

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Success for All within a Christ-Centred Community



School Liturgical Calendar

The importance of the Liturgical Year

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of ritual and celebration that helps to connect each new generation with its past. The Catholic Church sets aside certain days and seasons of each year to recall and celebrate various events in the life of Christ.

Through the observance of feasts, particularly those that are special to the Diocese of Liverpool or the St Monica's community, we can root our children in the faith and give them a foundation on which to build their own response to the call of God.

The Catholic liturgical year has been shaped by events in the life of Christ. Although the actual historical dates of those events are uncertain, over the centuries a chronology has evolved that reflects the principal milestones of Christ's life as described in the Scriptures.

Just as in the life of each individual, 'ordinary time' is also a component of the liturgical year. During ordinary time, no specific events in Christ's life are celebrated, although holy days of obligation such as All Saints do fall within ordinary time. Strictly speaking, 'ordinary' here refers to ordinal, or numbered, time. Ordinary

time pays homage to the simpler days that Christ spent on earth and reminds us to consider, even now, how we go about our normal daily lives.

Liturgical Seasons – below is a brief guide to the liturgical seasons in the Church's year.

ADVENT

Begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on December 24.

Advent is a time of expectation for the second coming of Christ at the end of time and preparation to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas. This is evident in the two phases of Advent. The first emphasises watchfulness as we wait for the time when Christ our Lord will come in glory. The second phase points us to the joy of Christmas by reminding us of the prophets' promises, the role of Mary and John the Baptist's mission. This is not the time to celebrate Christmas early but a time for preparations.

Liturgical Colour: Violet. Symbolises joyful waiting, renewal and expectation.

CHRISTMAS

Begins on Christmas day and ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Christmas is a season, not a day. This is difficult to realise since the world wants to 'get back to normal' long before we have arrived at the last day of Christmas: the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It is a season of true joy when we celebrate that 'God-is-with-us' – Emmanuel! The colour and vibrancy of our Christmas celebrations should inform a very deep part of ourselves that something has happened, that Christ is born, and the world will never be the same again

Liturgical Colour: White or gold. Symbolises true joy and triumph.

ORDINARY TIME

From the end of the Christmas season until Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent).

From the day after Pentecost until the first Sunday of Advent.

For a few weeks in January and February, and then all through the summer and autumn, the Church is in Ordinary Time. "Ordinary" comes from the word "ordinal" and means "counted". In other words, each of the weeks has a number (for example, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time). During Ordinary Time the Sunday gospels follow Jesus from story to story in Matthew, Mark or Luke. Each of these gospels is read for one year in the church's three-year cycle of Sunday Mass readings. Sunday after Sunday we also read through the various letters of Paul and others in the New Testament.

Liturgical Colour: Green. Symbolises life and growth

LENT

Begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday in the evening – approximately 6 weeks.

In the Christian Year, Lent precedes and prepares for Easter. It is a penitential season and a time of spiritual growth and a time for discerning and doing good. Traditionally we give more time to prayer, fasting and almsgiving (money given to the 'poor' or good causes). This helps us to say 'Yes' to God's will and 'No' to our selfish ways in order to become better followers of Jesus. The season begins by recalling the 40 days Jesus fasted in the desert and prepared to proclaim the Good News. In the Northern Hemisphere, Lent begins in winter. But when the 40 days are over, we know that the warmth and new life of spring are surely coming.

Liturgical Colour: Purple. Symbolises penance.

HOLY WEEK

For the Church, Holy Week is the 'greatest week' during which the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus is remembered in special celebrations. On **Passion Sunday** which is sometimes called **Palm Sunday** (because we bless palms and we hear the reading of the passion of Jesus), Christians celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem to face his suffering and death.

The Paschal or Easter Triduum begins on **Holy Thursday** in the evening and ends on Easter Sunday in the evening.

When Lent ends, we stand in the centre of the Christian year. On the night between **Holy Saturday** and **Easter Sunday**, we keep the **Easter Vigil**. We gather to light a fire and a towering candle, to listen to our most treasured scriptures, to sing psalms and other songs. Then we go to the waters and baptise those who have been preparing for new life in Christ. The newly baptised are then anointed with fragrant oil and, at last, with these newly baptised, we celebrate the Eucharist.

We prepare for this Vigil in the washing of feet on Holy Thursday and in the veneration of the cross on **Good Friday**. We also prepare by fasting. The Church fasts – from food, from entertainment, from chatter, from work – so that we have time to ponder deeply the death and resurrection of the Lord, the mystery of faith that we will celebrate in our Vigil.

Liturgical Colours of Holy Week

Palm Sunday: Red

Holy Thursday: White and Gold. Symbolises

Good Friday: Red

Easter Sunday: **White** and **Gold**. Symbolises true joy and triumph.

EASTER

Begins on Easter Sunday and ends 50 days later on Pentecost Sunday.

Easter Sunday is the beginning of the Easter Season which lasts for 50 days. The Easter season is to the year what Sunday is to the week. It is the heart of the Christian faith. St. Paul writes that without a strong, unswerving belief in the resurrection of Christ, then, "empty too is our preaching; empty too your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14.) We are an 'Easter People' and make "Alleluia" our song because we delight to praise the Lord who is raised from the dead and now shares his new life. The Paschal candle, the giant candle that is lit during this season whenever we celebrate in church. This shows that Jesus lives.

Liturgical Colour: **White** and **gold**. Symbolises triumph and joy.

PENTECOST

50 days (7 weeks) after Easter Sunday.

Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth. The Jewish 'feast of weeks' was held fifty days after the beginning of the grain harvest. It was a thanksgiving feast to celebrate the end of the harvest and to commemorate the day God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jesus made it clear to his disciples that it was important that they carry on his mission after he was gone. He promised he would give them the strength of his Spirit to do this. At Pentecost the Church celebrates the fulfilment of Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit will guide and help his disciples to understand all that he has taught them. It is sometimes called the 'birthday' of the Church.

Liturgical Colour: **Red**. Symbolises royalty, fire and martyrdom

Celebrating the Liturgical Seasons in our school

Here at St Monica's when planning Prayer and liturgies within a particular season, we take into account.

- Readings taken from the correct liturgical year
- Appropriate colour to represent the season, e.g. green for ordinary time, purple for Lent
- Readings, activities to reflect the key themes/mood for the season, e.g. joyful anticipation, preparation, for Advent, penance for Lent
- We ensure that the cloth displayed on our holy tables within our classrooms match the colour of the season e.g. green when we are in ordinary time, purple during advent etc.
- We ensure that they children have a good understanding of these seasons and key feast dates.

Key Feast Days

In addition to the liturgical seasons, the Church's year is marked by particular days dedicated to events in the life of Christ, e.g. the Transfiguration, or to particular saints, e.g. St. Peter and St. Paul.

