



The Liturgical Year



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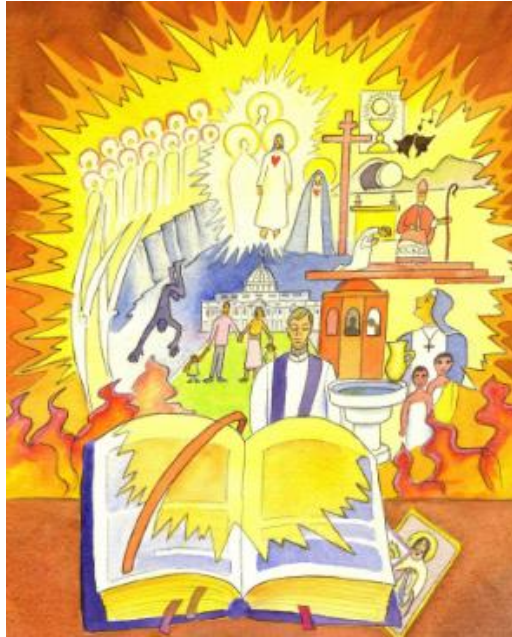
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The Liturgical Calendar



It is hoped that this document will help teachers to use, or make further use of, the prayer areas in their classrooms. A number of the solemnities, feasts and special occasions in the Liturgical Calendar have been included, so that you are aware of them and may have a better idea how to mark them and pray about them, in your classroom.

The information included here is not meant to be overwhelming, and you are not expected to change your prayer area every time a suggestion is made here. They are merely ideas that may provide you with a bit more direction and inspiration about how to keep your prayer area an active part of your classroom. Use the parts and the information that work for you, and the children in your classroom. The ideal is if you and your pupils take ownership of it, design it and renew it according to your prayer routines. Once you spend a year gathering artefacts and images together, they can obviously be used again the following year. This document is simply intended to help you get started.

In particular, we have tried to draw your attention to the liturgical colours by changing the colour of text in the document where appropriate. On the whole, Feast Days of saints are white/gold. These are identified as such in the document although it may be best to keep the main seasonal colour of green, purple or white on display as **you could not be expected to change your prayer area every time it is a saint's day or a special celebration.** A little bit of information about each saint or the celebration is also included so you or your pupils can mention them in your morning prayer. It is not an exhaustive list so you and your pupils may wish to find out about other special days too.

Your Prayer Areas and the Liturgical Year

Basic ingredients for a Prayer Area

A cross / crucifix

An image of Mary

A candle

The Bible

Coloured cloth

Other things you may include:

An alms box

A bowl of holy water

A book of petitions for prayers

Seasonal items

Make your prayer area exactly what it is supposed to be: an *area for prayer* in your classroom. Think about this when you choose where to position it. It needs to be in a place where it is central, can be easily seen but is not going to be in the way of the whiteboard, or things you need ready access to. Look at your prayer area through new eyes. Would it help you to pray? That is the sole purpose of this area of your room, to aid prayer, and if it doesn't do that then you need to rethink things. Talk to your students about what would help them to pray. You could spend time as a class designing your prayer area at the beginning of the year.

When it is time to pray, get students into a routine of turning to the prayer area. You can ask them to focus on different elements on the area at different times, for example, the candle, the image of Mary.... Just as silence is able to focus thoughts, so the visuals used here are meant to direct our attention to prayer. Avoid overcrowding and clutter as that serves to distract rather than focus attention. Keep it simple, with a few well thought out and well placed objects.

Invite everyone to be responsible for the upkeep of the prayer area. Make that spot and the materials there the common property of everyone in the class, a place that everyone has a stake in. Invite everyone to contribute to the images there, although the use of contributions may need to be coordinated.

Try to keep the walls directly around the prayer area free from busy distractions. In season you can use the free space for appropriate wall art, or class work on a particular seasonal theme.

Autumn Term

When pupils start school in September, it will be **Ordinary Time**, the colour for which is **green**. This will last until the beginning of **Advent** when the colour changes to **purple** for the preparation of Jesus' birth at Christmas time. Whilst the date of Christmas is fixed every year, the day of the week on which it is celebrated will vary. For this reason, the date of the beginning of Advent will vary too. It will be celebrated on a Sunday four weeks before Christmas (not the 1st December as often thought).

SEPTEMBER

(Liturgical colour –
green until Advent)

First day of School for Students

A meaningful way to begin the school year is to bless the students through a simple service, which involves a scripture reading and some short prayers. You may choose to do this as a school, or in individual classrooms. There are various examples of prayer services to bless students that can be adapted and personalised. Alternatively, you may choose to celebrate the beginning of the new academic year with the whole school.

September 8th

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Birthday of Mary

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

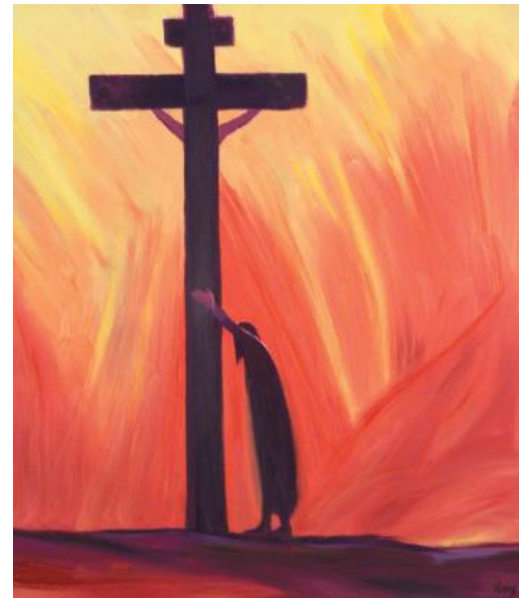
Use this time to introduce the classroom statue / picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Blue and red are two particular colours associated with Mary: blue as the colour of the sea and sky, represents the mortal created world. Red, the colour of fire, represents the divine and the immortal. Try to incorporate these colours if you can. Young children are quick to appreciate a birthday. You can help them feel close to Mary, by having a celebration, party, cake, balloons, cards, sing Happy Birthday...

