

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

OFFICE OF SCHOOLS

The Environment of a Catholic Classroom



Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Superior are a mission of the Church entrusted by Jesus Christ to instill Catholic faith and morals in our students. Within community, our schools prepare students spiritually, academically, and physically to proclaim and live out the Good News in preparation for eternal life.

"A school's physical environment is also an integral element that embodies the genuine community values of the Catholic tradition. Since the school is rightly considered an extension of the home, it ought to have 'some of the amenities which can create a pleasant and family atmosphere.' This includes an adequate physical plant and adequate equipment.

It is especially important that this "school-home" be immediately recognizable as Catholic:

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, §25

If Catholic schools are to be true to their identity, they will **suffuse their environment with a delight in the sacramental**. Therefore, they should **express physically and visibly the external signs of Catholic culture through images, symbols, icons, and other objects of traditional devotion**. A...

- chapel,
- classroom crucifixes and
- statues,
- liturgical celebrations, and
- other sacramental reminders of Catholic life,

including good art that is not explicitly religious in its subject matter, should be evident. All these signs embody the community ethos of Catholicism.

Prayer should be a normal part of the school day, so that students learn to pray in times of sorrow and joy, of disappointment and celebration, of difficulty and success. Such prayer teaches students that they belong to the communion of saints, a community that knows no bounds. **The sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation in particular should mark the rhythm of a Catholic school's life. Mass should be celebrated regularly**, with the students and teachers participating appropriately. Traditional Catholic devotions should also have their place:

- praying the Rosary,
- decorating May altars,
- singing hymns,
- reading from the Bible,
- recounting the lives of the saints, and
- celebrating the Church's liturgical year.

The sacramental vitality of the Catholic faith is expressed in these and similar acts of religion that belong to everyday ecclesial life and should be evident in every school."

(Miller, Most Rev. Michael, CSB, Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools, 2006, p. 39-41)



In carrying out the expectations of integrating the faith throughout the curriculum, as well as, the mission of the Church, it is imperative that our Catholic schools **provide a multitude of prayer and liturgical opportunities for the students, and their families**.



Every classroom should have a **space dedicated to prayer**. It should be a prominent location within the classroom where either the class as a whole or students may go individually for prayer. This space should be a constant reminder of Christ's presence in the classroom. This space is best to be separate from the student desks and create an environment that encourages or draws children to prayer. Children respond to and need concrete images to assist them in learning to pray.

Not all classrooms have a physical space to accommodate a full prayer space, if this is the case, a prayer table alone with some wall space is sufficient.

Prayer Table Ideas

Make your prayer table central to the life of the classroom!



<https://www.catholicteacherresources.com/prayer-table-ideas/>

Here are a few ideas about how to set up and incorporate a classroom prayer table.

- Place your prayer table in the focal point of the room
- At minimum, place an open Bible, a crucifix, a statue of Mary, a rosary and a candle (battery operated if necessary)
- Modify your prayer table in accordance with the weekly readings
- Change your prayer table theme to reflect the liturgical season
- Set up a box or basket where students can place their intentions
- Have students bring in significant personal items to adorn the prayer table
- Include Sacramental symbols when appropriate: oil, holy water, rings, etc.
- Have your students set the appropriate cloth and items on the prayer table to begin each day. At the end of the day, have them remove the cloth and items until the following morning.
- Post your school's Gospel theme or "Word of the Month" if you have one
- Assign a student to read from the prayer table Bible each day
- Place prayer cards for members of the school community on the prayer table
- Assign a different group of students to arrange and maintain the prayer table each month
- Visit other classrooms with your students to view their prayer tables



Wall and Prayer Space Items

Each classroom has a significant role to play because each classroom establishes age appropriate ways to **connect the children to their faith** and its teachings. The wall space or bulletin board(s) in a classroom provide an ideal opportunity **to infuse the classroom with the Christian message**. Religious images can leave an indelible mark on the student's minds and perhaps touch their hearts in a way that our words do not.

