



*St Catherine's Seminary is the name of the internal study and training program of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church*

## The Liturgical or Church Calendar

Church life follows a Liturgical or Church Calendar, which guides us on the date a festival occurs. Some festivals we hear of and celebrate regularly such as Easter and Christmas, however our understanding of even these festivals is far less than we realise. This document aims to help you understand the seasons that make up the Liturgical calendar. Each year is made up of major and minor festivals, each of the major festivals such as Easter, are celebrated with a Eucharistic mass. The calendar also determines the colour of the robes worn by priests and the altar dressings. Saints days are also celebrated by the church, please see the Directory of Saints for details of these.

The church year is divided into six seasons:

Advent (Purple vestments)

Christmas (White vestments)

Ordinary Time (Green vestments)

Lent (Purple vestments)

Holy Week (White or Gold vestments)

Easter (White or Gold vestments)

the church then resumes Ordinary time from Easter to Advent (Green Vestments).

There are specific festivals within each of these seasons where the liturgical colours are different, and these are shown with the festival below.

### **Season 1 Advent**

*Vestments are purple*

Advent is the four weeks leading to the birth of Christ. Five candles are held on a wreath, the four candles around the center candle each represent a thousand years, of the four thousand years between the time of Adam and Eve and the Christ's birth. The candles are lit on the Sundays of Advent. The fifth candle is lit at midnight of Christmas Eve to signify the Light has come into the world. The date Christmas Day occurs is used to determine the date Advent begins. The Advent candles symbolise Christ's virtues of Love, Hope, Joy and Peace.

**Advent 1 Hope** (the first Sunday in Advent) remembers the Advent Hope, the desire of God's faithful for the coming of the Christ. (This candle is purple).

**Advent 2 Love** remembers the word of God in the Old Testament, where throughout history God promises that one day the Christ will come. (This candle is purple).

**Advent 3 Joy** remembers the forerunner, John the Baptist, who prepared 'the way' for the Christ to come (This candle is pink and the third Sunday of Advent is also known as *Gaudete* from the Latin word for rejoice).

**Advent 4 Peace** celebrates the Annunciation, where an angel (God's messenger Gabriel) told Mary about the soon to happen events (This candle is purple).

The fifth candle is white and is in the center of the wreath, this is lit at midnight of Christmas eve, to symbolise the arrival of Christ into the world.

## **Season Two Christmas**

**Christmas – 25<sup>th</sup> December** (7<sup>th</sup> January in the Orthodox or Eastern Churches)

Christmas is NOT Christ's birthday. The best scientific reckoning (based on historic study of the orbit of the planet and planetary system) estimates it is sometime in the month we now call April. In early Christian times the Church in Rome decided on a date to hold a Mass (hence Christ-Mass or Christmas) to celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Christ as a child. The date was chosen to coincide with the Roman winter festival of Saturnalia, and to smother it out. Christmas has of course grown popularity and done just that. Chosen on the 25th of the tenth month (our calendars have changed since then, with two extra months having been added). Dec means ten, hence December was the tenth month in the old calendar. The other main church headquarters of the time, Constantinople, chose a different date to hold their Christ-Mass hence the Eastern churches use of 7th January. Although the date is arbitrary, the events celebrated are not and are a part of the most profound series of events ever.

Christmas begins on the eve of the 25<sup>th</sup> (or 7<sup>th</sup> Jan) with the birth of Christ being celebrated at midnight to signify the light has come into the world and continues until January 12<sup>th</sup> (or 19<sup>th</sup>) with the feast of Our Lords Baptism. In this season we celebrate the hidden life of Christ, from his birth, to the Visit and Adoration of the Magi ( Epiphany), the feast of the Holy Innocents, the Flight to Egypt, the Feast of the Holy Family, the first Sunday after Christmas Day; except where Christmas Day is the Saturday, and ending with the feast of the Lord's Baptism.

## **Epiphany 6th January** *Vestments are white*

The festival when we remember that the wise men, the Magi, visited Jesus when he was small, having seen his coming astrologically (saw him in the stars). Biblical accounts tell of a bright star which lead them to where Jesus was. Interestingly, modern astronomers have found that a very bright comet would have been visible to the naked eye in that part of the sky at that time. The Magi saw this and took it as a message from God that the expected Messiah would make His appearance. Traditionally we think of three wise men, but there is no biblical evidence of the number of wise men so possibly this is an assumption because each brought gifts, and three gifts (Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh) are mentioned. We also remember that Herod's plan to kill Jesus was frustrated when the Magi returned to their land without having told Herod of the baby's whereabouts.