September 14th

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

(Liturgical colour: red)

This feast is an occasion to speak about our regard for the Holy Cross. In the Christian calendar, Good Friday and Holy Cross Day are considered anniversaries of creation. On Good Friday and Holy Cross Day we remember how Jesus loved the world enough to die for it. These days are also considered anniversaries of creation. You can “autumnise” your classrooms, or prepare crosses out of dried flowers or grass. The cross itself, with its base plunged into the earth and its top touching heaven, with its arms seeming to reach from one horizon to the other, is an emblem of God’s embrace of creation. The colour of the day is red.



Although young children cannot quite appreciate the significance of the cross, they are well aware of the symbol of it. Display a cross where it can be easily seen, talk through the Sign of the Cross with them, explain the Sign of the Cross was part of their Baptism...

September 21st

Feast of St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

(Liturgical colour: red)

Matthew was a tax collector and very unpopular with the Jewish people. Tax collectors were often perceived as traitors as they were working for the Romans, but also dishonest as they often took more than they were entitled to. Yet Jesus chose Matthew to be one of his apostles. Matthew became a great man who taught many others about Jesus. Many of the stories Matthew tells in his Gospel are about how Jesus loves all kinds of people.

OCTOBER

(Dedicated to the Holy Rosary)



October 2nd

**Feast of Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael,
Archangels**

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

The feast of the angels calls for a celebration. It's a great occasion for having fun with decorations. Gather as many images of angels as you can find. Angels are signs of God's love and care. They remind us how God knows each of us. Look for reproductions of classic artwork, angel wing seashells, angel food cake – anything that reminds you of angels. In addition to wings, halos are features of angels (the word is related to “whole” or “holy”).

St Michael schools may want to focus particularly on the archangel Michael. In the Old Testament Michael is described as standing guard over God's people. The Book of Revelation tells how Michael cast the angels out of heaven who thought they were like God. Michael's name means “Who is like God?”. Michael is thought of as a great protector, and is often shown by artists dressed in armour fighting Lucifer, the head of the fallen angels. Because Michael fights against evil, his feast day offers images of good versus evil.

October 4th

Memorial of St Francis of Assisi

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

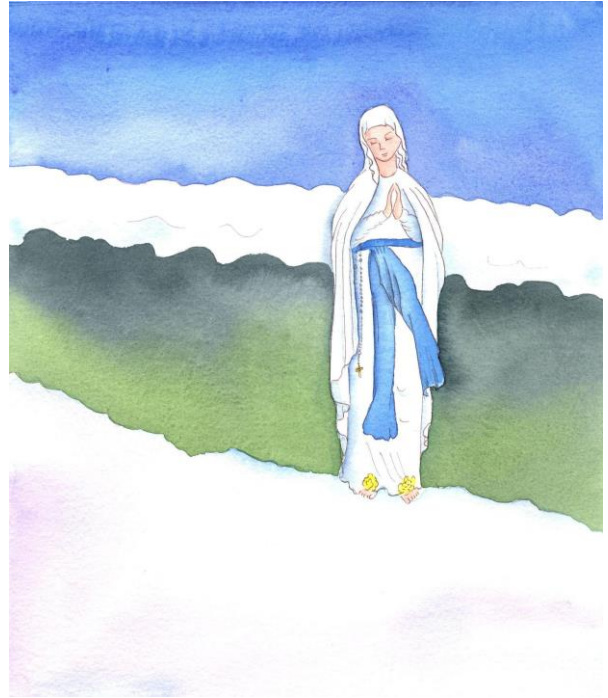
Francis is one of the most beloved saints in the world. He so loved God that he worked to have others come to love God too. Francis rejoiced in life, and in the people and animals he met along the way. All this love and joy gives us many wonderful stories about him. As a result of Francis' association with animals it may be an appropriate time if you want to host a blessing of any classroom pets or animals.

October 7th

Our Lady of the Rosary

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

St. Pius V established this feast in 1573. The purpose was to thank God for the victory of Christians over the Turks at Lepanto—a victory attributed to the praying of the Rosary. Clement XI extended the feast to the universal Church in 1716. This is a good point in the year to introduce the Rosary to your students or to begin praying decades of the Rosary at some point in your school day/week. There are many age-appropriate resources to introduce the Rosary to children.



October 18th

Feast of St Luke, Evangelist

(Liturgical colour: red)

One of the Gospels, as well as the Acts of the Apostles, was written by Luke. He was a Greek man, well-educated and was probably a doctor. He may have also been an artist. Luke didn't know Jesus when he was on earth, but Luke became a student of Paul, who taught him all about Jesus. He also became a good friend and helper of Paul. Most of the apostles and Gospel writers were Jews who had begun to follow Jesus. Luke however was not Jewish. He understood best the people who were not Jews but still came to love Jesus. He wrote about this in his Gospel. Many of the people he wrote about were poor and Luke's Gospel is sometimes called "The Gospel of the Poor". Luke also wrote often about Jesus and prayer. Luke shows us that Jesus' followers were often joyful and happy to give their lives doing Jesus' work.

