

Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time Overview

- theological reflection on liturgy and the liturgical year
- reform of the liturgical calendar after the Second Vatican Council
- a few notes and questions for reflection on the presentation of the 7 Solemnities and Feasts

[The challenge is to] overcome the separation in time and space from the actual saving event. The salvation manifested in the past **lives on now** as an active force in our lives only if we encounter it anew and respond to it in faith, and we cannot do that unless we remember it. In the Old Testament, cultic memorial is one of the ways in which Israel remembered, making present the past saving events as the means of encountering in every generation the saving work of God. **That present encounter is the point of it all.**

Fr. Robert Taft, SJ, "The Liturgical Year," p. 12

This is what we do in liturgy.
We make anamnesis, memorial,
of this dynamic saving power in our lives,
to make it penetrate ever more into the depths of our being,
to the building up of the Body of Christ.

Liturgical feasts, therefore, have the same purpose as the Gospel:
to present this new reality in "anamnesis"
as a continual sign to us
not of a past history,
but of the present reality of our lives in him.
The focus is not on the story,
not on the past,
but on Paul's "power of God unto salvation,
first the Jew, then for the Greek,"
and right now for you and me.

I must "put on Christ" (Gal. 13:27), assimilate him,
somehow experience with God's grace and repeat in the pattern of my own life
the principal events by which Christ has saved me....
How do I experience these events?
...[B]y so entering into the mystery of his life
so that I can affirm with Paul:

“I have been crucified with Christ;
it is no longer I who live,
but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Fr. Robert Taft, SJ, “The Liturgical Year,” pp. 16 - 18

The Liturgical Year...

is neither a series of ideas
nor a sequence of festivals
that are of greater or lesser importance,
but a Person,
“Christ himself, who is ever living in his Church.”

The liturgical year
is the moment
in which the totality of the history of salvation,
that is to say,
CHRIST in all the ways he is manifest in the past,
the present, and the future,
is actualized
at a specific moment in time
in a concrete ecclesial assembly
at a particular time of the year.

Consequently, the spirituality of the liturgical year
is a process
of progressive transformation in Christ.

Matias Augé, “A Theology of the Liturgical Year”

OLM n. 3 [T]he liturgical celebration, based primarily on the word of God
and sustained by it, becomes **a new event**.... Thus in the liturgy
the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read
and explained the Scriptures,
beginning with the “**TODAY**” of his coming forward in the synagogue....

No liturgical year is exactly like any other;
each cycle moves closer to the parousia, the last day,
and the life of the world to come.

A spiral, not a circuit. . . .

Adolf Adam, pp. 26 – 27

The Liturgical Reform of the Second Vatican Council

SC 102 Within the cycle of a year, the Church unfolds **the whole mystery of Christ**, from his incarnation and birth until his Ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and of the Lord's return. **Recalling thus the mysteries of redemption**, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of the Lord's powers and merits **so that these are in some way made present in every age** in order that the faithful may lay hold on them and be filled with saving grace.

SC 105 Finally, in the various seasons of the year and according to its traditional discipline, the Church completes **the formation of the faithful** by means of devout practices for soul and body, by instruction, prayer, and works of penance and of mercy.

OLM 61 [T]he Order of Readings for the Mass aptly presents from Scripture **the principal deeds and words belonging to the history of salvation**. As its many phases and events are recalled in the liturgy of the word, the faithful will come to see that the history of salvation is **contained here and now in the representation of Christ's paschal mystery** through the Eucharist.

SC 108 The minds of the faithful must be directed primarily toward those feasts of the Lord on which **the mysteries of salvation are celebrated** in the course of the year. Therefore, the Proper of Seasons shall be given the precedence due to it over the feasts of the saints.

GNLYC 5 Because of its special importance, the Sunday celebration gives way only to solemnities or feasts of the Lord. The Sundays of the seasons of Advent, Lent, and Easter, however, taken precedence over all solemnities and feasts of the Lord. Solemnities occurring on these Sundays are observed on the Saturday preceding.

Solemnity: highest rank; begins with Evening Prayer I; Mass includes Gloria and Creed; two readings before the Gospel; two (Easter and Christmas) continue for 8 days (octave); proper prayers, readings and color

Feast: ranks second; celebration begins at midnight (or with Evening Prayer I if the Feast occurs on a Sunday); includes the Gloria; proper prayers, readings (2 or 3) and color

Memorial: obligatory or *optional*; Missal includes some proper to the United States; no Gloria; one reading before the Gospel; may have only proper Collect; proper color

“Our calendar is the result of a rich and complex history, full of trends, counter-trends, dead ends, and successful experiments....For devotions, political needs, climate, communal life styles, theology, and the arts have all had a hand in the continual reform”
BCL, p. 18.

Consilium: the Commission given direct authority by Pope Paul VI to implement the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [SC]*; composed of 48 – 51 experts who worked in their various study groups; it eventually became the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. *Bugnini, pp. 49 – 53.*

- How can I keep the focus of this celebration on Christ’s paschal mystery here and now, alive and transforming this assembly?
- How do I experience the difference between the celebration of an event in Christ’s life and “an idea feast”? What difference does this make in my liturgical planning?
- How can I best integrate the images and events from the Scripture readings to bring the person of Christ to the celebration of “idea feasts”?
- What are the liturgical options I can pastorally choose or create (or encourage!) to make real this Christological focus for this unique assembly?
introductory commentary, commentary before the readings (*OLM 15*), general intercessions, their introduction and concluding prayer, the homily, music (entrance, psalm [*OLM 89*], gospel verse [*OLM 90*], preparation of the gifts, communion song, etc.), environment, bulletin notes, worship aid, etc.
- Liturgical reform is on-going.