## **Season Three - Ordinary Time**

Ordinary time is a total of 34 weeks and covers the time between Christmas and Lent and the time after the Easter Season has ended until Advent. It covers the time of Jesus's public ministry and ends with the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. The Celebration of the Lord's Second Coming during the final judgment. Vestments in ordinary time are green.

## **Shrove Tuesday** *Vestments are Green*

Shrove Tuesday is the last Ordinary time celebration before Lent.. In preparation for the fasting and denial associated with Lent, Christians would eat and drink any rich foods or drink they had, including any meats. The intention was to prepare themselves to follow the example of Jesus as he struggled with his doubts in the desert for forty days. Lent itself would be a time of prayer and fasting. In modern times we eat pancakes as a symbol of our celebration before the abstinence of the Lent Period.

## **Season Four Lent**

**Lent** Dates: Variable.  
*Vestments are Purple*

Lent is the forty days beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday. Lent is the time we remember the days Jesus spent in the desert preparing himself for the coming events. Jesus spent forty days alone 'in the wilderness', neither eating or drinking, and away from the temptations of everyday life. Scripture tells us that the

devil turned up to try and spoil this time of preparation. Early Christians and some people today fast or give up eating or drinking in memory of Christs sacrifice. Lent for most Christians today is a period of reflection, repentance and prayer in preparation for Easter. Lent is the preparation for the Paschal Mystery.

## **Season Five Holy Week**

### **Holy Week**

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday and is considered by Christians to be the most important week of the liturgical calendar. It includes Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

**Palm Sunday**      Date: The Sunday before Easter.

*Vestments are Red*

Celebrating Christs triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the people waved palm leaves and sang, chanted and welcomed Jesus as he entered the holy city on a donkey as the Old Testament scripture had predicted the Messiah would. The people waiting outside the city were gathered in preparation for the Passover and would have been excited by the vision of the man they had heard so much of fulfilling the predictions of the Old Testament.. In the service palm leaves or branches are waved by the congregation in memory of the excitement of that day.

**Ash Wednesday** is the beginning of Lent.

*Vestments are white or gold*

A variable date it is held on the Wednesday closest to forty six days before Easter Sunday. On this day Christians receive a smear of ashes on their forehead in the shape of a cross. The ashes are from crosses made from palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday festival, which are burned and mixed with oil. As the priest makes this mark they say 'remember you are dust and to dust you will return' as a reminder of our mortality.

**Maundy Thursday**      Date variable, but always the day before Good Friday.

*Vestments are white or gold*

Traditionally a day for the distribution of 'alms' or charity. This festival reminds us that Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet. He was showing them that no matter how great you are, you are to serve, as opposed to be served. In England, the monarch washes the feet of several ordinary people in a re-enactment of this on this day. Catholic Bishops hold a Chrism Mass on this day during which Priests renew their commitment to priestly service. At this service the oil of the sick, the oil of

catechumens and the oil of the sacred Chrism which have been sanctified by the Bishop are collected by the priests for the coming year.

**Good Friday**            Date variable but always the Friday before Easter Sunday  
*Vestments are red*

The word Good of 'Good' Friday comes from the middle ages when Good also meant Holy. The day is one of prayer and remembrance of Christ's humiliation and suffering in being placed before the Romans, rejected by the Jews, scourged and forced to carry the cross and then hung upon it to die. This sacrifice representing his taking the sins of all the world to move humanity to a state of Grace. There is significance in it being the day before the Jewish Sabbath and the day following the Jewish Passover, as some theologians believe this signifies the break from the old covenant to the new. Public prayers in places of worship stop at 3 pm as this is the time that it is believed the curtain of the temple split, the sky went dark and Jesus died.

## **Season Six Easter to Pentecost**

**Easter**                    Date: Variable, determined by Lunar calendar.  
*Vestments are white or gold*

Commonly Easter is used to refer to Easter Sunday although the whole of Holy week is Easter. On Easter Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and His triumphant victory over death and sin, not only for himself, but also for us and everyone who follows him. Christians in many countries celebrate Easter by giving and receiving Easter Eggs, the egg being a symbol of 'new life', as promised by Jesus' resurrection. Easter in some calendars starts on Easter Sunday however Easter ends on Pentecost Sunday, Between Easter Sunday and Pentecost, the bible narrates Christ's descent from Heaven and his time with his disciples, his ascent to Heaven and the visit of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. (Pentecost)

**Ascension Day – Forty days after Easter Sunday (held on the closest Thursday)**  
*Vestments are white or gold*

The end of Easter which totals forty days in all. When Jesus leaves the Earth and ascends to heaven, having promised the apostles that someone else will come who will help and support them. Ascension may be interpreted as rising, as the Old Testament often refers to God being above. As we cannot see God or the Kingdom of God we might better describe it as being a different existence. Some years also have an Ascension Sunday, this developed to allow Christians to celebrate in Church where they may not have been able to do so on a working day. Ascension is the oldest recorded Christian festival and has been celebrated since 68AD. Ascension ends Easter and occurs ten days before Pentecost.