October 28th

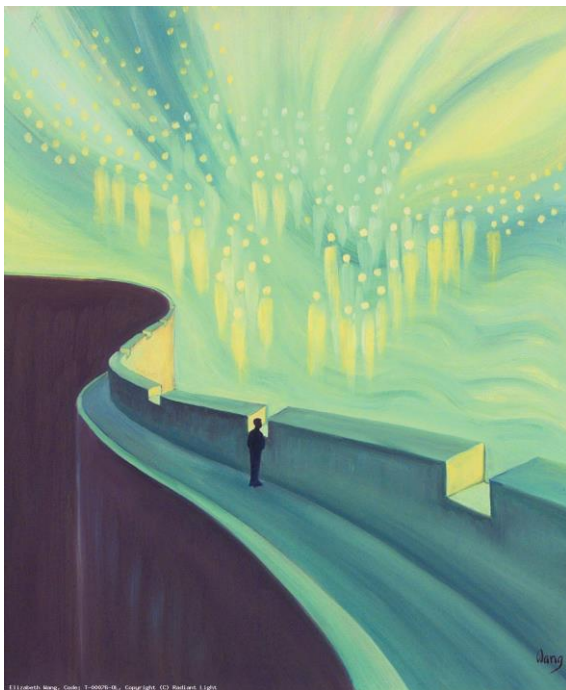
Feast of Ss Simon and Jude, Apostles

(Liturgical colour: red)

St. Jude travelled with St. Simon and everywhere they went they overcame idols and converted lots of people. They performed most of their work in Persia. Simon & Jude were martyred in Samir; their death caused a conversion of the king who carried their bodies to his city and built a wondrous size church in their honour. In the middle centuries, St. Jude's body was taken to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Simon is often referred to as a Zealot (he was part of a sect emphasizing zeal for religion and the purity of God). Jude is often known as the patron saint of lost or desperate causes.

NOVEMBER

(Dedicated to the Souls in Purgatory)



November 1st

Solemnity of All Saints - Holy Day of Obligation

(Liturgical colour: white)

All Saints' Day is a day that honours all martyrs and saints, known and unknown. A saint is a very blessed and holy person who loved God very much. Saints are people who dedicated their lives to God and served others unselfishly. Spend some time talking about the good works of saints and their faithfulness to God. Share some examples of people who are saints and the ways they served other people and God. Ask how we can act and live as the saints. How can we help others to do so? How can we take more time for prayer?

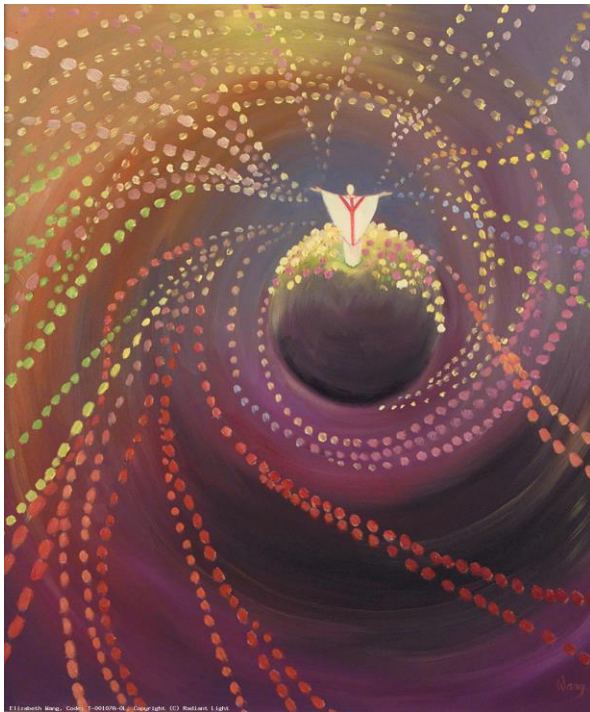
November 2nd

Commemoration of Faithful Departed, All Souls

(Liturgical colour: purple)

This is a day dedicated to all those who have died. Catholics all over the world remember loved ones, family and friends with thanksgiving and prayer. Depending on the age of your students, you may want to spend a bit of time talking about what death is, and talking about the new life we have with Jesus when we die. It may be appropriate to set up a shrine for the deceased. Gather pictures and mementos of loved ones who have passed away and leave this up throughout the month. You may have a blank book on your prayer area where students can write down the names of people they know who have died. You can also add names from the news. Photos can be added to the book. After you have built the shrine, use it in prayer.

If practical, you may want to make a small candle centrepiece for the children to take home. Collect pint size jars. Put an inch of sand or small pebbles in the bottom of the jar. Place a votive candle in the bottom of the jar. Place the cover on the jar and tie it with a piece of ribbon. Attach a prayer to the jar and suggest that parents light the candle and pray together on All Souls Day.



Sunday before Advent

Christ the King

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

This is a fairly new feast day. The Church uses the language of royalty as a symbol (like a monarch we are anointed at Baptism). We become a royal people. We share in Jesus' crown. The kingdom we are called to announce is one of justice, self-sacrifice, peace and freedom. We call Christ the "king". This word brings to mind power and wealth and authority. The Gospels we hear today tell us something else. Jesus is crowned with thorns. His throne is the cross. We recognise Christ the King in the hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned...

December 8th

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

(Liturgical colour: white/gold)

On this day we celebrate and honour the holiness and innocence of Mary. As Catholics we believe Mary was, at her conception, free from sin. She was free of original sin and therefore pure enough to be the mother of Jesus.

You could replace your year round statue / image of Mary with one of the Immaculate Conception. It is custom in some places to veil Mary's statue and to remove the veil at Christmas. Roses and other flowers can be used to ornament the shrine. You can honour Mary's purity by making a white paper chain with white cutout flowers to decorate the prayer space. Write each child's name on a flower or link of the chain.

Advent

Advent: Liturgical colour – purple/violet until Christmas

First Sunday of Advent: Hope – Light the Prophets' Candle

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus. The Church prepares us in three ways, through the Old Testament, through John the Baptist and through Mary. Until the last seven days of Advent, the emphasis is on the coming of Jesus at the end of time.

For your prayer corner simplify and pack away anything non-essential. Let the bareness be a visual surprise on the first day of Advent, along with the striking purple cloth. Ornament Mary's statue or image appropriately, (dark blue or silver fabric) and be sure to include an image of John the Baptist (you may ornament the image with signs of wilderness). If possible, try to get hold of an Advent wreath to pray around. Advent calendars have become a lovely way to count the days to Christmas too (you can make your own ones).



