



LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

Liturgical Prayer and Popular Devotions

Opening Prayer

*Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*¹



1. From the Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, *The Roman Missal*, p. 139.

Lesson Objectives:

- ❖ Discover the significance and structure of the Church's liturgical calendar, and understand how it forms us through sacred rhythm rather than mere repetition.
- ❖ Recognize the structure of solemnities, feasts, and memorials, and the three-year cycle of Sunday Scripture readings that shapes the Liturgy of the Word.
- ❖ Explore the Church's treasury of devotional prayer: the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, *lectio divina*, and the Rosary, and how these practices form a daily life of prayer rooted in the Mass.
- ❖ Appreciate sacramentals—like rosaries, medals, and holy water—as sacred signs that prepare us to receive grace, and learn to use them with reverence.

BURNING QUESTIONS

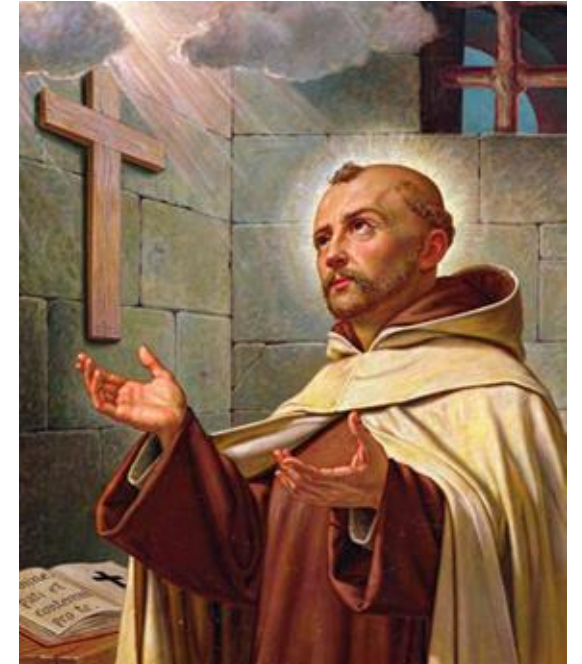
- ❖ Why does the Church have its own calendar? What makes the Catholic Church's calendar special?
The liturgical calendar starts at the beginning of Advent and includes major seasons like Lent. What do these seasons tell us about the Church calendar? Why do you think the Church follows a different calendar from our day-to-day calendar?
- ❖ Why do Catholics use repeated prayers? Isn't that what Jesus warned against?
What do you think Jesus meant when he warned against heaping up "empty phrases" in prayer (Matthew 6:7)? How can you tell the difference between empty repetition and loving devotion?

St. John of the Cross

Feast Day: December 14

Lived: June 24, 1542 – December 14, 1591 · Ávila, Spain · Patron of Mystics

John was a Discalced Carmelite priest who joined St. Teresa of Ávila in a movement to reform the Carmelite Order toward stricter observance and deeper contemplative prayer. John was kidnapped and imprisoned for nine months by Carmelites opposed to the reform, suffering cold, beatings, and hunger in a tiny dark cell. Yet in that darkness he experienced the close presence of God and composed some of the most profound mystical poetry in the Catholic tradition, memorizing entire stanzas because he could not write them down. After escaping, he founded more monasteries and gave spiritual direction until his death. Known as the “mystical doctor,” he was made a Doctor of the Church in 1926.



“Flame, living flame, compelling yet tender past all telling, reaching the secret centre of my soul.”

St. John of the Cross

Sacred Time

The Liturgical Calendar

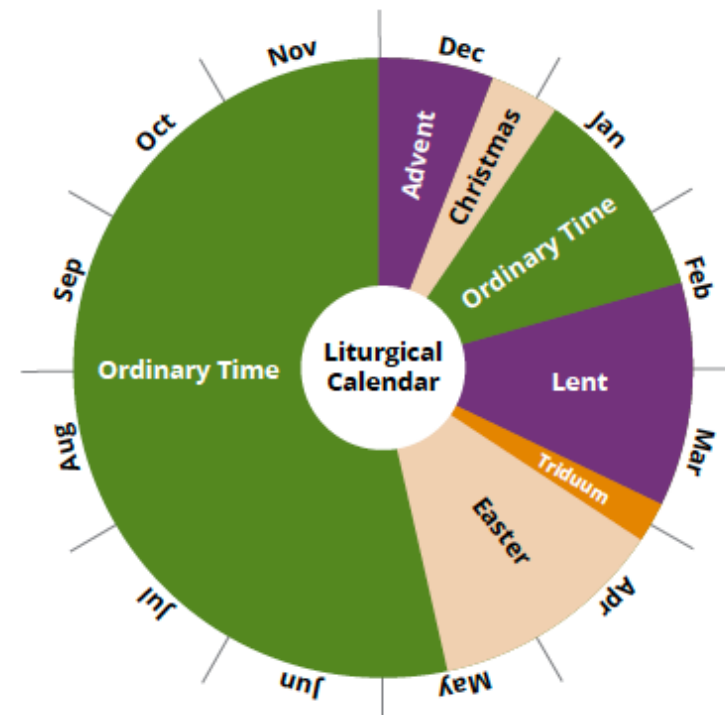
The civil year begins January 1; the Church year begins with Advent. Greek distinguishes *chronos* (clock time) from *kairos* (sacred, God-acting time). The Church lives by *kairos*—each liturgical season draws us into the saving events of Christ’s life so we become participants, not mere spectators (see CCC 1168, 1171).

