days of joy for the Church of God.  

**Ancient Vigil: Third-century Rome**

The traditional manner of celebrating the Easter Vigil is clearly described for us by Hippolytus.

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

At cockcrow, prayer is offered over the water flowing through the baptismal tank, which is in a place 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 elect strip off all their clothes. Then each candidate renounces Satan and is anointed with the oil of exorcism by a presbyter. The presbyter places his hand on the person, who steps down into the water. Next the presbyter asks for the triple profession of faith and each is baptized by immersion, the children first, then the men, and finally the women.

A presbyter anoints them all with the oil of thanksgiving. Each one dries off and dresses; then they all go to the church, where the bishop lays hands on each, prays over each one, and anoints each on the forehead with the oil of thanksgiving, and 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. At last, the offerings are brought and the eucharist is celebrated. At communion time, after receiving the bread of life, they receive from three cups: water, milk mixed with honey, and finally the precious blood.

**Restored Vigil: 1955 and Beyond**

Before Pope Pius XII restored the Easter Vigil in 1951, this mass was celebrated on Saturday morning, even though its texts referred to night and darkness. Celebrated at first on an experimental basis for five years, the Easter Vigil became the cornerstone for the renewal of both the calendar and the liturgy that we have experienced since then. In 1955, the entire Holy Week liturgy was renewed and included the restored Easter Vigil as its climax. Revised and simplified during the 1960’s, the Easter Vigil in the present sacramentary contains four main parts: the service of light, the liturgy of the word, baptism and confirmation rites, and finally the liturgy of the eucharist. These parts of the liturgy are better understood when seen in 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 lamplighting ritual and the Johannine symbolism of light and darkness, the service of light was gradually developed and elaborated. In the fourth century, Constantine had the entire city of Rome illuminated on this night. St. Patrick is said to have lit the paschal fire on the hill of Slane.

**The Easter Candle**

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 indicates knowledge of the rite, it

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17 See *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 102 and 106; *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, 18–21; and introduction to the Easter vigil in the sacramentary.

18 *Apostolic Tradition*, II: 20–23,
did not actually come to Rome for many centuries. The Spanish rite includes the blessing of both a lamp and the Easter candle on this evening as far back as 633. The five grains of incense and the practice of having the deacon carry the candle in procession are mentioned in the Ambrosian rite in the twelfth century. In England, the paschal candle was decorated with flowers and inscriptions, including the date. At Westminster Abbey, the candle used in 1557 weighed 300 pounds.

**The Easter Proclamation**

The *Exsultet* or Easter proclamation was used by the Gallican rite in the seventh and eighth centuries, and eventually entered the Roman missal.

**Liturgy of the Word**

The reading of the word of God—with psalms/canticles and prayers between the readings—has always been the basic and most important element of any vigil celebration. The Easter Vigil has retained this central element. During the centuries and in different rites, the number of readings has varied from four to twelve. The present Roman rite has nine readings for use during this night: seven Old Testament readings (before the “Glory to God,” which marks the boundary between the vigil of readings and the mass itself), followed by Romans 6.3-11, and the resurrection gospel according to the three-year lectionary cycle.

While the prayers after the Old Testament 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 Liturgy of Baptism**

**The Litany of the Saints**

At present, the Roman rite has placed the litany at the beginning of the baptismal rites. In ancient times the litany of the saints, sung while the bishop or priest was going to bless the font and celebrate the baptisms (in a separate baptismery, not in the main part of the church) provided an opportunity for the rest of the congregation to invite the whole communion of saints to participate in the great celebration that was about to unfold in their midst.

In the old Spanish rite, where there was no litany, the bishop left to bless the font during the third reading, and the congregation remained in the church for the rest of the readings and canticles!

**Baptismal Water**

In the first half 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 was modelled on the Greek eucharistic prayers. The present prayer concludes with an acclamation by the people.

St. Ambrose mentions the signing of the water with the sign of the cross in the fourth century. 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 Gallican rite used chrism in preparing the baptismal water.

**Baptism and Confirmation**

As long as adult initiation was the norm, baptism was followed immediately by chrismation or confirmation, and led to immediate first sharing in communion at the table of the eucharist—even if the candidates for initiation were infants. This sequence was restored in the post-Vatican II Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

**Baptismal Promises**

During the early middle ages, when baptism and confirmation were no longer celebrated at this liturgy, the scripture readings and the blessing of the baptismal water concluded with the litany of the saints, which ended with the “Lord, have mercy.” This in turn led into the mass. A similar format was used in the 1950s.

Today, the renewal of baptismal promises is one of the prime goals of the Lenten period; the work of prayer and penance during Lent leads the believing commu-
nity to an appreciation of Christ's victory feast at Easter Vigil. There the renewal of their baptismal promises is an emphatic conclusion to the baptismal rites. 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.

Liturgy of the Eucharist
As already described above, the eucharist that concluded the Easter Vigil celebration marked the end of the paschal fast. In the middle ages, the vigil mass, which had gradually crept back to Saturday 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), rather than vespers, as its conclusion.

Today 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 of bread and wine for eucharist to the altar. The liturgy of the eucharist has no omissions or changes from the usual Sunday liturgy and all are invited to receive communion, preferably under both forms.

The prayer after communion, which refers to the "Spirit of love," evokes the essentially unitive character of the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord and his sending of the Holy Spirit. A proper solemn blessing is provided in the sacramentary.

Mass during the Day
The mass during the day on Easter Sunday continues the celebration begun in the vigil mass, the first eucharist of Easter. Originally, at Rome, the eucharist concluding the all-night vigil was celebrated after cockcrow (about 3:00 AM); there were no other masses on Easter Sunday. As adult baptisms became rarer and the Easter Vigil seemed of lesser importance, a proper mass came to be celebrated on Easter 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 rite of sprinkling with holy water—taken from the font—as a reminder of baptism, may be used at the beginning of Sunday mass at any time of the year.)

In general, this eucharist is to be celebrated with full solemnity and multiple jubilant alleluias. Certainly this eucharist, like the Mass of the Lord's Supper and the Easter Vigil eucharist, is an occasion in which all should share in communion under both species.

Easter evening prayer closes the Triduum. Communities are encouraged to gather as evening falls, to make a solemn conclusion of the paschal feast.

The Great Sunday:
Fifty Days of Joy
Though Luke/Acts presents a clear calendar of events—Jesus died on Friday, rose on Sunday, ascended forty days later and bestowed the Spirit on the fiftieth day after Easter—the early Church reflected the reluctance of John to celebrate these different aspects of the paschal mystery as separate events assigned to separate specific days. Until the fourth century development of Holy Week, every Sunday 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.
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"): 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 early Church kept the feast of the Lord’s passover.

Early Christians appropriated the name of the Jewish harvest festival, Pentecost, which coincided with the Christian paschal festival. Pentecost means fiftieth day, implying a single day. In earlier Jewish tradition the day marked the end of a lengthy festival (begun with the day of Unleavened Bread) rather than a separate feast with distinct content. However, the separateness of the day—with a focus on the renewal of the covenant and giving of the law, rather than on the end of harvest—was beginning to emerge even in contemporary Jewish thought, as evidenced in the Qumran material. 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 (signs of penitence) were forbidden and the Church rejoiced: “Alleluia!” was their constant song. The entire season was seen as a celebration of Christ’s triumph over death, his exaltation and his gift of the Spirit to the Church.

When the fifty days were fulfilled, the Pentecost 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 marking the end of the season by honouring the Lord’s ascension and his outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

**Baptism and the Easter Season**

Since the time of Tertullian, the Easter season has been the occasion *par excellence* for initiation. It is intended by the Church to be a time of continuing growth in the baptismal spirit for the entire community. Together the faithful and the newly baptized 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 period of initiation is known as the time of mystagogia. The Church’s mystagogical activity is centred in the Sunday masses of the Easter season, especially the readings of year A.¹⁹

**Easter Octave**

The first week of the Easter season is an exuberant 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; the selections from the Acts of the Apostles describe the early Church’s preaching of the resurrection.