Second Sunday of Advent: Faith – Light the Bethlehem Candle

Try to remain focused on the Season of Advent and don't jump ahead to Christmas. Advent is about preparation and waiting and it's important we don't skip past this important time in the Church's calendar. The quiet anticipation of Advent makes the beautiful carols of Christmas that much more special. Avoid red, green and gold during Advent as these are Christmas colours. Keep using your Advent wreath to observe the season and build the sense of anticipation.

Third Sunday of Advent - Gaudete Sunday: Joy – Light the Shepherds' Candle (Liturgical colour: rose)

Advent is perfect for celestial signs – stars, comets whirling planets. It is a good time to use stars and snowflakes designed from clear, silver, blue, purple and white materials. On December 22nd the focus changes from Jesus coming at the end of time to the coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem. In the final days of Advent you could set up a Jesse Tree, which symbolises the lineage of Jesus. Some people create a tree that gets hung with symbols of Jesus' spiritual ancestors.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Peace – Light the Angels' Candle

The nativity of Christ doesn't enter the liturgical scene until the final days of Advent, not before December 22nd. This is the time to move decorations toward Christmas. Perhaps you can set up a stable and move the figures of Mary and Joseph closer and closer each day, adding more and more animals too. Ask all students to be involved in decorating the classroom. You may want to include a Christmas tree with lots of light, mistletoe (a sign of peace), lots of flowers, fruits and evergreens, stars hanging overhead. You may wish to do these activities much earlier in December due to school holidays and commitments.

Keep exchanging of gifts to the final days before term ends, to avoid bypassing the season of Advent and moving straight to Christmas.



Spring Term

When pupils return after Christmas, the colour will have changed to **white/gold** as it will be the Christmas season until the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. **Ordinary Time** will then begin again with **green** being displayed until Ash Wednesday, the beginning of **Lent**, when the colour changes to **purple** for the six weeks (40 days) preparation for Easter. The date of Easter changes each year which means that the date of Ash Wednesday, the Sundays in Lent, Holy Thursday and Good Friday will also vary.

JANUARY

January 6th

Solemnity of Epiphany

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

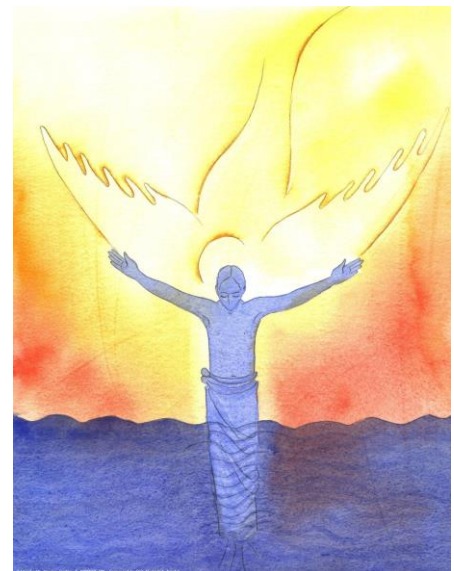
At Epiphany (which means “appearance” or “to show oneself”) we celebrate the Magi visiting Jesus and acknowledging him as the Saviour the world had been waiting for. They offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Use images of the three kings from Christmas cards to decorate your prayer corner. Include symbols of the three gifts, sweets wrapped in gold foil....

Sunday after Epiphany

Feast of Baptism of the Lord

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

We celebrate Jesus being baptised by John, marking the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. To represent the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ Baptism, include images of a dove, or a bowl of holy water to bless ourselves.



January 25th

Conversion of St Paul

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

Include an image of Paul – perhaps his experience on the road to Damascus and then add signs and symbols that remind us of Paul (a quill pen for his writings, a ship for his travels...). Open the Bible to the one of the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. This day marks the conclusion of the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity (a week of prayer for Christian Unity); perhaps this could be reflected in prayers said.

January 28th

Memorial of St Thomas Aquinas

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

St Thomas was a Catholic priest, and is considered the Catholic Church's greatest philosopher and theologian. His influence on Western thought is considerable. He is held to be the model teacher for those studying for the priesthood. St Thomas' life may be summed up in a few words: praying, preaching, teaching, writing and journeying. He had a strong passion to explain and defend "Christian Truth".

FEBRUARY

February 2nd

Feast of Presentation of the Lord

(Liturgical colour – white)

Here we take a final look back at Christmas and a forward look to Lent. We remember Jesus being taken by his parents to the Temple and Simeon's thanks to God that he can now die in peace. (Read Luke 2:22-38). The feast of the Presentation is also called Candlemas. Since the seventh century there has been a tradition of blessing candles before Mass that day and giving them to people. This feast day was probably chosen for this tradition because it symbolises that Christ is the Light of the World. A statue of the Holy family is appropriate, (perhaps adorned with the first of spring flowers, paper cut outs if not possible), as well as candles and lamps, and perhaps even a procession of light...

MARCH

March 1st

Solemnity of St David, Patron of Wales

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

Although we have little reliable information about St David, we know that he became a priest engaged in missionary work and founded many abbeys. A number of stories and legends sprung up about David and his Welsh monks. Their austerity was extreme. They worked in silence without the help of animals to till the soil. Their food was limited to bread, vegetables and water. He was elected Archbishop after impressing at a synod and ruled his diocese until he reached a very old age. Despite the hard manual labour and restricted diet, David focused on joy. His last words to his subjects were “Be joyful, brothers and sisters”.



March 17th

Solemnity of St Patrick, Patron of Ireland

(Liturgical colour – white)

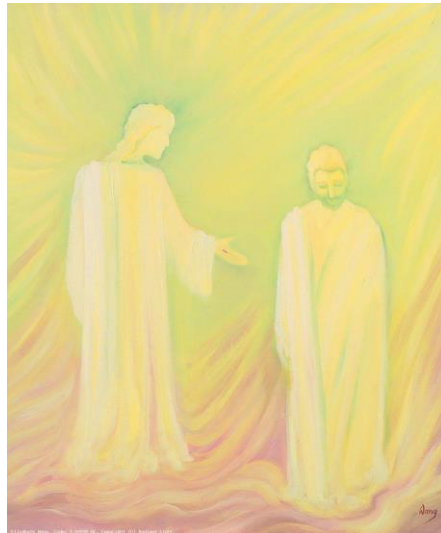
The liturgical colour for this day is white/gold; however the colour green fits in with Ireland and welcoming springtime. Shamrocks were the teaching tool of St Patrick for teaching the Trinity. It is said that he drove the snakes out of Ireland but this is just a myth; the snakes are symbolic of evil and are also a suitable Lenten image too.