Items that should be present in a classroom...

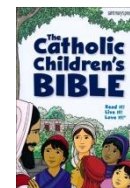
Crucifix – Jesus died on the Cross for us. What once was a symbol of torture is now a sign of hope and salvation. It should have a central part of our classroom space and our day. It is best to have a Crucifix in the room, rather than a cross, as this is a visual reminder of Jesus' sacrifice for us.



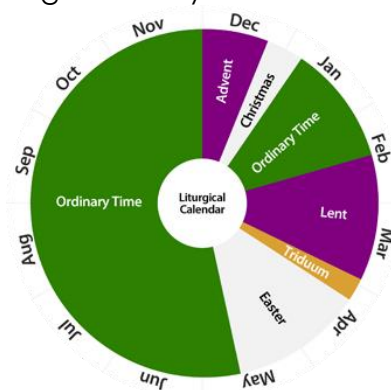
Candle – It is a fitting symbol of God, the All Pure, the Source of all Grace and enlightenment. It represents our Blessed Savior and His mission. He was "the Light of the world" (Jn 8:12) to enlighten "them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Lk 1:79). (www.awakentoprayer.org/candles.htm) Lighting the prayer table candle, before prayer helps to settle students and create an atmosphere of sacredness and respect for prayer time. Battery operated candles are appropriate. If a real candle is used, be sure to extinguish completely following the prayer time.



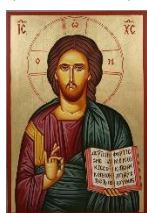
Bible – The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It should be given a place of prominence on the prayer table or somewhere in the classroom. Be sure to display a Catholic approved Bible - (<http://www.usccb.org/bible/approved-translations/index.cfm>). An age appropriate version of the Bible is appropriate.



Tablecloth – During the Liturgy of the Eucharist an altar cloth adorns the altar. It is custom then to have a tablecloth covering the prayer table in a classroom for it is a special place in our classroom where we offer reverence for our Lord. The material should be cloth and the color should change throughout the year to reflect the liturgical season of the Church.



Pictures, Posters, Icons – Most people have photos of their loved ones in their homes or on their desks. Catholic icons and pictures are those same reminders of friends and servants of God whom we admire for their holiness. An icon is a form of prayer in itself. It is meant to make you aware that you are in the presence of God. In addition to the style of the painting (or writing as it is called), the actual technique of making an icon is rich with symbolism.



Statues – Catholics do not worship idols, but have a long tradition of using statues in our churches, because thousands of years ago, people were not able to read and write. Therefore, the church used statues, paintings and stained glass windows to visually portray the stories in the bible and show what people from that time period may have looked like. Catholics have statues of Jesus, Mary and the saints in our churches, to honor them and preserve their memory, just like our nation does with statues of presidents and war heroes.



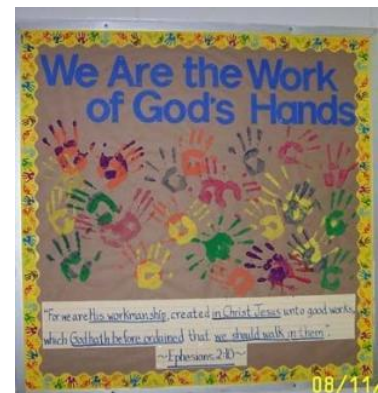
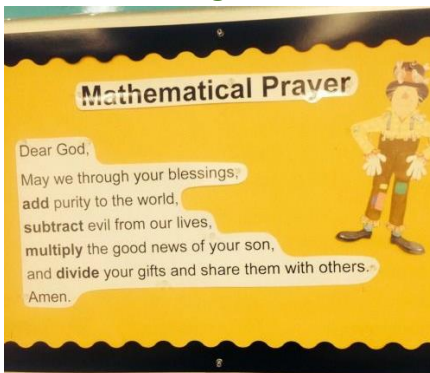
Rosary and Chaplets – The Rosary focuses on the life of Jesus Christ and is prayed to show devotion in honor of the Virgin Mary. Each decade represents an important chapter or mystery in the life of Christ. Chaplets are a devotional prayer card, with the number of beads being tied to the specific prayer, often to a saint. By using a chaplet or rosary, you tap into the power of focus in prayer.