Advent Through Easter

Advent prepares us for Christ’s coming through waiting and penance (purple). Christmas celebrates the Incarnation (white). Lent’s forty days recall Jesus’ time in the desert, devoted to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (purple). The Easter Triduum—Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter—enters deeply into the Passion and Resurrection, the “Feast of feasts” (CCC 1169), celebrated for fifty days through Pentecost (white and gold).

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1



Liturgical Prayer and Personal Devotion

Praying with Scripture Through the Year

The Lectionary organizes Mass readings on a three-year Sunday cycle (Year A: Matthew, Year B: Mark, Year C: Luke) and a two-year weekday cycle. Praying with the upcoming Sunday readings through *lectio divina* is one way to unite personal prayer with the worship of the Universal Church.

Two Essential Forms of Prayer

Liturgical prayer (the Mass, the sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours) is the official, public worship of the Church—prayer that God initiates and the whole Body of Christ enters together. Popular devotions, such as the Rosary, novenas, Eucharistic Adoration, and *lectio divina*, are personal or communal practices that are not part of official liturgy but flow from it and lead back to it.



“In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold.”

CCC 1171

The Treasury of Devotional Prayer

Adoration, *Lectio Divina*, and the Hours

The Mass is the greatest act of prayer, from which all other forms receive nourishment. Eucharistic Adoration is time spent with Jesus truly present in the consecrated Host. *Lectio divina* is a slow, four-movement encounter with Scripture: reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation. The Liturgy of the Hours is the Church's official daily prayer, rooted in the psalms.

The Rosary

St. John Paul II called the Rosary a “compendium of the Gospel,”¹ meditating on the joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of Christ's life through the eyes of his Mother. These devotions are not burdens; they form the heart and turn ordinary time into sacred time, making our homes domestic churches where Christ dwells.

“Could you not watch with me one hour?”

Matthew 26:40



1. John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, On the Most Holy Rosary, apostolic letter (October 16, 2002), 19, vatican.va.



Discussion Questions

- ❖ What forms of Catholic prayer or devotion (such as the Rosary, Scripture reading, Adoration, or daily Mass) do you feel naturally drawn to, and which ones seem challenging or unfamiliar?
- ❖ How do you envision incorporating sacramentals and visual reminders into your home, workplace, or daily routine? What role do you think these physical objects play in keeping us focused on our spiritual life throughout the day?
- ❖ How does the idea of having this spiritual community—both the living Church and the Communion of Saints—support or challenge your understanding of prayer and spiritual growth?

Faith and Fun

Which day marks both the end of the liturgical year and the beginning of a new one in the Church's calendar?

a. Solemnity of All Saints

b. Pentecost

c. Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

d. Ash Wednesday

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The Solemnity of Christ the King is celebrated on the final Sunday of the liturgical year. It reminds us that everything—all time, history, and our personal lives—finds its fulfillment in Christ, who is King of the universe. The very next Sunday, we begin again with Advent, entering into a new year by longing for the coming of our King. This teaches us that sacred time is not just cyclical, but also purposeful; it leads us deeper into the mystery of Christ, season by season.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

What It Means to Adore

The word “adore” comes from the Latin “*ad + oratio*”—literally a “kiss” or “embrace.” To adore is a form of worship reserved for God alone. In Eucharistic Adoration, we come before Jesus Christ truly present in the consecrated Host—reposed in the tabernacle or exposed in a monstrance, a vessel whose name comes from *monstrare*, “to show.”

What Do We Do in Adoration?

St. John Vianney once asked a parishioner what he did during Adoration; the man simply answered, “I look at him, and he looks at me.” That is the heart of Adoration: being with the One who loves you. St. Teresa of Ávila described prayer as “a close sharing between friends” (quoted in CCC 2709). There is no formula required, you might sit in silence, pray with Scripture, or simply rest in his presence.



Living It Out:

Begin each day in sacred time. Check a Catholic liturgical calendar to see the season, feast, or saint the Church honors today, and ask: What is God inviting me to remember or celebrate today?

Closing Prayer

The Divine Praises

*Blessed be God.
Blessed be his holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be the Name of Jesus.
Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be his most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the most holy
Sacrament of the altar.*

*Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse.
Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.
Amen.*

Announcements / Reminders — add notes here