**Pentecost**      Date: Variable, first Sunday 50 days after Easter, also called Whitsun.  
*Vestments are red*

Pentecost celebrates the day the Holy Spirit comes to the Apostles and gives them the gifts Jesus has promised them. The bible speaks of on lookers seeing tongues of fire above the apostles heads and of them speaking in the languages of every person on the planet. The Holy Spirit is believed to give the gift of persuasion so that any Christian can find the words to help others find Christ. Pentecostal Churches give great importance in their worship to the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues. Pentecost is the last celebration before Ordinary time.

### **Season Seven Ordinary Time**

Vestments in ordinary time are green except on the festivals stated

**Trinity Sunday** – first Sunday after Pentecost  
*Vestments are white or gold*

Trinity Sunday celebrates the understanding that God is manifest as one God revealed in three forms. The Triune God, The Father , the Son and the Holy Spirit, not three Gods. This nature of God was established during the Council of Nicaea, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, Although the Trinity is not scriptural it does reflect the words of the Lords Prayer. The first Triune Sunday was instituted by Pope Gregory IX in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. It became known as Trinity Sunday and a regular church celebration in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Corpus Christi**      Date: Variable, but always the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.  
*Vestments are white or gold*

The feast of Corpus Christi (Latin for the Body of Christ) commemorates the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his apostles, the night before he was crucified. It celebrates the ‘transubstantiation into the actual body and blood of Christ during the mass. During the Eucharist the priest stands in Christ to channel the spirit of the Lord Jesus to cause the transformation.

**Michaelmas**      Date: 29th September.  
*Vestments are white or gold*

A feast celebrating the contribution of St Michael. This day celebrates the work of the Archangels on Gods behalf, and although called Michaelmas is celebrates the three Archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. In the Anglican tradition four Archangels are celebrated, the fourth being Uriel.

**All Saints Day**      Date: 1st November.

*Vestments are white*

All Saints Day, also known as All Hallows, the Feast of All Saints, or the Feast of Hallows is the day on which all the saints are remembered. Please see the separate module for the list of individual saints and the days they are celebrated.

**All Souls Day**      Date: 2nd November.

*Vestments are black*

The day the deceased of the parish are remembered. Churches hold Eucharistic services and some invite those they have held funeral services for in the preceding year. Often congregants are offered the opportunity at some stage of the service or after the service to light a candle in remembrance of the deceased.

**Remembrance Sunday**      Date: the Sunday nearest 11th November.

*Vestments are black*

Remembrance Sunday is celebrated by all faiths and those of no faith. It is a service where those who died in the arena of wars and conflicts are remembered. The service follows a march to a Cenotaph of those in uniform with representatives of the armed services, serving or retired, Fire Brigade and Police Officers, and youth groups such as the Guides and Scouts. This is followed by an ecumenical service, where faith leaders join together for the service of the word and with the Eucharistic service being presided over by the minister of the church. Most services culminate in the names of the fallen being read by faith leaders beside a Cenotaph and wreaths being laid

**Christ the King Sunday** the last Sunday of November.

*Vestments are white or gold*

Also known as The Feast of Christ the King, and the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This feast celebrates Christ as ruler of everything and is the final celebration of Ordinary time. The following Sunday being the start of the next liturgical year.

**Ember Days**      variable

*Vestments either Red or colour of the season e.g. green for Ordinary time.*

Ember Days traditionally occur quarterly, to mark the change of the seasons and are time set aside for reflection, fasting and prayer, often focusing on the blessings of nature. Originally the days were fixed as St Lucy's Day the 13<sup>th</sup> December, the First Sunday of Lent, Pentecost Sunday, and Holy Cross Day the 14<sup>th</sup> September. Ember

Days: traditionally days of fasting; are now often used in religious communities and seminaries in preparation for ordinations.

## **Biblical Festivals**

These are the Hebrew festivals that Christ would have been familiar with. Some are clearly noticeable in the Bible, others are inferred or referred to. They are here to help us make sense of scripture and to understand the festivals a bit better.

**Passover** – remembers the promise Adonai made to Moses: paint your doorposts with the blood of lambs so the impending disaster will 'pass over' the homes of the faithful.

**Purim** – celebrates the saving of the Jews from Haman the Vizier of the Persian King, by Esther the wife of the Persian King. OT Book of Esther.