Daily/Weekly Prayer Intentions/Prayer Wall – In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. The series of intentions said at Mass are usually to be: a) for the needs of the Church; b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world; c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty; and d) for the local community. Displaying certain prayers each day, week or month helps children focus on particular intentions.



Positive Messages of Faith –



School Mission Statement –



Prayer

Prayer is an expression of our relationship with a loving God. Don't let daily prayer breaks be just one more thing to do. Challenge the students to slow down and think about the words that they pray. Give them something to think about. Give them something to do each day to help reflect on those prayers.

We teach traditional Catholic prayers to:

- give students a sense of routine.
- give students a working knowledge of simple prayer to pray in times of need.
- give students a connection to the greater church of the world, family and the communion of saints.
- give students a sense of Catholic Identity.

Before you pray, take a few minutes to have them take some slow deep breaths. Encourage them to spend a few moments in silence—something they nearly never get to experience in their daily lives. If possible, find a book of reflections to read to them throughout the year to help them prepare and meditate on the words that they pray. Those short invitations to pause and reflect on the words of the prayer will make them more than memorized words. We really want them to experience the loving presence of the Lord. These short reflections may be the words that makes something click in their minds to see and pray the devotions in a whole new way. Read the reflections before or after the devotion to help them think, pray, and meditate.

(Jered Dees, <https://www.thereligionteacher.com/school-wide-prayer/>, 3/21/17)

Ways to utilize prayer throughout the school day are to:

- Pray at all times of the day – introducing different prayers. Don't always use the same prayer for each time of day.
- Give the students prayer cards or prayer folders to hold (tape) their prayers.
- Pray at different times of day other than morning, lunch and dismissal – pray before a test, a class, a field trip, an event – choose a prayer that would meet the need.
- Put the prayer name on a popsicle stick – have a child draw a stick at the time of prayer and say that prayer.
- Include spontaneous prayer, journaling prayer and other non-formal forms of prayer along with these traditional prayers.
- Allow students to see that tradition and modern prayer can interact.

Prayer can be a great opportunity to empower students to lead prayers. Ensure that they take these experiences very seriously. Talk with them about the importance of what they are doing. Set the tone for them before they lead others in prayer. At the beginning of the year, model the piety that you expect them to mirror in the way they pray before others.

(Jered Dees, <https://www.thereligionteacher.com/school-wide-prayer/>, 3/21/17)