Thomas J. Talley relates the celebration of an Easter octave to John’s account of Jesus’ apparitions in the upper room a week apart (Jn 20.19–29).²⁰ In fourth century Rome, neophytes gathered throughout the week for mystagogical catechesis on the mysteries in which they had participated—still dressed in their baptismal garments. This led to the octave being called a week in *albs* (white garments). (At least in the Church of Hippo, this mystagogical activity attracted the whole community.) The newly baptized put away their baptismal robes and were integrated into the Sunday assembly at the end of the octave.

By the end of the fourth century in Milan, Spain and Gaul there were daily masses throughout this week; in 389 the whole week became a civil holiday.

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The Fiftieth Day

The idea of commemorating two aspects of Christ's redeeming work (ascension/exaltation and the sending of the Spirit/missioning of the Church) in this one day seems a little strange to today's Catholics, who tend to see their distinction rather than their unity. Yet we find a number of references to their unity in the practice of the early Church. Some examples:

- **Eusebius, 337**: When Constantine died on Pentecost Sunday, 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.

- **Egeria, 385**: Egeria notes that fifty days after Easter, on the Lord's day, the Jerusalem Church celebrates the coming of the Spirit and the Lord's ascension in two separate ceremonies, but on the same day.

Gradual Fragmentation

Separation into two 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, the fiftieth day, as the day of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, as well as the day that ended the joyful fifty-day paschal season. The day after Pentecost Sunday was the day for resuming the penitential practices of fasting and kneeling, both of which had been 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." Both Augustine and Leo the Great make 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.

There is evidence that Augustine and Leo the Great in the West, and Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom in the East, regarded the celebration of Pentecost Sunday as the feast of the coming of the Spirit—and therefore of the missionary origin of the Church—rather than the last of the great fifty days.

The link between Pentecost and Easter was maintained in that Pentecost became an alternative time for initiation, to such an extent that it even developed a vigil modelled on that of Easter. By the sixth century a preparatory fast on the preceding Saturday arose in some places. By the seventh century Pentecost had acquired an octave for mystagogical catechesis.

- **Ascension Thursday**: At first, the ascension was celebrated as part of the total paschal mystery (as it is still described in the Eucharistic Prayer I, for example). But by the fourth century, the ascension began to emerge as a separate feast. In 375, it was a distinct feast day in Antioch, mostly likely marking the fortieth of the great fifty days (Acts 1.1–11). This was to be the beginning of the fragmentation of the season, from which we have still not fully recovered.

In the 390's, it was observed in Brescia, Italy, and was preceded by three days of fasting—in the Easter season! These fast days became the rotation days. John Chrysostom and Augustine write as if Ascension had always been separately celebrated from the time of the apostles.

Just a few years after Egeria's visit to Jerusalem, in the opening years of the fifth century, the ascension celebration of Jerusalem, where the unity had been maintained longer than in many other places, was moved back to ten days before Pentecost, to what we now call Ascension Thursday.

Cassian indicates that people tended to want the whole of the Easter season festivity to end 10 days early; they had to be reminded to maintain the festive spirit until the true end of the festival at Pentecost. (Eventually, there did, however, come a time when it became customary to extinguish the Easter candle on Ascension Thursday.)

A specific feast of Ascension was accepted in Rome early in the ninth century. The final blow to the unity of the season had been struck.

### Vatican II Reform

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. They are Sundays of Easter, not after Easter. Nothing is to interfere with their celebration, and no feast—or devotional observance—is to replace them.
- **Weekdays**: Daily mass texts have been provided in the sacramentary and lectionary for each of the days in the Easter season, permitting a fuller, more consistent celebration of the paschal themes.
- **End of the Season**: The octave that had grown up around Pentecost (once it had been severed from Easter) was removed in the post-Vatican II revision of the calendar. Ordinary Time resumes on the day after Pentecost.

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Christmas Cycle

When we look at the development of Christmas and Epiphany in the light of the biblical infancy narratives, we are better able to appreciate the Church’s purpose in establishing these feasts. The first two chapters in Matthew and Luke are primarily theological in scope, rather than historical. The purpose of the narratives is not to give “facts of history” (like a school textbook) so much as to teach the meaning of Christ’s coming, to show who he is, to proclaim him as God’s Son, our saviour who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and expectations of God’s people.¹

In the liturgies of Christmas and Epiphany, the Church proclaims that the Son of God has become human to save us. This is the reason we rejoice: God has shown utter faithfulness to the covenant and will continue to keep the promise to our generation as to our ancestors in faith; our saviour has come and is to come again.

Epiphany and Christmas

In the early fourth-century Eastern Church, a celebration on January 6, called Epiphany, commemorated the Lord’s birth at Bethlehem, his baptism by John in the Jordan, and his first miracle at Cana. Obviously, it was a unitive feast, celebrating the incarnation/nativity and its revelation in the early life of Christ.

The celebration of Christmas on December 25 as the commemoration of Christ’s birth began in Rome around the year 336.

Both Epiphany and Christmas seem to have replaced pagan feasts of light connected with the winter solstice. Two developments in Christological thought contributed to the nature and development of both these feasts:

- **Theological Reflection**: the strong gospel image of Christ as the light that came into the world,²
- **Doctrinal Orthodoxy**: doctrines (dealing with the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ) enshrined in liturgical feasts to support anti-Arian declarations of the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon and Ephesus.

As the Eastern Church felt the influence of Rome more strongly, the various elements of the one feast were separated and celebrated individually.

The baptismal (re-birth) motif of Epiphany was so strong that, in the East, January 6 became a typical occasion for the celebration of the sacraments of initiation; some believe that Advent developed out of the period of preparation for initiation at this time. Certainly, between the fourth and sixth centuries in Rome, Advent evolved as a season of preparation for Christmas. The pattern of its development varied from place to place and is often difficult to trace with incontrovertible accuracy; yet it has generally included the eschatological dimension of his second coming. In fact, Advent in Gaul included penance to prepare for final judgement.

For a clearer picture, the three distinct aspects of the cycle are presented in the following order: Epiphany, then Christmas, and finally Advent.

² See especially Jn 1, 8, 11, 12.
Feast in the East

It is uncertain just when the Church in the East began to celebrate Epiphany, but it seems to go back to a time before the Council of Nicaea in 325 (that is, before Christmas was observed in the West). The observance probably arose as a Christian counter-festival in the face of pagan celebrations, perhaps the birthday of the god Aion, a date on which water was drawn from the Nile and stored away. The water motif of the Aion festival lends the occasion a natural affinity with the Christian baptismal motif (rebirth in water), as well with Jesus' transformation of water into wine at Cana, which was celebrated by Eastern Christians as part of Epiphany.

What is Celebrated?

The name of the feast means manifestation or unveiling. Through its observance God is praised for revealing God's self to the world in Jesus Christ. Certainly, the divinity of Christ is at the forefront of this celebration.

In its origins, the celebration was not limited to Christ's manifestation to the pagan world in the visit of the magi. At the centre of the feast have been a number of events that revealed God in Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnation, the birth of Jesus, the adoration by the magi, Jesus' baptism by John, and the miracle at Cana have each shared the role of serving as the focal point of the celebration of Epiphany in various combinations.

Date Chosen

The choice of January 6 for this feast seems to be based on the dating of pagan festivals.

- Solstice Festival: At Alexandria in Egypt, Petra in Arabia, Alusa in Palestine, and other places, the birth of Aion, a pagan god of time and eternity, from a virgin mother was being observed. Though the solstice was almost two weeks past by January 6, the date seems to have been calculated using 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, an additional water-motif festival was celebrated at this time of year when the Nile rose and irrigated the fields.
Festival of Dionysos: In Greece, January 5 celebrated the birth of the god Dionysos and involved springs of water that produced wine on his feast.

Fourth- and Fifth-Century Development

Different rates of evolution in this period of transition help to confuse today’s reader of liturgical history.

Syria: Ephrem, famous for his hymns, spent his last ten years in Edessa. He died there in 373. His writings include 19 Christmas hymns and 15 for Epiphany. The Christmas hymns speak of the adoration by the wise men as part of the celebration of Christ’s birth. In the Epiphany hymns, Christ is called the giver of light, and it is his baptism by John that is being celebrated as his manifestation to the world. The theme of the wise men is also part of the Epiphany hymns. Both Christmas and Epiphany hymns speak of the incarnation and baptism by John as a unitive event.

