

The Calendar of the Christian Year – An Introduction

The Christian Year is comprised of two cycles of holy days. The first is the Paschal Cycle, which follows the lunar calendar and identifies the first Sunday after the full moon that falls on or after March 21 as Easter Day. (Easter Day cannot occur before March 22 or after April 25.) The season of Lent precedes Eastertide and the Season after Pentecost follows it. The second cycle, the Incarnation Cycle, follows the solar calendar and places our Lord's birth on December 25 (Christmas Day) with the season of Advent preceding it. The season of Epiphany follows the twelve days of the Christmas season (Christmastide.)

Sundays

The sequence of the Sundays of the Calendar depends on the date of Easter, because every Sunday is a celebration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Nevertheless, Sundays also reflect the character of the seasons in which they are set. Following ancient Jewish tradition, the celebration of any Sunday begins at sundown on the Saturday that precedes it. Therefore at Evening Prayer on Saturdays (other than Holy Days), the Collect appointed for the ensuing Sunday is used.

Principal Feasts

Easter Day	Christmas Day (December 25)
Ascension Day	The Epiphany (January 6)
Day of Pentecost	All Saints' Day (November 1)
Trinity Sunday	

These feasts take precedence over any other day or observance. All Saints' Day may also be observed on the Sunday following November 1, in addition to its observance on the fixed date.

Holy Days

The Holy Days, traditionally called Red-Letter Days, observed in this church, in addition to the Principal Feasts, are the following:

The Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ (January 1)	The Nativity of John the Baptist (June 24)
The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2)	Mary Magdalene (July 22)
The Annunciation (March 25)	The Virgin Mary (August 15)
The Visitation (May 31)	Holy Cross Day (September 14)
The Transfiguration (August 6)	Holy Michael and All Angels (September 29)
The Feasts of the Apostles	James of Jerusalem (October 23)
The Feasts of the Evangelists	Stephen, Deacon and Martyr (December 26)
Joseph, the Guardian of Jesus (March 19)	The Holy Innocents (December 28)

Any of these feasts that fall on a Sunday, other than in Advent, Lent and Easter, may be observed on that Sunday or transferred to the nearest following weekday.

No holy day or observance can replace the fixed propers for Ash Wednesday, Holy Week or Easter Week.

Days of Discipline, Denial and Special Prayer

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, and Good Friday, the day of our Lord's Crucifixion, are traditionally days of special devotion and total abstinence. Maundy Thursday is observed with rites recalling the Last Supper and betrayal at Gethsemane.

The weekdays of Lent and every Friday of the year (outside the 12 Days of Christmas and the 50 days of Eastertide) are encouraged as days of fasting. Ember Days and Rogation Days may also be kept in this way.

Fasting, in addition to reduced consumption, normally also includes prayer, self-examination and acts of mercy.

Ember Days are set aside for prayers for those called to Holy Orders, and occur on the following Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays:

- After St. Lucy's Day (December 13)
- After Lent 1
- After the Day of Pentecost
- After Holy Cross Day (September 14)

Rogation Days are the three days preceding Ascension Day, especially devoted to asking for God's blessing on agriculture and industry.

National Days with proper lessons are:

- Memorial Day (United States on the Monday closest to May 28)
- Canada Day (Canada on July 1)
- Independence Day (United States on July 4)
- Thanksgiving Day (Canada on the second Monday in October; United States on the fourth Thursday in November)
- Remembrance Day (Canada on November 11)

Commemorations

The Book of Common Prayer of 1662 appointed days of optional commemoration (Black Letter Days). In this edition of the Book of Common Prayer, two categories of optional commemorations are presented: Anglican and Ecumenical. These commemorations may be observed according to the needs and desires of each community. Collects and Lessons are offered in nine categories: Martyr, Missionary, Pastor, Teacher of the Faith, Monastic, Ecumenist, Reformer of the Church, Renewer of Society, and any Saint. The daily Psalms and readings at Morning and Evening prayer are not usually superseded by these commemorations.

Those preparing weekday liturgies are encouraged to limit the number of commemorations, especially in Advent or Lent, in order that the spirit of the season be maintained.