March 19th

Solemnity of St Joseph, Spouse of Blessed Virgin Mary

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

St Joseph is well loved for being an understanding and supportive husband to Mary and protector and teacher to young Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, St Joseph was called a “tzaddic” which means a person of justice and virtue and was one of the most wonderful compliments given in biblical times. Try to find a picture of the Angel appearing to a sleeping Joseph, or a picture of Joseph on his deathbed surrounded by family (lots of artist impressions of these events available). If you have a statue of Joseph it could be crowned with flowers. You could include carpenter tools, to symbolise his work.



March 25th

Solemnity Annunciation of the Lord

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

The Annunciation is the day we celebrate the announcement to Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus. The angel Gabriel visited her and told her the baby would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel also told Mary that the baby’s name would be Jesus and he would be the Saviour of the world. Celebrate the Annunciation with Spring in mind. Mary found out she was to bring forth new life during the time of year we look for new life.

Lent and Easter

Ash Wednesday - Day of Fast and Abstinence.

(Liturgical colour – purple/violet until Triduum)

Historically called the Day of Ashes, it marks the beginning of Lent. On this day, early Christians declared their sinfulness and desire for forgiveness to their community. They wore sackcloth and covered themselves with ashes as symbols of their unworthiness. Today we observe this day by having the mark of the cross made on our forehead with ashes. The ashes are a symbol of sadness and death. The cross reminds us that we belong to Jesus who died for us.

Lent is a penitential season of prayer and penance; it is also a time when we renew our desire to be more loving towards God and our neighbor. It is therefore a time for simplicity, so make that apparent in your classroom and school. Also make sure Lent's liturgical colour, purple/violet, has pride of place in the classroom and school.

Devote a corner of the classroom or one of the common spaces in the school to share the ways students are praying, fasting and giving alms this Lent. Perhaps include an earthenware bowl of ashes on your prayer corner, along with bare branches, symbols of wilderness.... Place six candles in a box or pan of sand. Light one candle a week during Lent. Find some way to keep count of the days or weeks of Lent, as a class and as a school.

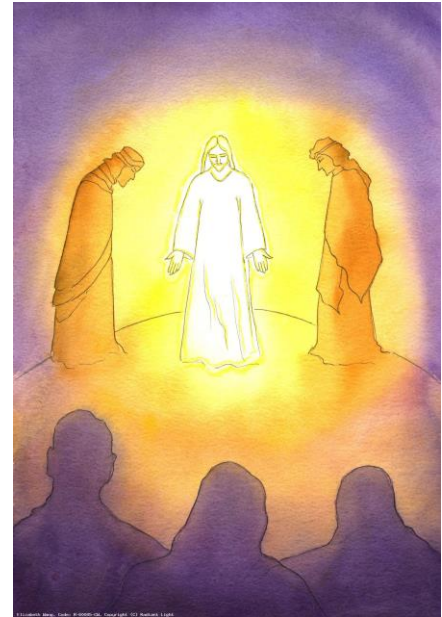
The Fridays of Lent are penitential days and as such fasting, prayer, almsgiving and works of mercy are to be encouraged in particular each Friday. Anyone celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are VIPs at this time of year. List the names in school, mention at assemblies and perhaps display photos of students preparing for the Sacraments.

First Sunday of Lent

Try to make prayer during Lent different and special. You could invite people in to participate. Perhaps parents and grandparents could be invited to join weekly prayer. If it is your practice to have prayer led over the intercom, perhaps stop doing that during Lent and instead have students lead prayers in the classrooms. Your prayer corner should now reflect some signs of Spring: potted plants, daffodils....

Second Sunday of Lent

On this Sunday we hear about the Transfiguration of Jesus. According to Scripture, Peter, James and John witnessed the presentation of the divine glory of Christ. It is believed that Christ wanted to strengthen the faith of the apostles prior to his death, so that they would know him when he returned. Through this amazing revelation, we recognize Jesus' divinity and hope for our own glory.



Third Sunday of Lent

Open the Bible on your prayer corner to John's Gospel during the final weeks of Lent. The Gospel this week is about Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. Water will be a key symbol for your prayer area, "those who drink the water I give them will never be thirsty again".

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Try to make it visually apparent (even to those driving by) that the school community is keeping Lent, and that Lent is all important in the life of the school. On a classroom level, you may want to cover your prayer corner in sandpaper for a "Lenten desert", finished with depictions of desert plants e.g. cacti, and desert animals e.g. lizards.

Fifth Sunday of Lent – Laetare Sunday (Liturgical colour – rose)

Just before Palm Sunday, drape the classroom crucifix with red and violet fabrics, with a crown of thorns and other Passion emblems. Place palms in the classroom and also bright banners or a donkey piñata to remember the procession itself.

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

(Liturgical colour – red or purple)

Read the Passion accounts and try to find suitable images to portray: a wood handled hammer, three large nails, dice, thirty silver coins, a purple robe, crown of thorns... Find beautiful depictions of the Passion in art books (or print from websites) and leave pages open on the prayer corner. It's a busy week for parish priests but it can be very valuable if they have time to come in and give an explanation of the Triduum, bringing in chrism and holy oils, talking about the washing of the feet and the procession with the Eucharist, the veneration of the cross... During Holy Week you may choose to make crosses, tying sticks together with raffia or leather straps. Attach a prayer and send home.

