

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA The Church Year

“The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God . . . will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:5b–7)

Insight

How are special annual days and events celebrated by your family or business? What makes these days and events special?

Frank hurried through the airport. His carry-on luggage was rolling behind him as he juggled his PDA, checking it to make sure that his order from the local florist was complete. He and his wife were celebrating their wedding anniversary that evening and he wanted the flowers delivered before he got home. He wanted the mood to be just right.

Frank had been away for a week, which was difficult for his wife. It was hard on him too. His business took him all over the country for weeks at a time. Some mornings, he wasn't sure which city he was waking up in. Nonetheless, he was looking forward to celebrating their marriage at a favorite restaurant and two blessed days at home before his next trip began.

For Reflection . . .

The liturgy is celebrated on fixed days throughout the year and is permeated with the mystery of Christ. The Church observes the memorials of martyrs and other Saints throughout the annual cycle of the liturgical year.

What activities or highlights of the week (or month) bring freshness and vigor to your life?

Who are the deceased family members or friends whose memory you carry with you? What triggers these memories?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1163–1173

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 170–173

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 241–242

Church Teaching

Saving Grace Made Present

Certain special days within the calendar year are set aside so that the Church might celebrate, in liturgy, the work of Salvation achieved by Christ.

Once a week, on the day when Christ rose from the dead—the Lord's Day (Sunday)—the Church commemorates the Resurrection and observes the Third Commandment. Sunday constitutes the preeminent day for us to gather liturgically, but there are also holy days (six days set by the U.S. bishops). These days are obligatory, which means that we participate in the Eucharist on those days as we would on the Lord's Day.

Seasons of the Liturgical Year

Special seasons contain Sundays and weekdays that are distinguished from Ordinary Time liturgical celebrations:

Advent prepares us for Christmas by focusing on the coming of Christ.

Christmas celebrates the Incarnation, the eternal Word of God made flesh in Jesus.

Lent readies us for Easter through forty days of penitence, fasting, and almsgiving.

Paschal or *Easter Triduum* celebrates the Paschal Mystery of Christ—how by dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life.

Easter joyously celebrates the Resurrection of Christ for fifty days until Pentecost.

The Sanctoral Cycle

Blessed Mary, the Mother of God, is also honored with special feast days and holy days throughout the year for she is inseparably linked to the work of her Son.

Other days throughout the year are set aside as memorials celebrating martyrs and Saints, who each uniquely exemplify the workings of the Paschal Mystery of Christ.