Jerusalem, 393–396: Egeria describes a festive 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 at all in Jerusalem at this time; the feast of Christmas is not established here until sometime between 424 and 458.

Bethlehem: Jerome, for the last 24 years before his 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.

Western Development

Epiphany is first mentioned in the West in Gaul and Spain in 360, where a three-week period of preparation for this feast began on December 17. However, when Julian the Apostate visited Vienne, Gaul, on the feast of Epiphany during his brief reign (361–363), Christmas does not seem to have been celebrated there. Even as the Roman Christmas (celebrating the incarnation) penetrated Gaul, Spain and Northern Italy, it would seem that the wise men, the Lord’s baptism and Cana remained part of the Epiphany feast. For example:

Northern Italy, late 4th Century: celebrates the visit of the wise men, the baptism in the Jordan and the transfiguration on Epiphany, with the incarnation being celebrated at Christmas.

Spain, late 4th Century: celebrates the visit of the wise men and the holy innocents on Epiphany.

Gaul and Northern Italy, 5th Century: Epiphany involves the visit of the wise men, the miracle at Cana and the Lord’s baptism.

Africa: In the mid-fourth century, the adoration by the wise men is part of Christmas. However, at the beginning of the fifth, Augustine addresses the wise men theme as part of Epiphany, (although the Donatists are complaining that this is an Eastern innovation).

Rome, mid-5th Century: Leo the Great preaches only on the wise men in his Epiphany homilies.

Spain, 7th Century: Isidore of Seville mentions that Epiphany still celebrates the wise men, the Lord’s baptism and Cana.

Epiphany and 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; however it is known that Gnostic Christians did observe the baptism of Jesus on January 6 with an all-night vigil back in 120–140.

Constantinople: Gregory Nazianzen speaks of Epiphany as the day when Jesus purifies the waters of the Jordan by his baptism (380–381). On the following day, Gregory speaks about baptism and the benefits it brings us.
Epiphany's theme of light is appropriate to the motif of enlightenment or illumination in the final stage of the preparation of catechumens.

- Asia Minor: Gregory of Nyssa describes Epiphany as the day of the Lord's baptism and the day when the sacrament of baptism is celebrated.

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

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 (and any other baptismal associations) 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 would 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 and of the nations; he is born before all ages; he is the light and saviour 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:

- **Morning Prayer:** “Today the Bridegroom claims his bride, the Church, since Christ has washed her sins away in Jordan’s waters; the Magi hasten with their gifts to the royal wedding; and the wedding guests rejoice, for Christ has changed water into wine, alleluia” (Antiphon to the Canticle of Zachary).

- **Evening Prayer II:** “Three mysteries mark this holy day: today the star leads the Magi to the infant Christ; today the water is changed into wine for the wedding feast; today Christ wills to be baptized by John in the river Jordan to bring us salvation” (Antiphon to the Canticle of Mary).

The short reading at this celebration (Titus 3.4–5) is part of the second reading at the Mass at Dawn 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.

- **First Sundays of Ordinary Time:** Gospel accounts of the Lord’s baptism and the Cana event on these Sundays continue to link these events to Epiphany.
Emergence in the West

While less complicated than Epiphany, the history of the celebration of the Lord's birth has gone through several stages in its development. 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 celebrated at the winter solstice—December 25 at that time—when the sun's power stops decreasing and begins to increase or be reborn, and the days get longer once more. This feast was called Natalis (solis) invicti, the birthday of the unconquered sun. In addition, during this period, the sun-worshipping religion of Mithras, the Persian sun god, was strong 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 that seem to be involved in the establishment of Christmas include:

- Countering Paganism: a festival in honour 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. In fact, the establishment of Christmas may also be 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 overshadow and eliminate pagan rites.

• Countering Heresy: emphasis on the incarnation, celebrating the Nicene doctrine in a most practical and tangible manner.

The spread of Christmas throughout the West progressed 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.

• Africa: In the fourth century, Christmas also included the wise men, but by Augustine's time, this was the theme of a separate celebration of Epiphany.

Christmas in the East

Within generations after it began in Rome, the feast of Christmas moved into the East, resulting in a breakdown of the unitive Epiphany celebration. Certainly, 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.

As the Eastern Church felt the influence of Rome more strongly, the various elements of the one feast were separated and celebrated individually. A few examples will describe the process:

• Syria, 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, 380: Gregory Nazianzen has to explain clearly the distinction between the meaning of Christmas and Epiphany. On December 25, he preaches the meaning of Christmas both as the theophany (God come to humanity in Jesus) and as the birthday of our Lord. This is the day Christians glorify the incarnate Lord along with the shepherds and angels, bring him gifts with the wise men, and proclaim him with Simeon and Anna.

Just days later, on Epiphany, 381, he calls that feast "the holy day of lights," celebrating the baptism of Christ, the light of the world.

The added doctrinal motivation for establishing two separate feasts is evident from the fact that the city had just been released from 40 years of Arian leadership in 379.

• Asia Minor: Gregory of Nyssa (Nazianzen's contemporary) preaches the same distinction.

• Antioch, 386: At Pentecost, John Chrysostom mentions Epiphany—celebrating Christ's baptism, the revelation of the appearance of God among us in human flesh in his Son—as the first Christian festival in the year, followed by Pascha and Pentecost.

Just months later, in December of that same year, Christmas is celebrated for the first time as the feast of the incarnation and birth of Christ and the adoration by the wise men. He mentions that Christmas was ancient in the West, and that it had been known in Antioch for about a decade, though not celebrated up to this time.
Epiphany (or Theophany) is, from this point, celebrated as the day of Christ's baptism, when he was publicly manifested and sanctified the waters.

• The Apostolic Constitutions (late fourth century) also mentions this distinction between these two feasts.

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

• Jerusalem, 424–458: Christmas was established, but fell into disuse a century later, only to be reintroduced again in the third quarter of the sixth century.

Christmas Masses
The three masses now 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 celebrated at the winter solstice.

• Shepherds' Mass: The Mass at Dawn was the second mass to develop, and was celebrated at St. Peter's from the end of the fourth century. For a while, circa 550 when the Byzantine court resided in Rome, this mass gave way to that of St. Anastasia, an Eastern martyr whose feast was observed on December 25 before the East developed Christmas. Later, the Shepherds' Mass was restored, with a simple commemoration of St. Anastasia that survived until recent calendar reforms.

• Mass during the Night: This celebration is the newest of the Christmas masses. About the middle of the fifth century, Pope Sixtus III inaugurated this celebration, apparently in connection 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). By this time, the theme of the feast had fully evolved from a holistic celebration of the incarnation (336) to a more detailed celebration of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Christmas and the Paschal Mystery
Throughout the Church year, we celebrate God's gift to us in Christ. The fact that Jesus is saviour is always presented, for it is by his death and resurrection that he saved us. Some guidance in understanding the paschal dimension of the Christmas cycle is provided by the prefaces of the season for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany: Jesus is the pivotal point in God's eternal plan of salvation. The incarnation and birth of Christ prepared the way for the paschal mystery and made it possible. 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).
Feasts within the Cycle

Mary, the Mother of God
From the time of Julius Caesar's reform of the civil calendar, January 1 has been observed as the first day of the new year in the western world. The Church in Rome celebrated its only Marian feast, the Natale Sanctae Mariae, on this day in the fifth century. The feast of the Circumcision arose in Spain and Gaul on this date in the sixth century, because of the tendency to historicization, seeking to turn the liturgical year into a biographical tour of Christ's life. In seventh century Rome, the Marian feast faded in the shadow of the feasts of Annunciation and Assumption, and it became simply the octave of Christmas. January 1 was restored as the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God in the 1969 reform of the general calendar.

Holy Family
This feast was established in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII who assigned it to the third Sunday after Epiphany. It is pastoral rather than liturgical in origin and is meant to highlight the value and dignity of the family as a societal unit. Having undergone two other moves since that time, it is now celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas (or on December 30 if no Sunday is available between December 25 and January 1).

In 1981 the feast was granted a full three-year cycle of readings. The gospel passages for the feast are: the flight into Egypt and the subsequent return from exile, the presentation of the Lord in the temple, and the family's Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old.

Advent

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 the season of preparation for these feasts.