Maundy Thursday

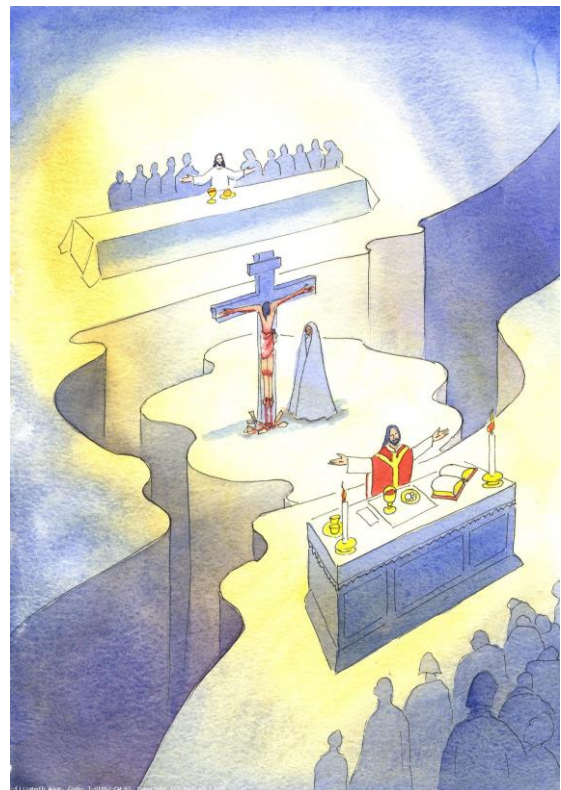
(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

We remember Jesus' Last Supper, the betrayal, his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane and his arrest. At church the priest washes the feet of twelve members of the congregation, and there is a procession of the Eucharist. Many stay in church until late in vigil.

Good Friday - Day of Fast and Abstinence

(Liturgical colour – red)

We remember the passion (that is, the suffering) and death of Jesus; it is a very solemn occasion. Statues are covered in the church, the altar is bare, no flowers, and only solemn hymns are sung. There is no Mass, but Holy Communion consecrated the night before, is received. The congregation venerates the cross, by either kissing or touching it.

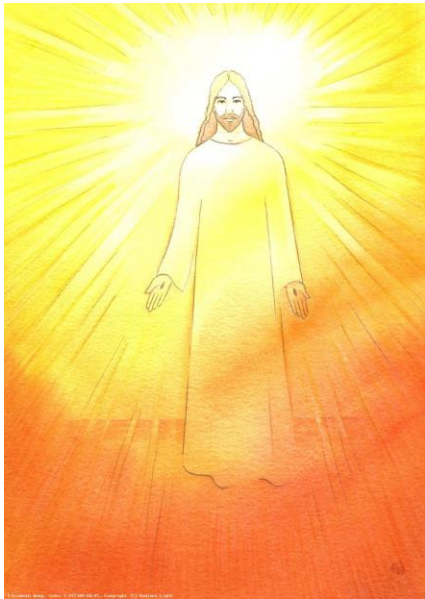


Saturday

(Liturgical colour – purple)

At the Easter Vigil, we wait for the resurrection of Jesus. Candles are held to symbolise Jesus as the light of the world, and many are baptised and welcomed into the Church.

Easter Sunday (Liturgical colour – white / gold until Pentecost)



Jesus is Risen! The church is bright, statues are restored/uncovered. Lots of flowers and candles and joyous singing – happiest occasion in the Church year!

The Easter season is just beginning and lasts until Pentecost – the entire season is supposed to be joyful! It is important that this isn't omitted from the school year because we are away from school for Easter Sunday. The Church celebrates for fifty days – so it still very appropriate to have an Easter celebration. Cover your prayer area with a beautiful white cloth, have an open tomb or figure of the risen Christ and lots of fresh flowers. In contrast to the barrenness of Lent, the Easter season is a time for an abundance of images and decorations that symbolise joy and triumph and eternity. You may show this by having a Paschal calendar running to Pentecost (one idea with younger children is to make 50 sheep and add a sheep to the calendar each day – symbolising the Good Shepherd. Alternatively, create an Easter garden and add one item to the scene each day.)

As well as focusing on Scripture, focus on our own stories too e.g. Baptism, Confirmation, First Holy Communion.... The Easter season should overflow with sacramental imagery, so focus on the children's own experience of the sacraments. Three things deserve special attention in the classroom, baptismal water, paschal candle and the cross. Teach the students the ritual of making the Sign of the Cross with holy water each morning. Light the paschal candle each day of the Easter season during prayer time. Perhaps hang a white shroud on the cross, or lay flowers before it.

When talking with the children about Easter, make connections between the new life we have in Jesus and his resurrection as well as springtime and the new life we see in nature. Discuss the symbols of flowers, eggs and baby animals. Look at the trees and grass and talk about how they begin to turn green and grow in the Spring. Be sure to continue Easter celebrations in the days and weeks that follow Easter Sunday!

Summer Term

When pupils return after Easter, the colour will have changed to **white/gold** as it will be the Easter season until the celebration of **Pentecost** when the colour will change to **red**. **Ordinary Time** will then begin again with **green** being displayed the day after Pentecost until Advent during the next academic year. As the date of Easter changes each year so too will the dates of all associated feasts such as Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and others.

April 23rd

Solemnity of St George, Patron of England

(Liturgical colour – white / gold)

Although there are many legends surrounding St George, the Church adheres only to his memory, not to the stories. However, there is every reason to believe he was a real martyr who suffered in Palestine probably before the time of Constantine. That he was willing to pay the supreme price to follow Christ is what the Church believes, and that is enough.

April 25th

Feast of St Mark the Evangelist

(Liturgical colour – white / gold)

Mark is one of the writers of the four Gospels. He was not an apostle, but a member of the first group of Christians. It is believed that Mark's mother opened her house as a place of prayer while St Peter was imprisoned. Mark also travelled with St Paul acting as his secretary. Most likely, much of his Gospel was based on information from St Peter, Mark wrote for a variety of people so his writing is simple and direct.

