

Advent – A Season of Waiting

The Church calendar

The current calendar was created by Saint Gregory the Great in an attempt to make the seasons more orderly. Prior to this, church events such as Easter and others floated all over the map using a calendar developed by the emperor Julian around the year of 45 BC. It had 365 ¼ days but was still 11 minutes too long – and after a few years the errors became significant.

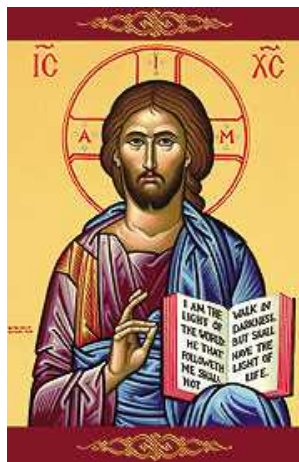
The calendar was important to the peoples of this time because it told them when to plant and when to harvest and these errors caused them problems. During the reign of Pope Gregory the Great - the calendar as we use it today was implemented to correct the errors.

What are the seasons and events of the church?

For the first thousand years, Christianity and the church year did not have the structural unity as we see it today. This evolved gradually centered on the remembrance of the greatest moment – the resurrection of Jesus. The first weekly celebration was called the Lord's Day or Sunday and was also know as the Pascha. We will cover these seasons more fully in other 5-Minute Catechisms but the following is a brief summary.

The church year begins with Advent and there are six distinct seasons of the year

1. Advent
2. Christmas Time
3. Lent
4. Holy Week and the Pascal Triduum
5. Easter
6. Ordinary Time



The seasons are based upon old Hebrew and Biblical lore and often the early church chose the period to offset some pagan festival. For example, Christmas became celebrated on December 25th to counter the pagan festival of the sun god.

Advent – a season of waiting

The word Advent comes the Latin *adventus* (coming) and originated in the 4th century. The color for this season is Purple and it is a time of preparation for Christmas and the coming of Jesus. It expresses penance, sorrow and waiting. It is also a symbol of royalty. Purple is also used during Advent to remind us to remain hope filled and waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus – called the Parousia.

Our church calendar year begins with Advent. and is four weeks long, beginning from the fourth Sunday before Christmas to December 24th and is a season of waiting – as we await the holy birth. The somber theme can be seen from the weekend masses that emphasis the end times and the Incarnation of Jesus.

Advent Traditions

The **Advent Wreath** is typically made of evergreens and suspended from the ceiling. You may see a rose-colored Advent candle in the wreath – in addition to the other candles. Typically, the rose candle is lighted during the 3rd week – called Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday to help lighten the mood from the previous weeks.

Many homes will have an **Advent Calendar** – which displays the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas. Biblical persons associated with the coming Messiah are often represented by a **Jesse Tree** – with such ancestors as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jesse and David. An old custom was to prepare a **Manger** for the family nativity scene. Each night the children would place a piece of straw for each good deed that they may have done.