Advent is not limited to preparation for the celebration of the Lord's birth. From the beginning, Advent has been eschatological, reminding us of our redemption and of the second coming of the Lord Jesus in power and majesty.

First Development
The season of Advent developed in the Western Church. In the second half of the fourth century, Hilary of Poitiers (Gaul) makes the earliest mention of a three-week preparation for the coming (adventus) of the saviour and leading to the celebration of Epiphany. It was, therefore, apparently considered as a time of preparation for baptisms at Epiphany, similar to Lent. Opening on December 17, this early Advent gave a Christian parallel 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 liturgical and disciplinary preparation.

Evolution of Meaning and Practice
In the fifth century, Pope Leo the Great (440–461) was keeping the eschatological viewpoint prominent in his December "ember day" sermons, encouraging his people to look forward both to the coming of the saviour at Christmas and to the final day when the Lord will come again.

By the end of that century, Gaul was moving toward an even more Lenten approach, with a six-week (40-day) Advent. In 490, Advent began on November 11, Martinmas, and went to Epiphany. In the
first half of the sixth century, Caesarius of Arles supported a 40-day fast, as in Lent (thus called “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, Rome seems to have had a five-Sunday Advent: the Sunday before Christmas was vacant because of a Saturday night vigil mass for ember week ordinations. The December ember days in Rome had begun before either the feast of Christmas or the season of Advent had come into the liturgical calendar.

In a way it could be said that a five-Sunday Advent survived until 1969: the Sunday before Advent was quite similar in its readings and prayers to the first Sunday of Advent. The current lectionary, too, presents eschatological themes in the final Sundays of Ordinary Time that make a smooth transition to those of the beginning of Advent.

Beginning of the Liturgical Year?

The earliest liturgical books used the civil year (January–December) as the starting point for a Church calendar. Some began with Christmas (closest feast before January 1), others with Epiphany. Since about the tenth century, it has been customary to place Advent in the liturgical books before Christmas—thus making it the beginning of the year—with an emphasis more on Christ’s first coming than on his second coming, the parousia.

Advent Today

• First Sunday: The second coming of Christ. This Sunday continues the eschatological theme of the final Sundays in Ordinary Time, which 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 cry, “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, as well as movement toward Jesus’ earthly ministry.

• Fourth Sunday: Abandoning the former readings about the Baptist, this Sunday has adopted the Ambrosian rite’s emphasis on nativity motifs. It is an obvious prelude to the birth of the Lord with Marian references in both the lectionary and sacramentary texts.

• Weekdays: A similar development is seen. 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.

Meaning of Advent Today

This season is not now penitential in tone and was never considered a time for the solemn reconciliation of penitents as Lent has been. The main concern of Advent is to help the Christian community to banish worldly preoccupations in preparation for a fuller celebration of Christmas, to enable recognition of the incarnate God present today in our midst, and to awaken a deeper longing for the second coming of the Lord.

3 Before the reform of the calendar, Christ the King was celebrated on the last Sunday of October. The Sunday before Advent was simply the last (twenty-fourth) Sunday after Pentecost.
Sanctoral Cycle

It Began with the Martyrs

The Seed of Christians

Jesus laid down his life for the life of the world, that all might live and enter his glory. He warned his disciples that the reward for following him could be hatred, persecution and death (Mt. 24.9). Martyrdom, the giving of one’s life as a witness to the Risen Lord, is recorded in the New Testament for Stephen and James, and is hinted at for Peter. By the time the book of Revelation was written, the blood of many Christian martyrs had been shed; Revelation spoke of their reward in order to strengthen those who had yet to suffer.

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. Records in the second century tell us that some local communities were already celebrating their local martyrs with 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 the martyrs” began in 258 when Sixtus II was martyred on August 6. (His seven deacons, including Lawrence, died four days later.) Rome honoured its martyrs with 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 the anniversary of their death (their “birthday” into heaven).

Confessors, Ascetics, Virgins and Bishops

Confessors

The term “confessor” (of the faith) is applied to those who survived the great persecutions but had suffered torture, imprisonment, or forced labour at the hands of the persecutors. Hippolytus and Popes Pontian (251) and Cornelius (251) are among this group.

Ascetics

In the latter half of the fourth century, ascetics—those who had, in the words of John Chrysostom, “mortified and crucified their bodies”—were considered to also share the crown of the martyrs. Among these are included Anthony (Egypt, 356), Hilarion (Palestine, 371) and Basil (Cappadocia, 379).

Virgins

The term “virgin” is applied to those who bore witness to the faith, in the words of Methodius of Olympus, “having persevered in the struggle to be chaste.” Virgins and other holy women (who were

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1 “The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.” Tertullian, Apology, 50.
2 John Chrysostom, Epist. ad Hebraeos homiliae 2, 3 (PG 63:93).
not martyrs) were honoured as local heroes but were not added to the calendar until the sixth century. Macrina (sister of Gregory of Nyssa), Sabina (Rome), Genevieve and Radegundis (Paris) were among these.

**Bishops**

Although many early bishops were also martyrs or ascetics, several bishops’ names were simply moved from a local obituary list onto the calendar of saints. Pope Sylvester (335) appears to be one of these.

**Further Development of the Sanctoral Cycle**

**Martyrologies**

By the fourth century, when persecutions ended, churches could be built at the martyrs’ tombs. Initially, only local martyrs, not those from other Churches, were celebrated. Various communities began to exchange the feasts of local martyrs and to celebrate those who were martyred elsewhere.

Pilgrimages to various martyrs’ churches and the building of new churches in their honour led to the export of relics, despite the protests of various popes. The Philocalian calendar of 354, in which is found the first mention of the feast of Christmas, lists nineteen anniversary celebrations for people martyred and buried in the area around Rome, as well as two feasts of African martyrs. Also included are two patronal feasts: St. Peter’s Chair, February 22 (based on the pagan practice of a family meal on this date in memory of deceased relatives, with an empty chair representing the presence of the departed), and the feast of Peter and Paul, June 29, (celebrated as the anniversary of the transfer of their bones to safety during the violent persecution of 258).

Lists of the various celebrations were known as “martyrologies.” A number of martyrlogies, listing local martyrs, still survive from the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Gradually, compilations appeared—gathered from various sources and places in the East and West—listing all the known martyrs for each day of the year. Different Churches would copy these lists, adding local saints and founders of local monasteries or Churches. Later revisions added other feast celebrated on fixed dates, as well as feasts on which the relics of saints had been transferred to the area. By the eighth century, monasteries had begun the custom of announcing the list of saints for the following day from the martyrlogies.

Later martyrlogies began to add short stories or eulogies about the martyrs. Bede the Venerable, who died in England in 735, wrote a classic martyrlogy, but left many blank days. Several ninth-century writers added other dates and celebrations to his work. Tenth-to sixteenth-century martyrlogies included many legends that the invention of the printing press spread 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 earlier part of the twentieth century contained errors and the names of saints whose existence appears questionable.

**The Calendar of Saints**

Alcuin’s arrangement of the sacramentary (circa 800) assembled a votive sacramentary based on the Roman calendar of feasts, adding only a few local celebrations. No saints’ days were to be 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 had reserved the process of canonization to itself, yet many more saints continued to be added. Pius V reduced the number of feasts to 130 in 1570, but each century after added more. In 1570 Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, suppressed all feasts
in Lent, including March 19 (St. Joseph) and 25 (Annunciation), for the Churches of the Ambrosian rite.

In response to the Vatican Council's teaching on the liturgical year, the universal calendar was revised and *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* was published in 1969 and updated in 1975. Some of the principles the new calendar seeks to maintain are the prominence of Sunday as the original feast day of the Church, the centrality of Easter within the year, and the importance of the temporal cycle over the sanctoral cycle. Many feasts of local interest (memorials) are to be celebrated only by Churches, nations or religious orders with particular devotion to them. Only feasts of universal importance are 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. Local feasts should not be duplicates of others, nor may they be increased out of proportion.

The current 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 and those based more on legend than on fact.