April 29th

Feast of St Catherine of Siena, Patron of Europe

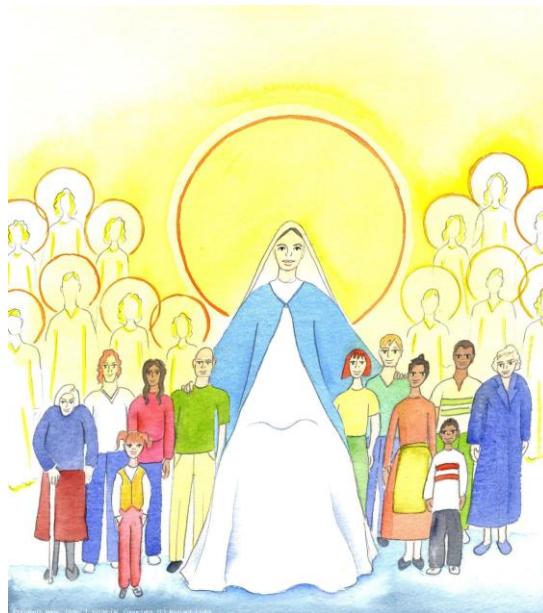
(Liturgical colour – white / gold)

St Catherine deliberately told popes, queens and kings how to behave. She was spontaneous, unafraid of authority and fearless in the face of death. She was a Dominican religious who corresponded with popes and peasants alike. Born in 1347, at Siena, Italy, Catherine lived through the Black Death, famine and numerous civil wars. Her impact on her society was so profound that Europe was unable to forget her. She was canonised and became one of the first female doctors of the Church.

MAY

(Dedicated to our Mother Mary)

A tradition is the May altar, which is a simple way to show that Mary is very loved by us. On the prayer area place a beautiful fabric behind Mary's statue. Especially fitting are spring flowers, and you may choose to crown the statue with fresh flowers each morning / week. Students may even create a simple crown that will fit the statue's head. Students could decorate scrolls with the Regina Caeli. Crowns made from flowers and herbs are not only traditional to crown Mary's statue but all sacred images during the Easter season.



May 4th

Feast of the English Martyrs

(Liturgical colour –red)

The feast is celebrated on this day as this is the date when the first martyrs of the Protestant Reformation died at Tyburn, London, for rejecting Henry VIII as the Head of the Church of England. Catholic martyrdom continued in England and Wales until the following century with, according to Jesuit sources, over 400 Catholics dying for their faith. The site of the Tyburn Tree, the gallows upon which 105 canonised and beatified martyrs were executed, is marked by a simple stone roundel at the junction of Edgware Road and Bayswater Road.

May 14th

Feast of St Matthias

(Liturgical colour –red)

Matthias was a follower of Jesus, but not one of the original Twelve Apostles. However, after Jesus ascended into heaven and Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, had died, St Peter called the eleven apostles together to choose a new apostle. They wanted to keep the number twelve since that number symbolised the complete family of God. Matthias had seen Jesus' miracles and had learned Jesus' teachings, so he was chosen.

Ascension of the Lord

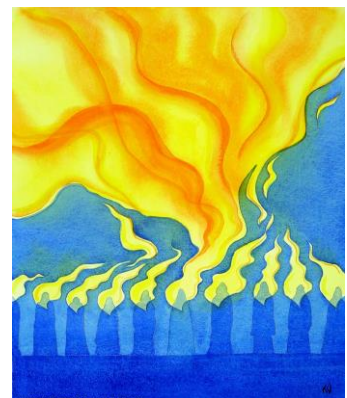
(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

Ascension Thursday falls forty days after Easter. The Pentecost Novena starts on this day, ending on Pentecost itself. Ascension literally means “to go up”, and on this day we commemorate the earthly body of Jesus going up to heaven. This day is not about Jesus leaving us, but about the everlasting presence of the Risen Christ – the apostles more fully understood that Jesus was God after this event. In the reading at Mass, Christ fills the universe, so celestial signs are appropriate on this day (the earth, sun, moon, stars, comets, galaxies...), you can scatter glitter and stars on a green cloth – representing the connection we now have between heaven and earth. You can also include images of blaring trumpets and clapping hands (incorporate into the prayer). The strongest image of the day though is the holy sign of the cloud. You could perhaps use a ‘cloud’ of incense in your classroom or images of Jesus ascending with the disciples gazing at the sky.... Use images of the apostles staring amazed and then use the same figures at Pentecost with tongues of fire on their head.

Pentecost

(Liturgical colour – red)

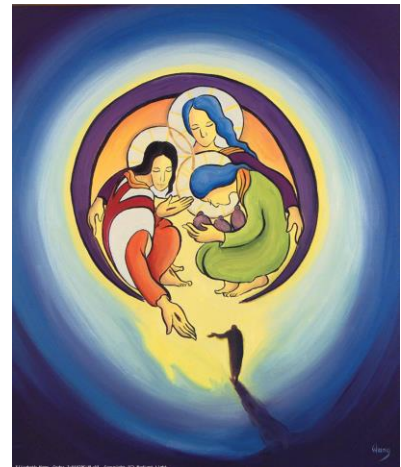
This is celebrated 50 days after Easter. The Holy Spirit descended in wind and fire upon the apostles. Create mobiles or kites depicting the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit or the nine Fruits of the Spirit. Fly the decorated kites noticing the power of the wind.... Fire and light are the main symbols for this day and should be used appropriately in the prayer corner. Depending on the age of children, perhaps you could have a ceremony of light where they all light a candle from a central one. After the Day of Pentecost, the liturgical colour is green – signifying “ordinary time” – Easter season decoration should now be removed.



The Most Holy Trinity

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

This is celebrated the Sunday after Pentecost. Throughout the Easter season we have been celebrating the work of the Trinity. Perhaps that is why the Church celebrates the Holy Trinity on this first Sunday after Easter time. It helps to remind us of what we celebrate every Sunday: the risen Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to be God's presence in us and in all God's creation. As Christians we are called to begin and end whatever we say or do "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen".



