

## Ordinary Time

This season, lasting about 33 weeks or fully two thirds of the year comes between the major seasons of the Easter and Christmas cycles. It begins after the Lord's Baptism and ends before Ash Wednesday; it resumes after Pentecost and continues until Advent and a new liturgical year.

**Sunday gospels:** The central reading each week is the Sunday gospel, which follows a three-year cycle. In year A, it is from Matthew; in year B, mainly from Mark; in year C from Luke. Week after week, the gospel writer takes us through the teaching of Jesus, and leads us to know him and follow him more closely.

*Time for renewal.* Every Sunday, we are invited to renew our baptismal promises of death to sin and life for God, of turning away from evil and of reaching out in love to help other people.

*Time for prayer.* As God's people we are invited to pray every day: to give praise and thanks to God in the name of all creation, and to pray for ourselves and for all the world. Ordinary time gives us the regular opportunity to check up on our personal and family prayer, and to start praying again if we have been neglecting to do so.

## Using Time for God

God has given us the gift of time to use wisely:

To *serve* our God and our neighbour;

To *grow* to our full maturity in Christ;

To *pray* for ourselves and all the world;

To *give thanks* and glory to God in everything we do.

## Saints

God calls us all to be saints, holy people, witnesses whose lives are sinless and pleasing to God. Those who have died in the love of God and have entered eternal life are also called saints. Their lives serve as models for us in our service and devotion; their prayers to God for us can help us as we try to live as God's holy people in today's world.

Mary and the saints are the friends of God. Saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, sharing now in the glory of the Lord, they are ready to help us by their prayers. We remember the way they believed, the way they served God in others and we are encouraged to follow them in imitating Christ. During the year, we celebrate the feasts of the saints and are led closer to Jesus Christ.

*Loving God,  
maker of the universe  
and Lord of all time,  
help us to live each day  
in your love and service.*

*Guide us in all we do,  
so that we may give you  
all honour and glory and thanks  
through Jesus Christ our Lord  
in the love of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen!*

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# OUR YEAR OF PRAYER

Praising our God  
throughout the year

Coming closer to Christ

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**Praise and prayer:** Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and our brother, is our high priest. He offers praise and glory to the Father, and prays for all creation. Throughout the year, we join Christ in offering our praise and prayer to God. Days and seasons help us to remember God's love and saving gifts to all.

## The Lord's Day

From the early years of the Christian Church, Sunday has been called the Lord's Day. It is the day when God calls us together to offer our worship, especially in the Eucharist. Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week, and this is the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on the apostles. Sunday is the day when Christians assemble to worship the God of heaven and earth.

**Celebrating the mystery of Christ:** We still come together each Sunday to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ – his dying and rising seen as God's great saving action. Our heavenly Father sent Jesus to save us. Jesus obeyed, even to dying for us on the cross. God raised Jesus from the dead and proclaimed that Jesus is Lord and Saviour of all.

**Eucharist:** Each Sunday we come together around the altar to thank our Father for calling us to be the priestly people of God. We listen with faith to the inspired readings: God is speaking to us. We reflect on what we have heard and respond in prayer for the Church, ourselves, and all the world. As the Eucharistic prayer is proclaimed, we offer ourselves and our love in union with Jesus' complete gift of himself to the Father. In Communion we are given the body and blood of Christ as our spiritual food: in the strength of Jesus we will be able to live another week in God's service.

## Easter Cycle

From Ash Wednesday to Pentecost, the Church celebrates the saving death and resurrection of Jesus, and encourages us to become more involved in his Paschal Mystery.

**Lent** is baptismal in its nature. Throughout this season we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter vigil, while catechumens are preparing for their baptism. Our Lenten activities include works of penance to help us overcome our sinfulness. We listen with deeper faith to God's word, and spend more time in praying. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are traditional Lenten works as we seek to die to sin and live with Christ for God.

**Triduum:** In the three days from Holy Thursday evening to Easter night, we celebrate the dying and rising of Jesus, and our involvement with him in our baptism. His death and resurrection are one great saving event: on Good Friday we look ahead to the resurrection, on Easter we remember his suffering and death. These three days are a time for prayer and reflection, and not for a whirl of shopping and entertainment. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the people of God keep the Paschal fast as a solemn completion of the works of Lent and as a preparation for the joys of Easter.

**Easter season:** The whole Christian community celebrates the resurrection: we rejoice because Jesus is present in our midst and we recognize him in the breaking of bread, the Eucharist. Toward the end of the season we celebrate the Ascension: our Lord returns to the glory of heaven, and continues to pray for us and offer our worship and prayer to the Father. Pentecost Sunday recalls the sending of Jesus' Spirit to be with us and guide us. It marks the close of the Easter season and our return to ordinary time.

## Christmas Cycle

**Advent** celebrates the two comings of Jesus Christ among us. We begin by looking forward to his final coming as our king and judge. From December 17, we prepare for Christmas, remembering the incarnation, when our Father sent the Son to become one of us. Jesus has come because God loves us and wants to save us. Advent is a season of expectation, joy and hope: we rejoice because God loves us. We try to make straight the way of the Lord in our lives, and we pray: Come, Lord Jesus!

**Christmas week:** We celebrate God's love: our Father loves us and has sent the Son to be our brother, God-with-us. Jesus has come to save us by his life, teaching, suffering, dying and rising. He wants us to show our love for God by sharing it with other people. Christmas is a time of loving, helping and serving others. Our first gift to those around us should be our love and our efforts to show them greater love. Our celebrations last a full week. January 1 is the feast of Mary, Mother of God, as well as the first day of the new civil year.

*Epiphany:* We celebrate the revelation of the Son of God. Jesus has come to save the world, to bring us all into the kingdom of his Father. We rejoice because God loves us and sends Jesus to us to save us.

*Baptism of the Lord:* When Jesus is baptized in the Jordan, the Father tells us that Jesus is the beloved Son and that we are to listen to him. The Spirit is poured on Jesus as he is sent to teach and save the world.

As we celebrate the Christmas cycle, we proclaim that we believe in Jesus, Son of God and one of us in all things but sin. He is our Lord and our brother, and we show our love for God by following Jesus in loving others.