The new *National Calendar for Canada* includes our national patrons: Joseph (solemnity) and Jean de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues and companions (feast); the patron of the province of Quebec, St. Anne and her husband Joachim. Marguerite d'Youville (Les Soeurs Grises [Grey Sisters]) and Marguerite Bourgeoys (Congrégation de Notre-Dame) are Canada's canonized religious foundresses; Marie Durocher (Religious of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary) and Marie-Léonie Paradis (Little Sisters of the Holy Family) have to date only been beatified, but have already been given a place on our national calendar. Three bishops have been beatified and placed on the calendar as well: François de Laval (apostolic vicar for Canada; established the Seminary of Quebec), Eugène de Mazenod (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) and Louis-Zéphirin Moreau (diocese of St. Hyacinthe). Others who have been placed on the calendar as models of faithfulness to Canadians include: Marie of the Incarnation (Ursuline), Catherine of St. Augustine (Hôtel-Dieu of Bayeaux), Dina Bélanger (Sisters of Jésus-Marie), Kateri Tekakwitha (patron of aboriginal peoples), André Bessette (Congregation of the Holy Cross, St. Joseph's Oratory), Frédéric Janssoone (Friars Minor, shrine of Cap-de-la-Madeleine). The day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is now to be celebrated as a feast throughout the Americas.

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5 The liturgical calendar for Canada is published each year by the CCCB. Contact: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Publications Service, 1-800-769-1147 or publi@cccb.ca.
In History

Mary's Place in the Church

The Vatican Council pointed out the important place of Mary—always, of course, in relation to her Son, our Saviour—in the annual celebration of the full mystery of Christ. She is honoured as "the most excellent fruit of the redemption" and as a model of what the Church is and wants to become.6

Both East and West have long venerated Mary as the mother of God (theotokos). January 1 was celebrated as 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 called St. Mary Major, being the most important Marian church in Rome—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. The dedication of the church is still observed on August 5. Since the sixth century, the Christmas midnight mass in Rome (the last of the three to be composed) has been celebrated at this station church.

Eastern Influence on Western Marian Feasts

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.
- **August 15, Assumption**
- **September 8, Nativity of Mary**

These four feasts replaced the other two Roman Marian celebrations on January 1 (see above) and 18 (observed in Gaul as the feast of the "deposition" [burial] of Mary).

Marian Votives

Alcuin, who edited the sacramentary for Charlemagne, included two votive masses for each day of the week, including two masses in honour of Mary on Saturday. The custom of such masses in Ordinary Time ("Our Lady's Saturday") continues in the present calendar.

Vatican II Reform of Marian Celebrations

Even before the Council, there was a clear recognition of the need to focus on the Christological content of certain Marian feasts. In 1960, February 2 was recast as a feast of the Lord and January 1 was restored as the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Thirteen feasts of Mary are now observed in the universal calendar. The 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.  

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6 See Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 103; Constitution on the Church has a whole chapter (52–69) on Mary, the mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and his Church; her veneration in the liturgy is described in 66–67.
Pastoral Resources for the Liturgical Year
Planning the Liturgical Year in Your Parish
Liturgical Musicians Association, Toronto

There never seems to be enough time. Choosing music, decorating the church, updating the parish, training ministers, drawing up schedules, choir practices, rehearsing the readings, rehearsing special rituals, and so on and so on. The work of liturgy preparation can leave us exhausted and frustrated. Especially if we’ve left it to the last minute. Here we offer some help for the “organizationally challenged.”

The Annual Planning Meeting
Choose a full day in early fall (mid-September) when the liturgy committee and the coordinators of each liturgical ministry group, if these are not already members of the liturgy committee, are available. This group should include: parish clergy, the director of music and/or other music group leaders, head lector, coordinator of ministers of communion (within the liturgy as well as to the sick), head usher and head greeter, coordinator of altar servers, chair of the decorating committee, etc. Full representation is crucial to ensure co-operation with the plan and to maximize intelligent input and discussion. Inform people of the date and length of the meeting well in advance to make attendance easier and to allow people to find a substitute if absolutely necessary. Invite other parishioners to prepare lunch and refreshments for the group; this builds community and shows the group, whose work is often unnoticed, that the parish appreciates their efforts.

Getting Started
Have ready a large calendar chart (perhaps several pages posted on the wall) on which has been marked the seasons of Advent and Christmas (through to the Baptism of the Lord), and Lent, Triduum and the Easter season (through to Pentecost). The pastor should have on hand a parish events calendar to prevent conflicts with other groups.

Step #1: Preparing the Festive Seasons (45 min.)
Together the group should decide a date when planning for Advent/Christmas must begin and who will be needed to do the planning. Be sure to mark all this information on the calendar. A date in mid-October is not unreasonable. Do the same for Lent/Triduum/Easter. Since Ash Wednesday is sometimes in early February, planning may have to begin as soon as possible in January. Remember to list other groups whose work impacts on the liturgy or the observance of the seasons, so that coordination with them can begin in good time. Next, schedule review meetings after each season when memories are fresh, to evaluate what happened, what to keep and what needs to be done differently next year. Keep detailed written records of exactly what was done, when and by whom, as well as the post-season evaluation. This makes preparation easier next year.
Step #2: Training Liturgical Ministers (60 min.)

You will notice that Ordinary Time occupies a much greater portion of the year than do the special seasons and is therefore deserving of at least as much of the committee’s time and energy as the special seasons. Problems that plague us in Ordinary Time—poorly-trained ministers, a bored or reluctant assembly, inadequate space or furnishings—lie in wait to explode in our face during the special seasons. Lacklustre liturgy during Ordinary Time sends out a strong message that only the “special” matters. If we have a C & E (Christmas and Easter) liturgy committee, we can expect C & E congregation. Regular choir practices and lector practices should be scheduled and marked on the calendar, as well as special rehearsals for the special liturgies. Each ministry also needs its own workshop day for reflection, in-service, and practice. Ministries may take this day together or each ministry may gather on separate occasions. Decide on these dates, as well as who will coordinate the day(s) and who might be the presenter(s) for each day. Mark all this information on your calendar. (Begin to contact guest presenters immediately!) Next, schedule review meetings after each event, when memories are fresh, to evaluate what happened, what to keep and what needs to be done differently next year. Keep detailed written records of exactly what was done, when and by whom, as well as the evaluation. This makes preparation easier next year.

Step #3. Renewing the Sunday Liturgy (60 min.)

If liturgy is to blossom in your parish, the liturgy committee will have to do an assessment of the state of liturgy in the parish, prioritize needs and draw up an action plan. On this pre-planning day, target an area of concern and lay out a time line for effecting change. September–October is a good time to assess. In September, agree to do some reading to get in touch with the Church’s vision of the Sunday celebration. Then do an “I-am-a-camera” study of what really goes on in your parish. In October, after a comparison of the vision and the experience, list what change is needed and what is necessary to achieve the desired change. State your goals clearly so you can tell if they have been met. Be sure not to bite off more than you can chew! Set goals one small step at a time—small enough to (virtually) guarantee success. Otherwise, you may become discouraged and lose the confidence of parishioners. Mark dates for these sessions on your calendar. If the liturgy committee does all its work as a committee of the whole, time is at a premium and progress will be slower. You may want to delay work on an action plan until the period between the end of the Christmas season and Ash Wednesday. Mark a date for this session on the calendar. If seasonal preparation and workshop design are assigned to different sub-committees, the process becomes easier and may be carried out at monthly meetings throughout the year.

Step #4: Recruiting Liturgical Ministers (30 min.)

Recruitment and training of new ministers is essential to the liturgical life of every parish. Successful recruitment requires advance preparation and diligent follow-up. Advertising should begin about a month before sign-up day and make use of every communication medium available. Candidates should be contacted with regard to inserviceing either by phone or by mail within a week of sign-up. Dates for sign-up Sunday and training sessions should be marked on the calendar immediately.

Step #5: Educating the Parish (30 min.)

Part of the work of renewal and change is educating the parish-at-large. In light of the action plan, examine the calendar and
determine when this is possible. Mark proposed dates on the calendar, decide who will coordinate the effort and list possible presenters. Next, schedule review meetings after each season, when memories are fresh, to evaluate what happened, what to keep and what needs to be done differently next year. Keep detailed written records of exactly what was done, when and by whom as well as the evaluation. This makes preparation easier next year.

This may sound like an awful lot of meetings. But remember that more than one issue may be addressed at a single meeting, especially if a timed agenda is established and circulated in advance and if everyone agrees to stick to the agenda. Not everyone needs to do everything if your committee is large enough. Make use of sub-committees. People won’t mind meetings so much if they are well-organized, productive and efficient.

