

Catholic 101, the Liturgical Year

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, these are the seasons that we move through every single year. Each of the seasons has its own feel, its own colors and smells and temperatures, and its own celebrations. The Liturgical Year, or church year, is much the same, just as the earth moves through the same four seasons each and every year, so too the Church moves through the same seasons every year. The Liturgical Year is how the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (the Pascal Mystery) is recalled, lived, and celebrated. And it is always the same structure, but never the same experience. We start with Advent, then move on to Christmas, we then move into Ordinary Time, then we have Lent, the Triduum, and Easter, and back to Ordinary Time: Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time. And just like the four seasons of the year are all different, the six seasons of the Church Year each have their own mood, theological emphases, color, and forms of prayer. The Liturgical Year is the Spiritual Director of the Church, leading us through the events of Christ's life. Within each season every single Sunday is essential not only to the season but to the year as a whole. Advent is the season of joyful anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ in glory and the celebration of the Incarnation. Christmas is the season of joy; it is the fulfillment of the prophets. Ordinary Time I continues the narrative and is a kind of interlude between seasons where the liturgies invite us to reflect on various aspects of our discipleship. Lent is a time of purification and penance before we enter the high holy days of the sacred Triduum and then tease out the mystery of the 50 days of Easter. And then, finally we end the year with the longest season of Ordinary Time II, a season where both the epistles and gospel are continuous readings that move us from discipleship to the power of God's grace, which ends with Christ the King on His cross. *Come Lord Jesus, Emmanuel, Lord Have Mercy, Alleluia*, these are the hopes and truths that define us and every Sunday brings just a little closer to the promise of salvation these words contain.