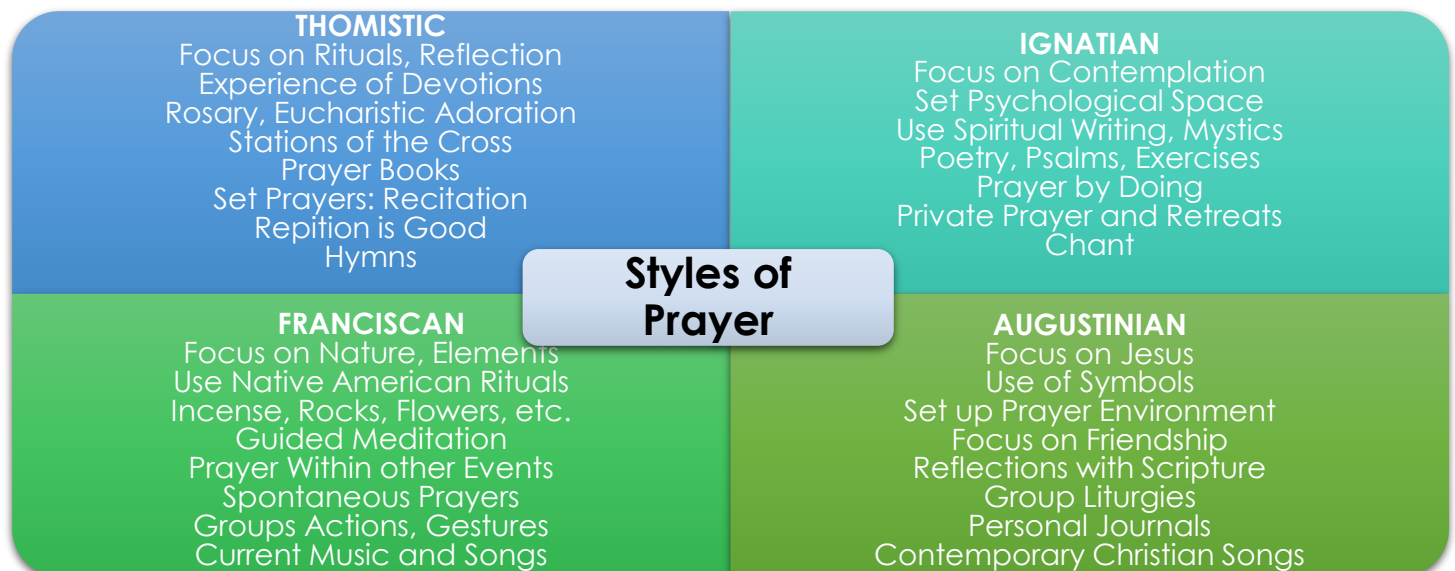
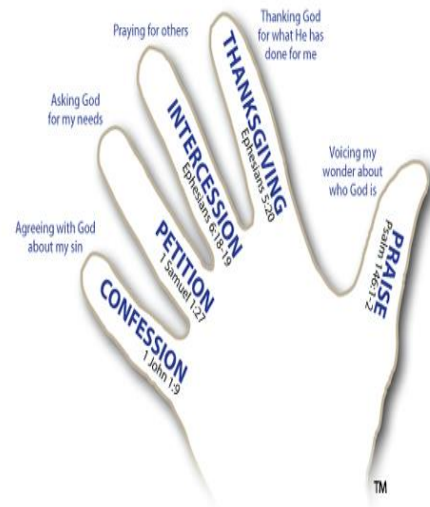
Forms of Prayer:

- Bless or adore God (prayer of blessing and adoration)
- Ask God for something for ourselves (prayer of petition)
- Pray for others (prayer of intercession)
- Thank God in prayer (prayer of thanksgiving)
- Praise God (prayer of praise)
- Pray silently or aloud
- Pray alone or with others (communal prayer)

- Meditate and contemplate
- Lectio Divina
- Song/Music
- Drawing/Art

This list of prayers is not an exhaustive list, but rather important traditional prayers of the Church that all children should be exposed to.

- Sign of the Cross (CCC 2157)
- Our Father (CCC 2762-2772)
- Hail Mary (CCC 2617-2619, 2676-2677)
- Meal Prayer
- Spontaneous Prayer
- Glory Be (Doxology) (CCC 2855)
- Guardian Angel Prayer
- Mass Responses (CCC 1273, 1389)
- Rosary (CCC 2678, 2708)
- Stations of the Cross (CCC 2669, 1674)
- Act of Contrition (CCC 1451-1454)
- Scripture Verses (CCC 2653-2654)
- Ten Commandments (CCC 2084-2557)
- Jesus' Great Commandment (CCC 1974)
- Apostle's Creed (CCC 194, 196, 2558)
- Morning Offering
- Act of Faith (CCC 2656)
- Act of Hope (CCC 2657)
- Act of Love (CCC 2658)
- Nicene Creed (CCC 195)
- Memorare
- Mysteries of the Rosary
- Hail Holy Queen
- Confiteor (I confess to...)
- Prayer Before & After Reconciliation
- Prayer to St. Michael
- Litany to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- The Angelus
- The Divine Praises
- Prayer Before & After Communion
- Anima Christi
- Diocesan Prayer for Vocations
- Litany of Mary
- Prayer of St. Francis
- Prayer for the Dead (Eternal rest..)