Canada has the honour of hosting World Youth Days 2002 and preparations are already underway all across the country. Fortunately, we have a wonderful up-to-date resource on hand for use in schools, parishes and dioceses as they prepare for this privileged time.

Youth at Worship will be a valuable resource in the liturgical formation of youth in preparation for 2002. If you or someone you know is preparing special youth events, let Youth at Worship be the first resource you consult.

Topics covered in Youth at Worship include:

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• Hospitality
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Sunday

• **Sunday is the Lord’s Day**
  Whenever we think about our faith, we see the important place that Jesus Christ holds in the history of the world. All time, in fact, is measured as before and after Christ.

  That is because Jesus passed through death to resurrected life and ascended to the life of glory in God. And because, even now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Lord draws the world into his own passage to the Father.

  It was on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead. This was the day of his victory, and ever since then Sunday has been known as the Lord’s Day.

• **Our Sunday Celebration**
  In last week’s bulletin, we saw why Sunday is called the Lord’s Day. It is the day on which Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father as the Spirit-filled Lord.

  It is for this reason that, from the beginning, the Church has gathered in full assembly on this day. We gather to praise and thank the Father for the passage—the victory—of Christ.

  Yet, there is even more to the Sunday eucharist than that. For it is the Lord himself who gathers us together, and through our sharing at his table in his body and blood, we make passage with him and experience communion of life in God.

• **Our Sunday Journey**
  The passage of Jesus through death to glorious life in God opens the way for the whole world to follow him; the eucharist is the sacred meal, given us by Christ, that achieves just that.

  The Second Vatican Council put it this way: “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 8).

  Life for us, then, has become a journey. We travel together, step by step, from Sunday to Sunday, on our way to the fullness of life in God.

• **Celebrating Life**
  It’s true of all of us that we sometimes miss the moment and we sometimes miss the joy.

  This is especially true of the Sunday eucharist. It’s easy to see it as simply an obligation: We have to go to mass on Sunday; or to see it as simply an opportunity to pay our respects to God.
But if we see it for what it truly is—the most important event in our lives, the one that draws us into the passage of Jesus and wonderful life in God—then our hearts will be filled with joy. And that joy will stay with us throughout the week and colour the whole of our lives.

Advent

• **First Sunday of Advent**
  Something special happens today. It's the beginning of a new liturgical year. Yes, our new year begins today! That's important for us to know, because it reminds us who we are as Church. We're the people of the journey. We're a people who travel together to the fullness of the kingdom of God. Let's try to capture in our hearts the energy, excitement and joy of the journey. Today's gospel reminds us to stay awake, to keep our eyes open to what God is doing in our lives.

• **Second Sunday of Advent**
  No one ever said it was an easy matter—travelling together to the kingdom of God. Mostly, it's hard to keep our focus. There are just too many distractions, too many things to take us off course. That's why today's gospel urges us to listen to John the Baptist and "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"—in other words, to put distractions aside and pay attention to the journey at hand. If each of us does this, and if we all do it as a community, we'll be a sign to the rest of the world to do the same.

• **Third Sunday of Advent**
  How are we doing on our journey? Have we set aside the distractions that get in the way of travelling together to the kingdom? Good. Today the gospel takes us another step on our way. John the Baptist is in the picture again, but it becomes very clear that the focus must not be on him, but rather on Jesus himself. There's a lesson here for us. As we journey through this Advent season we need to fasten our attention, not on ourselves, but on the Lord. This week, let's do just that. He leads us on our way; his destiny is ours as well!

• **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
  In the background to today's readings is a people who have waited longingly for the Messiah. In this respect Mary stands for the whole of Israel. She sums up that longing in the fullest possible way. We ourselves live in the time of fulfilment, when the long-expected One has already come. But in our Sunday eucharist we express our own deep longing. We yearn for the coming of Christ more fully into our hearts. We yearn for the day when the whole world will live in him.

Christmas Season

• **Christmas**
  Christmas is a popular festival. Commercial hype and the vaguely religious figure of Santa Claus make sure of that. But we are the community of faith, and we know that Christmas is all about the birth of the Lord. For us, what really counts is the Christmas mass (Christmas = Christ-mass). We don't come together to listen to lovely music or to watch a splendid ritual. We come together to meet the Lord, who is God's great gift to the world, and to welcome him into our lives.
• Holy Family

The Christmas season includes a number of festivals that mark the arrival of the Lord. Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. The holy family is presented as a model for our own Christian families and for the Church as the family of God, and there is much for us to reflect on here. Beyond this, the feast really drives home the humanity of Jesus Christ. As John's gospel puts it: the Word became flesh and lived among us. In Jesus we see a God who stands in solidarity with us all.

• Mary, Mother of God

The solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is the Church's most ancient and most important festival related to Mary. It is also a major celebration of the Christmas season. It will be helpful for us to remember the intimate connection between Mary and the Church. Mary gave birth to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church, again through the power of the Holy Spirit, draws the world to the font of baptism and to a new birth and a new life in Christ. Mary is the model of the Church.

• Epiphany of the Lord

An epiphany is a manifestation or "showing forth." When the wise men from the East visit Jesus and present their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, Jesus is shown forth as Lord. With this in mind, we may say that every Sunday eucharist is a new epiphany of the Lord. As a community that shares the wisdom that comes from God, we come together on the Lord's Day and publicly proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ. Our gift is the gift of our lives for the glory of God.

• Baptism of the Lord

The feast of the Baptism of the Lord brings our Christmas celebrations to a close. Jesus' baptism is another manifestation of his real identity: the Son, the Beloved. At the same time, it marks the beginning of his public ministry and his journey to the fulfillment of his work. As we celebrate this feast, we too proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father. At the same time we join ourselves to Jesus in his public ministry and on his journey home.

Lent

For use in every year:

• Two Sundays before Ash Wednesday

Lent is just around the corner. That's right! [date] is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. Please mark this date on your calendar now. Let's keep Ash Wednesday free so that we can all come together and begin Lent well.

Lent is a special time for us as the family of God. In some parts of the Church it is called Great Lent, a title that shows just how important it is in our lives. The word Lent comes from the Old English lencten meaning spring. For all of us, the season of Lent is a spiritual springtime, a time of renewed life in the Spirit.

Let's make this Lent a genuine springtime in our lives. Let's roll up our sleeves and celebrate Lent in the very best way we can.

• Sunday before Ash Wednesday

This coming Wednesday [date] is Ash Wednesday, the day when we come together as a parish family to launch the season of Lent. What is Ash Wednesday all about? It is
the time when we begin our journey to the great three-day festival of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the celebration that is the heart and centre of the Church’s liturgical year. We call this feast the Paschal or Easter Triduum (“triduum” meaning a period of three days) or the Passover of the Lord.

The readings of Ash Wednesday are a clarion call to assemble as a people, a solemn announcement that this Lent is “the favourable time” of grace, a summons to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The words that accompany the imposition of ashes are a fine summary of our Lenten undertaking as a people: “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.”

Ash Wednesday is a universal day of fast and abstinence. Let’s give our Lenten discipline a strong start. Let’s begin to put our house in order so that we will be spiritually ready for the greatest feast of the entire Church year.

• First Sunday in Lent

The Sunday readings, and particularly the gospel, should be our spiritual guide as we make our way to the Easter Triduum, the feast of the Passover of the Lord. We should carry the Sunday gospel with us throughout the week.

Today’s gospel records that Jesus overcame the temptations in the desert. This gospel gives us confidence that we too, living in the Spirit and journeying together through the forty days of Lent, can overcome those things that continue to lure us away from a deeper communion with our God.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on what the spiritual issues are in our own lives. Once we identify them more clearly, we can subject them to the power of the Holy Spirit, who will draw us ever closer to the Lord.

• Second Sunday in Lent

Today’s gospel records the transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain. Peter, John and James were given a glimpse into Jesus’ marvellous life of glory. This life of glory is our destiny as well. In fact, through our celebration of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, we have already begun to share in this remarkable gift, and the annual festival that lies ahead of us draws us ever more deeply into that mystery.