**Rosh Hosannah** - the Jewish New Year which occurs in September. It begins with ten days of penitence followed by the Yom Kippur celebration. In the Bible, this day is never actually called 'a New Year'. Instead, God calls it the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah in Hebrew), when He ordained to blow the shofars – ram's horns. The sound was a reminder to repent and to encourage reflection.

**Yom Kippur** - the most Holy Day of the Jewish year, often called the Day of Atonement. The day is marked by fasting and prayers of repentance during a daylong service in the synagogue.

**Feast of Tabernacles** - also known as Sukkot, meaning tents or booths. The celebration of the Jews freedom from the Egyptians by the Hand of God. This festival takes place five days after Yom Kippur and lasts for a week.

**Feast of first fruits** - The offering of the First fruits of the harvest occurs in the week of the Passover/Unleavened Bread festival and is a ceremony performed which commences the marking off of time to the Feast of First fruits, which is called Shavuot or Pentecost.

**Pentecost** – In Hebrew Shavuot, also called Feast of Weeks in full Hāg Shavuot which translates as Festival of the Weeks, second of the three Pilgrim Festivals of the Jewish religious calendar. It was originally an agricultural festival, marking the beginning of the wheat harvest. See Pentecost above as a Christian Festival.

**Feast of Trumpets** - calls the people of Israel to prepare for the Messiah's return at the End of Days. We do not know the day or the hour of His return. However, we can remember this holy day knowing that God is regathering His people from the four winds even now.

**Days of Awe** - Forty days of repentance. In Jewish tradition, these forty days are called Yemei Ratzon or Days of Favor, since it was during this time that God forgave



the Jewish nation after the sin of the Golden Calf (Pirke d'Reb Eliezar). See Lent as a Christian Festival: Christ was in the desert 40 days doing his Days of Awe.

**Hanukkah** - The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah commemorates the re-dedication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. The oil for the lamp miraculously lasted for 8 days.

**Feast of Trees** - The Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shevat (sometimes spelled Tu Bishvat) occurs on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. It marks the beginning of a 'new year' or 'birthday' for trees, as they emerge from their winter sleep and start another fruit-bearing cycle.

## **Calendar Dates in other Churches**

Other Trinitarian Denominations have additional days of celebration or feasts that relate to their history:

**Rogation Sunday** - is celebrated mostly in rural parishes and celebrate the fruits of the world and our stewardship. Rogation Days are recognised in all Christian denominations but not all churches of any denomination celebrate it.

### **Lutherans**

Have both Feast and Commemoration days. Feasts or Festivals are termed minor feasts and celebrate the life of Christ and his followers. Commemorations are celebrations of the lives of people who were influential in life or death on the Christian faith and specifically Lutheran Church.

### **Calvinists**

Similar to Lutherans Calvinists broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Their services follow the liturgy written not by John Calvin but by the Calvinist Church Community. The service itself is similar to the Scottish Presbyterian service. In addition to Sundays Calvinists celebrate Christmas Day, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.

### **Presbyterians**

(includes Reformed Presbyterian) Churches are led by Elders. Reformed Presbyterians hold that the only Holy Day is the Sabbath and no other exists in the New Testament. They celebrate Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost and All Saints Day. Some Presbyterian churches also celebrate Christ the King.

### **Methodists**

In addition to the Holy Days shown on the church calendar, the Methodists hold the following as celebration days:

**World Day of Prayer** - (formerly the Woman's Day of Prayer - the closest Friday to the 14<sup>th</sup> April.)

**Racial Justice Sunday** - date variable

**Mothering Sunday** - a Sunday in April

**The Methodist Diaconal Order Convocation** - first weekend of April

**Vocations Sunday** - date variable but follows Convocation weekend.

**Christian Aid Week** - date variable but follows Trinity Sunday

**Aldersgate Sunday** - date variable but follows Christian Aid week

**Wesley Sunday** - the Sunday before Pentecost

**Methodists Homes Sunday**- Sunday after Pentecost

**Refugee Week** – third week of June

**Action for Children, Sea Sunday and Rural Mission** are all on the second Sunday of July.

**Education Sunday** - the first or second Sunday of September

**Bible Sunday** - the last Sunday of October

**Women against Violence Sunday** - last Sunday of November

**Local Preachers Sunday** - Usually in August or September, a reminder of the lay preaching function in Methodism and a Sunday when as many pulpits as possible are filled with local preachers.

### **United Reform Church**

URC celebrate Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints Day and Christ the King. In addition they celebrate Reformation Day- 31<sup>st</sup> October which celebrates the beginning of the Reformation. This celebration takes place alongside the All Hallows (All Saints) Celebration,

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