Solemnity of Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ - Corpus Christi

(Liturgical colour – white/gold)

Corpus Christi is celebrated the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. It is the Latin for the "Body of Christ". People in the middle ages wanted a joyful day to celebrate Jesus' gift of the Eucharist. They created this feast as a good time of year for processions and street fairs. In many towns, streets were lined with flowers, and flowers and herbs were arranged into pictures and designs. The bread of the Lord's body was carried outdoors under a canopy, bands played and people sung hymns of praise. Today lots of people think the best way to celebrate Jesus' gift of the Eucharist is to put heart and soul into celebrating the Eucharist well. That way every Sunday is a feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

June 22nd

Feast of Ss John Fisher and Thomas More

(Liturgical colour – red)

St John Fisher was an English Catholic Cardinal and Theologian. He was a man of learning, associated with the intellectuals and political leaders of his day. He was executed by order of Henry VIII during the English Reformation for refusing to accept the king as Supreme Head of the Church of England and for upholding the Catholic Church's doctrine of papal supremacy. St Thomas More was an English lawyer, social philosopher, author and statesman. He was an important councillor to Henry VIII. He opposed the Protestant Reformation and the King's separation from the Catholic Church. He refused to accept him as the Head of the Church of England. More was tried for treason, convicted on perjured testimony and beheaded.

June 24th

Solemnity of Nativity of John the Baptist

(Liturgical colour – red)

St John the Baptist was a prophet, a person who understands what God wants and tells others so they know too. The feast of John the Baptist is celebrated in different countries in different ways: French Canadians have a large festival with street fairs and parades with music and dancing. The streets are decorated with flowers and images of John. Images associated with John the Baptist fit in well with the theme of Summer: seashells, the river and the summer sun. Water is also a powerful symbol of John's role in baptising Jesus.

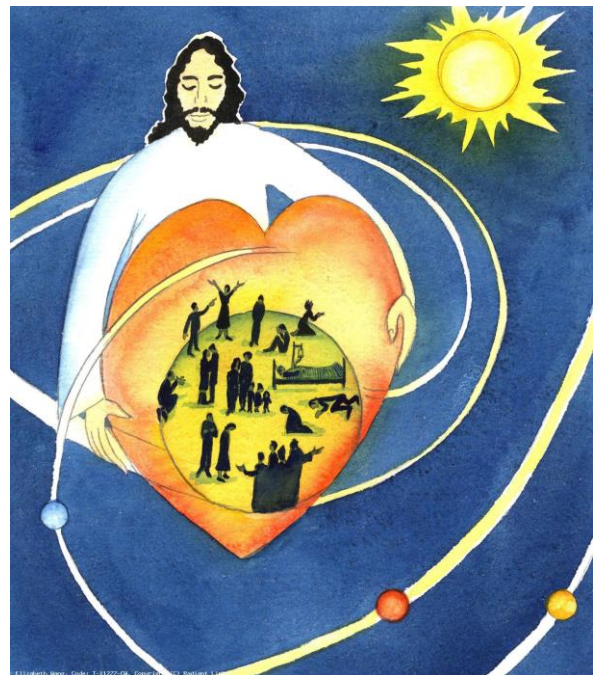
Solemnity of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

First Friday after Corpus Christi

(Liturgical colour – white)

The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most common devotions in the Catholic Church today. That is why many people are surprised to find out that it was not celebrated until fairly recently. It is celebrated on the first Friday after Corpus Christi.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus took root first in France, but it took the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90) for the devotion to become universal. In 1856, Pope Pius IX decreed that the feast should be celebrated by the universal Church, in reparation for our ingratitude for the sacrifice that Christ has made for us.



Since the Feast of the Sacred Heart always falls 19 days after Pentecost Sunday, it is almost always celebrated in June, which is why June is known as the Month of the Sacred Heart. It can also fall in July, however--the Month of the Precious Blood of Jesus. These two months, and the feast they share, should lead us to meditate on the connection between Christ's Precious Blood, i.e. his sacrifice for us, and his Sacred Heart, his mercy towards us. The Sacred Heart represents not only Jesus' physical heart, but his love for us all. With younger children, Jesus' love for us is the focal point, and then when appropriate his sacrifice as an expression of that love.

June 29th
Solemnity of Ss Peter and Paul
(Liturgical colour – red)

Peter and Paul are the solid rock on which the Church is built. They were both martyred, and for many centuries Christians have gone on pilgrimage to their tombs. It is worth reading the stories of these two saints and telling children that St Peter was asked by Jesus to lead his flock and that St Peter's authority extends to the present Pope in an unbroken line. St Paul reminds us of our mission to tell the Good News to all those who have yet to hear of Jesus. St Paul took the Gospel to new parts of the world and to non-Jewish communities. He changed the nature and dynamic of the Church.

July 3rd
Feast of St Thomas the Apostle
(Liturgical colour – red)

Thomas is known in popular culture as "Doubting Thomas" because of the famous Bible story in which he demands to see physical proof of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus appears, inviting Thomas to touch the scars of his wounds from the crucifixion.

When Thomas believed, he could be quite courageous. The Bible records in John chapter 11 that when the disciples were worried about accompanying Jesus to Judea (because the Jews had previously tried to stone Jesus there), Thomas encouraged them to stick with Jesus, who wanted to return to the area to help his friend Lazarus, even if that meant being attacked by Jewish leaders there. Thomas says in verse 16: "Let us also go, that we might die with him."

Thomas later asked Jesus a famous question when the disciples were eating the Last Supper with him. John 14:1-4 of the Bible records Jesus telling his disciples: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas' question comes next, revealing that he's thinking of physical directions rather than spiritual guidance: "Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'"

Thanks to Thomas' question, Jesus clarified his point. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him'. St Thomas is a good introduction to activities and discussion about faith and proof.

Key: Red



Red
(Time of passion)



White / Gold
(Time of Celebration)



Green
(Ordinary Time)



Purple
(Time of Preparation)

Information taken from: 'School Year Church Year' by Peter Mazar

'The Big Book of Catholic Customs and Traditions' by Beth Branigan McNamara et al.

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