Should we not, then, look forward to the feast with great expectation and joy? And should we not prepare ourselves to celebrate the feast with open hearts, so that the Lord may work his transforming power in our lives?

This week is a good time for us to reflect on the wonderful things that God does in our lives. This kind of reflection will help us all to set aside whatever stands in the way of our transfiguration in Christ.

For use in Year A:

• Third Sunday in Lent

Today’s gospel (John 4.5–42) records the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, an event that reminds us immediately of Christian baptism.

Part of this gospel reads as follows: “But the hour is coming, and is here now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
This is the way that we must approach the feast of Christian Passover. We need these forty days of preparation because this feast challenges us to give our lives fully to the glory of God. It challenges us to worship in spirit and truth.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on the quality of our participation in the eucharistic prayer. It is in the eucharistic prayer that we offer the gift of our lives for the glory of God. If we open ourselves to this prayer more fully from Sunday to Sunday, we'll be preparing in the best possible way for the coming feast.

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Today's gospel (John 9.1–41) records the encounter between Jesus and the man born blind. Jesus said to the man, “Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam.” The man did as he was instructed “and came back able to see.” Here is another image of baptism. Through our baptism, we became children of light; we were enabled to see in a new and marvellous way.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on our journey as people who live in the light of Christ. Do we recognize the presence of God, who “walks with us” from day to day? Do we recognize our community as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit? Do we recognize our common destiny, which is to live in God forever? Do we live our lives in the light of Christ?

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Today's gospel (John 11.1–45) records the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Once again we find an image of baptism. In baptism, we die and rise in Christ, we rise to new and everlasting life.

When Jesus first heard that Lazarus was ill, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Likewise, the new life that we have received through baptism should be a life that leads to God's glory.

This week is a good time for us to look at our lives from the point of view of God's glory. Do our lives really give glory to God? Are there “pockets” in our lives where we do not give glory to God?

For use in Year B:

**Third Sunday in Lent**

In today's gospel (John 2.13–25) we witness the dramatic cleansing of the temple by Jesus. He says to those who are selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

Jesus’ zeal for his Father's house is something that we can apply to our own lives and to our journey to the feast. We are the body of Christ and the living temple of the Holy Spirit; and we are the Father's house in the deepest meaning of that term. If we open our hearts to the Lord, he will work new wonders in our lives, cleansing us of everything that does not belong, and making us a more perfect dwelling place of God.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on our dignity as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. How can we open our hearts more fully to the presence of the Lord and the transforming power of the Spirit?
• Fourth Sunday in Lent
In today's gospel (John 3.14-21) Jesus says to Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Indeed, it is in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we encounter in an astonishing way the immeasurable love of God for the world.

Of course, believing in Jesus means adhering to him with the heart, following him where he goes. This is the real significance of our Lenten journey. We walk with the Lord toward the feast of Passover, where we become one with him in his dying and rising and his communion of life in God.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on God's enduring love for us and for the whole of the world. This kind of reflection, taken deeply into the heart, will sustain and strengthen us on our journey to the feast.

• Fifth Sunday in Lent
In today's gospel (John 12.20-33) Andrew and Philip approach Jesus on behalf of some Greeks who are eager to see him. This becomes the occasion for Jesus to speak about his impending death and glorification.

At the end of the gospel passage Jesus says, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension is for the sake of the world; it opens the way for all people to follow him, to be gathered into his own glorious life in God.

This week is a good time for us to reflect on the deeper meaning of our Lenten journey. We travel together toward the great three-day festival of Passover; within this feast the risen Lord even now gathers us into his passage through death to life, into his life of glory.

For use in Year C:
• Third Sunday in Lent
Choose life! In today's gospel (Luke 13.1-9) Jesus turns a report of disaster into an offer of new life. He does so by telling the story of a gardener who asks for time to bring a barren fig tree to full fruit.

Is this not what the Lord is doing in our midst along the Lenten journey to the feast? With the help of his word, we are bringing to light and digging out all that impedes our progress to fullness of life. Nourished by our sharing in his body and blood, we are growing in the communion of life to which we are called.

This is the way that we must approach the feast of Christian Passover. We need these forty days of preparation because this feast challenges us to live the new life we have been given in our baptism.

This third week in Lent is a good time for us to reflect on the quality of our life together in our parish community. Our lives have been bound together in the waters of the baptismal font. Do we take time to be together, to commune with each other? Do we use our time together to foster our community life?

• Fourth Sunday in Lent
We do not journey alone! In today's gospel (Luke 15.1-3, 11-32) Jesus is at his storytelling best. He describes the family of God: some of us find it relatively easy to walk "the way" of life; others get lost or become caught up in a death-dealing cycle of
Pastoral Resources • Bulletin Announcements

misadventure. No matter which son we identify with, we are all called to the feast, called to celebrate with the Lord. And our presence is treasured. Every meal of the Lord is a meal with sinners; 'twas ever thus.

This fourth week of Lent is a good time for us to reflect on our attitude toward those with whom we have been bound in the waters of the baptismal font. Do we look at this assembly with the eyes of love? Do we recognize everyone as a sister and brother in Christ? Do we treasure our life in the family of God?

• Fifth Sunday in Lent

Go on your way! Today's gospel (John 8.1–11) records Jesus' encounter with a woman who has been caught in adultery. Jesus opens the door to a new life for her. Her past has not condemned her; her future is up to her. As we get closer to the paschal festival, we, too, hear the words of Jesus, "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

This fifth week of Lent is a good time to reflect on how effective our Lenten effort has been. In what ways have we moved forward on the journey? What has really changed? How will our lives together after Easter Sunday be different from before Lent started? It's never too late to change, never too late to start again!

For use in every year:

• Passion (Palm) Sunday

Today's gospel is an account of the Passion of the Lord. The Passion signals the arrival of Holy Week and ushers in the last few days of our Lenten journey. Lent comes to a close when the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper begins. The time of preparation is almost over; the Easter Triduum is close at hand. As God's beloved people, let us use these last days well. And then, when they are over, let us celebrate the feast—from beginning to end—with all the spirit and power and joy that we possess. Let's make this year’s feast the greatest spiritual event of our lives.

Easter Sunday

For use in every year:

• Easter

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of the Church's proclamation of the good news of salvation. The risen Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God, and as Spirit-filled Lord he gathers the whole world into his own glorified humanity. This is the great mystery that we celebrate today and throughout the fifty days of Easter. This is the mystery that we share.

Easter Season

For use in every year:

• Second Sunday of Easter

The disciples were filled with fear. They had even locked themselves in their room. But when Jesus stood among them he said, "Peace be with you," and his presence calmed their fear. Thomas had a problem believing that it really was Jesus who was there. Today, when we break through our own "Thomas problem" and recognize that the risen Lord is our host at the Sunday eucharist, we too come to share his peace. We "rest" in our God.
For use in Year A:

• **Third Sunday of Easter**
  
  Jesus joined the two disciples as they walked to Emmaus. For a while they didn't know who he was, but their hearts burned within them as he interpreted the Scriptures, and, finally, they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. The same is true for us today. We meet him in the Sunday eucharist. He speaks to us in the word and he gathers us at table for "the breaking of the bread." Like the two disciples, do not our hearts burn within us?

• **Fourth Sunday of Easter**
  
  In today's gospel Jesus uses the images of shepherd, sheep, gate and sheepfold to explain why he has come among the people: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” All of this is played out in the Sunday eucharist. The Lord is the true shepherd and today he gathers us into the true sheepfold, which is the kingdom of God. It is at the eucharist, gathered securely and joyfully in the Lord, that we gain the abundance of life in God.

• **Fifth Sunday of Easter**
  
  In today's gospel Jesus reveals the future of his disciples: “I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also.” Jesus, established as Lord at the right hand of God, would gather the whole world into his own glorious life. This is what the Sunday eucharist is all about. The Lord, present in our midst, shares his wonderful, exalted life with us.

• **Sixth Sunday of Easter**
  
  Today's gospel picks up where last Sunday's reading left off. Jesus talked about his intimate union with the Father: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” Now he tells his disciples that, on the day of his return, “you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” All of this is fulfilled in the Sunday eucharist, where the Lord shares his life with us, where we share communion of life in God.