Styles of Prayer

Catholic Teacher as Witness

Every Christian, and therefore also every lay person, has been made a sharer in 'the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ', and **their apostolate "is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself ... All are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself'**. (Lay Catholics in Schools, 6)

- † The integration [of religious truth and values with the rest of life] is expressed above all in the lives of the teachers in Catholic schools whose **daily witness to the meaning of mature faith and Christian living** has a profound impact upon the education and formation of their pupils. (Teach Them, 1976, p. 3)
- † Teachers' **life style and character** are as important as their professional credentials. (Teach Them, 1976, p. 7)
- † The extent to which the **Christian message is transmitted** through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. (The Catholic School, 1977, #43)
- † The achievement of this specific aim [**growth of faith**] of the Catholic school **depends** not so much on the subject matter or methodology as **on the people who work there**. (The Catholic School, 1977, #43)
- † The integration of **culture and faith is mediated by** the other integration of faith and life in **the person of the teacher**. (The Catholic School, 1977, #43)
- † The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, **in imitation of Christ**, the only Teacher, they **reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior**. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other. (The Catholic School, 1977, #43)
- † **By their witness and their behavior** teachers are of the first importance **to impart a distinctive character** to Catholic schools. (The Catholic School, 1977, #78)
- † To give witness to the gospel, the catechist must **establish a living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord**. He or she must **be a person of prayer, one who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christ-like living testifies to deep faith**. (Sharing the Light of Faith, 1979, #207)
- † They [lay Catholics] live in the midst of the world's activities and professions, and in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life; and there they are called by God to exercise their proper function so that being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world as a leaven from within. In this way they can **make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life marked by faith, hope, and charity**. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #7)
- † The lay Catholic, however, can **exercise an evangelizing role** in any, not just a Catholic, school to the extent that this is possible in today's diverse socio-political contexts. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #14)
- † The Catholic educator must be **a source of spiritual inspiration** for each of these groups [colleagues, parents, etc.], as well as for each of the scholastic and cultural organizations that the

school comes in contact with, for the local Church and the parishes, for the entire human ambient in which he or she is inserted and, in a variety of ways, should have an effect on. In this way, the Catholic educator is called to display that kind of spiritual inspiration which will manifest different forms of evangelization. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #23)

- † As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are expected to give, it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school **participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school**. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #39)
- † In particular, the [Catholic] educator **should have a mature spiritual personality**, expressed in a profound Christian life. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #60)
- † Every educator needs **a firm hope**, because the teacher is never the one who truly reaps the fruits of the labor expended on the students. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #72)
- † ...every educator is in need of **a permanent and growing charity**, in order to love each of the students as an individual created in the image and likeness of God, raised to the status of a child of God by the redemption of Jesus Christ. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, #72)
- † ...the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; **this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life**. (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, #96)
- † Religious instruction can become empty words falling on deaf ears because the authentically Christian witness that reinforces it is absent from the school climate. All symptoms of ill health have to be faced honestly and directly, remembering that the Gospel calls us to a **continuous process of conversion**. (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, #104)

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.
 Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.
 Teach Them, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976.
 The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.
 The Religious Dimension of Education in Catholic Schools, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Christ Has No Body

St. Teresa of Avila



Christ has no body but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth by yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world,
 Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
 Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world,
 Yours are the hand, yours are the feet,
 Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
 Christ has no body now but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
 Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Catholic Classroom Walkthrough Checklist

