

Unit Four: The Liturgical Year

The aim of the Liturgical Year is the living out of the Paschal Mystery (SC 107)

1. General Overview

Salvation has a specific historical and spatial setting reflected in worship:

- structured on recurring rhythms of day, week and year
- programmed on annual liturgical calendar:

purpose of Calendar is to sanctify OUR time: faith is nourished by weekly Sunday assembly; daily prayer; annual seasons and feasts.

We become a people shaped by our liturgy when we learn to live by the calendar; symbolically when the year is inscribed on the Paschal Candle, we insert our fleeting moments into the everlasting Christ

Foundation

(Cf. Unit 1: ritual, assembly, Sunday.)

- As a redeemed people we are set apart by a unique past, present and future
- The Liturgical Year is the celebration and appropriation of group story, myth, values, treasures
 - *group history and memory*
 - *handing on to new generations*
- The Liturgical Year is a way of releasing the power of the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection in our lives today, bringing eternal values to the present

The Paschal Mystery

The work of our redemption is achieved in celebration

We proclaim the death of the Lord 'until he comes'

- *'Paschal mystery': shorthand for passion/death/resurrection/ascension of Jesus which frees us from death of sin to life in God;*
- *the sweep of salvation history celebrated in every Sunday Mass is gradually unpacked, pondered over, in the seasons and feasts, keeping the paschal mystery at the heart of our lives*

Sanctifying Time

- The liturgical year is sacramental (Paul VI).
- Worship is structured on day, week, life: '
 - *Spiral time*' rather than repetition.
 - *'Always and everywhere we give thanks.'*
- DAY
expressed in prayer of the people of God, especially Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours
- WEEK:
Sunday, the Lord's day: paschal mystery celebrated in its entirety
- YEAR:
divided into seasons and Ordinary Time - see below

2. Principles of the Liturgical Calendar

Sunday

- The 'kernel' or foundation of the year; the original feast day (SC 106, Roman Calendar (RC) 4)
- Revision of the calendar has made a strong attempt to re-instate primacy of Sunday in the life of the Church.

Sunday should not be obscured by special themes and intentions, which tend to shift attention to our needs and what we are doing for the Lord, rather than what he is doing for us

The Seasons (RC 17-47)

- **PASCHAL TRIDUUM:**

Detailed study of Triduum liturgies; planning, practicalities, relation to Christian Initiation

- the culmination of the entire liturgical year
- one single celebration from Mass of Lord's Supper to Easter Day
- no other sacraments celebrated from Good Friday until the Vigil:

Church is caught up in once-a-year dying/rising of Christ made actual in baptising

- **Lent/Eastertime**

- Lent: a passageway to Easter, journey of rebirth and renewal;
- a penitential period of prayer, almsgiving and fasting:

preparation for the annual celebration of the paschal mystery in the Triduum; emphasis on Baptism and Penance

- Ash Wednesday to Pentecost is one season
- Eastertime: the 50-day feast or 'Great Sunday'

Alleluia is sung. Praising God not for past history but for what the risen Jesus works in our hearts TODAY.

Avoid anti-climax in practice and realise goal of 50-day feast.

- rejoicing with new Christians

- **Advent/Christmas**

- *Christmas is celebrated too early and the preparatory season of Advent is not always understood:*

Three comings of Christ - in history, mystery, majesty

- *Prime importance of seeing paschal mystery celebrated throughout Advent and at Christmas. HODIE.*
- *Advent not a penitential season but period of joyful preparation*

- **Ordinary Time**

- the time which is not the 'peak times' of the great seasons; needed in order to appreciate the latter
- season when we celebrate the paschal mystery as lived in the Church today:
- *-time of mission and ministry*
- *the Lectionary reflects the approaches of the different evangelists*
- *a challenge to take seriously the Christian meaning of Time*

- **The Sanctoral Cycle**

- We celebrate the dying and rising of Jesus Christ in his saints
- *Feasts of Mary: many of them came from the East*
- *Saints: stress local calendars*

3. Planning

- The whole year should be seen as a unity.

- *Plan sacramental liturgies early, especially RCIA, and days of prayer*
- *Liturgical year is non-historical*
- *Parish group for planning liturgy*
- *Home celebration of liturgical year*

Documentation and Bibliography

Constitution on the Liturgy Ch. 5

General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar (included in Documents on the Liturgy, etc)

A.G.Martimort (ed) **The Church at Prayer** Vol. IV. Geoffrey Chapman, 1986

M.Searle (ed.) **Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship**. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1982

United States Catholic Conference: **The Roman Calendar. Text and Commentary**. Washington: USCC Publications Office, 1976.