

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



## A Column by Fr. Tom

### **The Mass, Part 9 – To Everything There is a Season [Eccl. 3:1]**

As you go to Mass every week, you may notice certain differences throughout the year. One of the most obvious differences would be the color vestment that the priest wears. Perhaps you wondered to yourself, “I guess Father is in a green mood today.” The reality is that even the vestments that the priest wears are symbols of something more.

You may have also noticed some other changes in the environment as we progress through the Church year. Like the seasons of the natural world, the Church has seasons as well. However, the difference is that the seasons of the Church are reflective of the life of Jesus. In each year, we relive the life and ministry of Jesus as we move through the year.

In order to determine the seasons of the year, we begin with the two main events of Jesus’ life and ministry – His Incarnation (birth) and His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Therefore, our Church year is anchored with Christmas and Easter. As you well know, we commemorate Jesus’ birth with Christmas, which we celebrate on December 25 each year. Easter, on the other hand, is a movable feast. Because Jesus linked his Paschal event (Passion, Death and Resurrection) to the Jewish feast of Passover, we celebrate Easter based on a similar lunar (vs. our solar) calendar. Since the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, the feast of Easter has been set as the first Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox. (Whew, that’s a mouthful!) Therefore, Easter can occur anywhere between March 22 and April 25. (In 2019, it is April 21.)

First, the Church celebrates Christmas Day and

Easter Day for eight days each, as an octave. In addition, both Christmas and Easter are seasons. Christmas season ends with the Baptism of the Lord, which is usually the third Sunday after Christmas. Easter season ends with Pentecost, the eighth Sunday of Easter. These are the festival seasons and the color for them is generally white, which represents joy, glory and triumph. It is for this reason that white is also worn on many saints’ feast days, as well as for weddings and funerals.

The Church, in her wisdom, gave us seasons of preparation for each of our major festivals – Advent to prepare for Christmas and Lent to prepare for Easter. The seasons of preparation evoke a spirit of repentance and humility, so the color violet is used.

The days outside of these four major seasons are called Ordinary Time. They are called “ordinary,” not because they are unimportant, but because the weeks are numbered, first through thirty-fourth. The word “ordinary” comes from the Latin *ordinem*, which means pattern or series. During ordinary time, the color green elicits the ideas of life and hope.

There are three other liturgical colors that are sometimes used as well. Rose-colored vestments are worn on the Third Sunday of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent to bring a little joy into these otherwise penitential seasons. Red symbolizes the Holy Spirit, the Passion and martyrdom, so it is used on feast days of martyrs, as well as for Pentecost and Good Friday. Finally, although they are rarely used, black vestments can be worn on All Souls’ Day and for funerals.

Next week, we will take a break from our discussion of the Mass for a special Thanksgiving edition of *Looking Through Stained Glass*.