	Yes	No
The Classroom		
1. Are there Christian elements immediately evident upon entering the classroom?		
2. Is there a prayer space in the classroom?		
3. Is there a prayer table in the classroom?		
4. Is there a wall space/bulletin board dedicated to faith?		
5. Is the school mission statement posted?		
The Prayer Table/Area		
6. Is the prayer table/area visible?		
7. Is the prayer table/area clear of clutter? Neat?		
8. Is the prayer table/area accessible to all the students: can they touch it? Is it at their physical level to visit it?		
9. Does the prayer table/area have a cloth or items in the appropriate color for the liturgical season?		
10. Does the prayer table/area have a cross?		
11. Does the prayer table/area have a Rosary?		
12. Does the prayer table/area have a Catholic approved Bible?		
13. Does the prayer table/area have a candle (preferably battery operated)?		
14. Does the prayer table/area have a statue of Jesus, Mary or a saint?		
15. Is there a symbol or item present that represents the current season of the Church year?		
16. Are there other notable items, such as devotional book, holy water, plant/flowers, artwork?		
Wall Space		
17. Is there a Crucifix on the wall of the classroom?		
18. Is there elements of the wall space that illustrate the Christian Message?		

Adapted from Grande Prairie Catholic Schools Checklist – <http://gpcsd.ca/documents/general/The%20Physical%20Catholic%20Classroom.pdf>



Classroom Environment During the Liturgical Seasons



Advent

Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas. We reflect and celebrate on his first coming – his birth, his presence with us today, and his second coming. This is a season of anticipation.

Color: **Purple** (a sign of penance, sacrifice and preparation)

Liturgical celebrations during this season are:

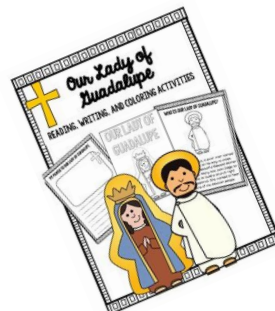
December 6 – Memorial of St. Nicholas

December 8 – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (*Holy Day of Obligation*)

December 12 – Memorial of Our Lady of Guadalupe (*Patroness of the Americas*)

Signs, Symbols, Activities and Celebrations within this Season:

- † Advent calendar counting down the days until Christmas with prayers and gifts as rewards
- † All-school prayer services once a week
- † Have St. Nicholas visit after reading/viewing his story
- † Attend Mass on the Immaculate Conception
- † Pray the Rosary on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception or Memorial to Our Lady of Guadalupe
- † Collect gifts/food/clothing for the needy
- † Prepare for the Christmas program
- † Advent wreath within the classroom
- † Jesse Tree
- † Gospel Readings of John the Baptist and the coming of the Lord
- † Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation



Christmas

Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. It is **one of the most important days of the Church year**, second only to Easter itself. It is the feast of the incarnation, the feast of God becoming flesh. The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Color: White (the color of purity and new life)

Liturgical celebrations during this season are:

December 24 – Christmas Eve

December 25 – Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord/Christmas Day (*Holy Day of Obligation*)

December 31 – Feast of the Holy Family

January 1 – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (*Holy Day of Obligation*)

January 6 (or Sunday after the Solemnity of Mary) – Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (celebrated on the Sunday or Monday after the Epiphany)

Signs, Symbols, Activities and Celebrations within this Season:

- † Christmas Program
- † Nativity scene displayed or dress up/play area for early childhood
- † Keep Christmas decorations up until end of the Christmas season
- † Angels, shepherds, wisemen



Ordinary Time

The Sundays and weeks of Ordinary Time take us through the life of Christ. This is the time of conversion. This is living the life of Christ. It is a time for growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are finally caught up in Christ. The goal, toward which all of history is directed, is represented by the final Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Ordinary Time occurs between the Baptism of the Lord and Ash Wednesday and then again between Pentecost and the first Sunday of Advent. There are 33 weeks of Ordinary Time.