• **Ascension of the Lord**
  
  Today the Church proclaims the final passage of St. Matthew's gospel. It is after the Resurrection, and the disciples go to the mountain in Galilee to meet the Lord. Remarkably, Jesus tells them, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Well, we recognize the presence of the Lord whenever we gather for the Sunday eucharist. He is in our midst, he speaks to us from the heart, he gathers us at table with him. He is with us now!

• **Pentecost**
  
  Pentecost Sunday is the grand climax of the fifty days of Easter. The gospel takes us back to the evening of the day of the Resurrection. It speaks of the presence of the Lord and the conferral of the Holy Spirit. In the Sunday eucharist, the Lord is present in our midst, and the Spirit breathes powerfully within the celebration. And the Lord says to us, as he said to the disciples then, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

For use in Year B:

• **Third Sunday of Easter**
  
  Saint Luke, much like Saint John (last week), points out that the disciples had difficulty recognizing the presence of the risen Lord in their midst. They thought they were
seeing a ghost until he ate food and spoke to them about the Scriptures. When we gather for our Easter liturgies, it is the same with us. We recognize his presence in the Scriptures and in the sacred meal that is the Lord's Supper.

• Fourth Sunday of Easter
The disciples may have thought that the risen Lord's presence was just for them—just as we may think that the Lord's presence at the Easter liturgies is just for us. Today's gospel of the good shepherd tells us otherwise: "I have other sheep... there will be one flock, one shepherd." This is where our work begins and ends—to make the risen Lord's presence known to the whole of the world.

• Fifth Sunday of Easter
In today's gospel Jesus introduces the image of the vine and the branches. It tells us that the risen Lord is present to us in a new and wonderful way. In our Easter assemblies and through the sacraments of initiation, the Lord lives in us and we live in him. We are drawn into his own glorified humanity. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. The wine of his glorious life is poured out in us.

• Sixth Sunday of Easter
The risen Lord lives in us, and we live in him. This is the awe-inspiring meaning of the Lord's presence in our Easter assemblies, the experience of our Easter celebrations, and the cause of our Easter joy. Thus, in today's gospel, the Lord urges us to abide in love, which is the bond of our communion of life in him. When we abide in love, the Lord's joy becomes our joy, and our joy will be complete.

• Ascension of the Lord
The ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father opens out the final age of the world, the age of a new creation. The glorified humanity of Christ is the new temple into which the whole of humankind will be gathered. Jesus, the Lord, is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of all creation. It is this life that we share in our Easter assemblies and our eucharist of joy.

• Pentecost
Pentecost Sunday brings the fifty days of Easter to a dramatic close. The gospel takes us to the heart of the matter. From his glorified humanity, the Lord breathes forth his own life-giving Spirit upon the whole of creation. In the sacraments, we meet the risen Lord and his Spirit and, if we are open to the gift, our lives are transformed. We become the Church, a living witness to the glory of the Lord.

For use in Year C:

• Third Sunday of Easter
In today's gospel Jesus stands on the shore and greets the disciples who had gone fishing. After a miraculous catch of fish the disciples have breakfast with the risen Lord. We, too, dine with him at the Sunday eucharist, which is the Lord's Supper. The catch of fish reminds us that it is our privilege and responsibility, as today's disciples of the Lord, to gather the world together so that it may feast in the kingdom of God.

• Fourth Sunday of Easter
The image of Jesus as the good shepherd is one that is very familiar to us all. A good shepherd looks after the sheep, shields them from harm, and above all protects them from other animals that would kill and devour them. As the true good shepherd,
the risen Lord looks after us. In the Sunday eucharist he nourishes our faith and feeds us at the table of the feast. As he tells us in today’s gospel, “I give them eternal life.”

- **Fifth Sunday of Easter**
Today’s gospel takes us back to the Last Supper. Jesus “knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father,” and he said to his disciples, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” He handed this on to us as “a new commandment” by which we should live our lives together. In the Sunday eucharist, as we gather at the table of the feast, we bind ourselves to that love.

- **Sixth Sunday of Easter**
Today’s gospel, like that of last Sunday, is connected with the Last Supper. Jesus tells his disciples that he is going to the Father. But he wants to reassure them, to let them know that he is not abandoning them: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” These are wonderful words, and we find them fulfilled in the Sunday eucharist, where we commune with our God.

- **Ascension of the Lord**
In Saint Luke’s account of the ascension, the disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.” As today’s disciples of the Lord, this is a joy that we too should experience, for Jesus’ ascension opens the way for us to follow him, to share his life of glory. In the Sunday eucharist the risen Lord does indeed gather us at the feast of the kingdom of God, and even now we share his new and glorious life.

- **Pentecost**
Pentecost Sunday brings the fifty days of Easter to a dramatic close. The gospel takes us back to the Last Supper, where Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, in our very selves as our life-breath, is the great gift from God. In the Sunday eucharist it is in the power of that Spirit that we praise our God, rejoice in salvation, and live in love. 🎉
Helpful Reading

History


Sunday


Christmas Cycle


Easter Cycle


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Pastoral Resources • Helpful Reading


General


Explanatory Note by the
Episcopal Commission for Liturgy
on the Revised General Instruction
of the Roman Missal

The Vatican Information Service on August 4, 2000, published the following information:

This autumn, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments is to publish the Latin text of the new updated Roman Missal. The text of the new Missal has been sent to Episcopal conferences and nuncios in order for them to become aware of the changes and to prepare translations. These, once approved by the Episcopal conferences, will be examined by the Holy See in order to receive the necessary 'recognito,' in other words, the confirmation of their juridical value.

The revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) is part of the third edition of the Roman Missal. The first edition was published in 1969 and the second in 1975. At the end of August 2000, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) received the Latin text of the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal but has to date received neither the new updated text of the Roman Missal nor the Decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments which will specify the date when the Latin text takes effect.

The following steps are necessary prior to the complete implementation of the revised GIRM in Canada:

1. The CCCB is asking the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and the Commission internationale francophone pour les traductions et la liturgie (CIFTL) to prepare official English and French translations of the text.
2. The bishops of Canada (French and English sectors) will vote on the translated texts.
3. The translated texts will be sent to Rome for the recognito of the Holy See.
4. Once recognito is received, bishops and pastors will complete the process of implementing the revised GIRM.

The CCCB Episcopal Commission for Liturgy is aware that an unofficial English summary and a "study translation" of the GIRM are available through the Website of the US National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference. However, this translation is currently not official even in the United States, much less in Canada. The full implementation of the GIRM in Canada must await the completion of the process described above.

Canon 835, §1 states:

The sanctifying office is exercised principally by Bishops, who are the high priests, the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God and the moderators, promoters and guardians of the entire liturgical life in the Churches entrusted to their care.

The initial implementation of the revised GIRM is under the aegis of each diocesan bishop. In this initial phase, individual priests and others should follow the directions of their bishop and his coworkers, especially the diocesan liturgy office/commission, so that the implementation of any changes following the new General Instruction are well planned, uniform, correct, and thoroughly explained to all involved.

September 18, 2000

Episcopal Commission for Liturgy (English Sector)
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Your Turn

Got something to say about the National Bulletin on Liturgy? Topics you think people need help with? Ideas for helpful things we could put in the Bulletin? Let us know how we can be more helpful. Just copy the form below or use your own stationery to send us your thoughts about this or any other issue of the Bulletin or just about the Bulletin in general.

National Liturgy Office
90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1N 7B1

### About This Issue

Which articles did you find most helpful or informative? 

Which were neither? 

What do you think should have been included and wasn’t? 

Would you recommend this issue of the Bulletin to others? 

### About Bulletin #

Which articles did you find most helpful or informative? 

Which were neither? 

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Would you recommend this issue of the Bulletin to others? 

### About the Bulletin in General

Which issues of the Bulletin have you found most helpful or informative? 

Which were neither? 

### What topics should we address in future issues? (Be as specific as you can about questions and areas of concern.)

### Any other ideas about what might be helpful to readers?

The more we know about our readers, the more we can serve their needs. We would appreciate it if you would provide the following information:

### Reader Information

Describe your pastoral situation:
- parish, diocesan, religious community, other?
- size of above community?
- rural or urban?
- Sunday worship led by priest?
- frequency of Sunday worship without a priest?

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