Color: **Green** (the color of growth and hope)

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
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JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
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OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
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Liturgical celebrations during this season are:

February 2 – Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
Solemnity of the Holy Trinity (Sunday immediately after Pentecost)
May 31 – Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
June 24 - Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist
June 29 – Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul
August 6 – Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord
August 15 – Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary
September 8 – Feast of the Birth of Mary
September 14 – Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
October 2 – Memorial of the Guardian Angels
November 1 – Solemnity of All Saints
November 2 – Commemoration of All Faithful Departed Souls
November 9 – Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (34th and final Sunday of Ordinary Time)



Signs, Symbols, Activities and Celebrations within this Season:

- † Catholic Schools week, the last week of January
- † Map the ministry of Jesus
- † Read, study and explore miracles of Jesus
- † Plants, Chi-Rho, footsteps
- † Study the saints
- † Learn about the patron saint of the school
- † Pray the Rosary during the month of October
- † Dress up like saints for All Saints Day
- † Pray the Angelus every day at lunch time
- † Celebrate May crowning the first week of May



Lent

During Lent, we are asked to devote ourselves to seeking the Lord in prayer and reading Scripture, to service by giving alms, and to sacrifice self-control through fasting. It is a time of prayer and penance, when Christ wants to lead us back to our baptismal promises of dying to sin and of living for God. The season begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes the evening of Holy Saturday. Usually the Sunday's are not included in counting the 40 days of Lent.

Color: **Purple** (symbolizes repentance and penance)

Liturgical celebrations during this season are:

- Ash Wednesday (forty-six days prior to Easter)
- March 19 – Solemnity of St. Joseph
- March 26 – Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord
- Palm Sunday (the Sunday prior to Easter)
- Holy Thursday
- Good Friday of the Lord's Passion
- Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil)

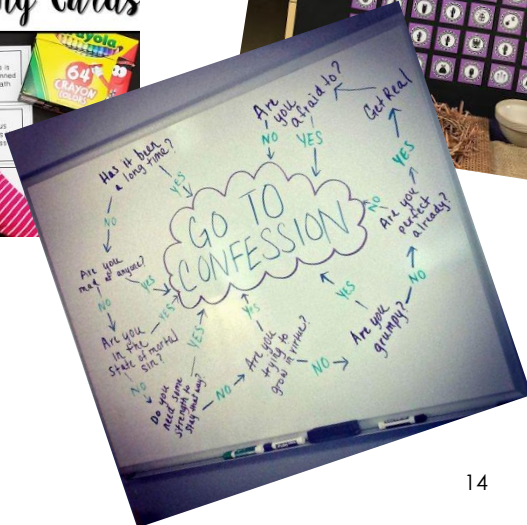


Signs, Symbols, Activities and Celebrations within this Season:

- † Attend Mass on Ash Wednesday where everyone receives ashes
- † Set time aside to pray the Stations of the Cross
- † Weekly prayer services
- † Perform service projects
- † Give up something or do something to change your life for the better
- † Abstain from meat on Fridays
- † Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- † Hold a Seder Meal to commemorate the Passover/Last Supper
- † Pictures of Jesus in the desert
- † Sand, rocks, twigs, palms, bread, chalice, crown of thorns



STATIONS OF THE CROSS
●●● Matching Cards



Easter

Easter Time is the most important of all liturgical times. It is the celebration of the Lord's resurrection from the dead, culminating in his Ascension to the Father and sending of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. There are 50 days of Easter from the first Sunday to Pentecost.

Color: White (symbolizes purity, holiness, virtue, respect and reverence)

Liturgical celebrations during this season are:

Solemnity of the Ascension (40 days after Easter) (*Holy Day of Obligation*)

Solemnity of Pentecost (50 days after Easter) (*Holy Day of Obligation*)

Signs, Symbols, Activities and Celebrations within this Season:

- † Lilies, lamb, dove, butterfly, holy water,
- † May celebrations depending on when Easter lands (see Ordinary time)
- † Plant flowers

