

Liturgical Seasons

Introduction

Our liturgical calendar marks the celebrations that shape, carry on, and expand the Church's communal life. The Sundays along with the seasons and feasts of each year establish a pattern of celebrating many events in the life of Jesus and the appearances of Christ's dying and rising.

Within each liturgical season there is a blending of spirituality, celebration, and religious instruction that show how we can live this paschal mystery in our everyday lives. Furthermore, the scripture passages that make up our lectionary readings during each liturgical season reveal to us the story of Jesus' life and ministry, with a special focus on his death, resurrection and imminent return.

The purpose of these programs is to reflect on the liturgical seasons of the year to gain greater insight into the universal themes that are part of our faith tradition. The enclosed reflection sheets are a resource to explore the seasonal themes of our church's liturgical life. The format is simple and consistent allowing the themes to be building blocks upon which to build an annual program. The paragraphs capture only glimpses and summaries of the scripture's richness as they are presented for each season. The content is inclusive of all three cycles of readings and acts as a catalyst for your club to enter more deeply into the beauty of each liturgical season.

Advent

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

O Lord our God, you have made us and this beautiful world in which we live. As we celebrate this advent season we pray that you enter into our lives more fully. Bring to us a peace that overcomes any doubt. Let us know the true meaning of waiting and understand the great love given to us through your incarnation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” *(Luke 1:26-35)*

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

The season of advent resets the clocks and calendars of Christian worship and calls us to a new beginning. We once again begin the rhythms of community and embrace the themes that make the Christian journey so rich.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

Advent is the first season of the Church year. It is a four-week time period that blends together a penitential spirit, a liturgical theme of preparation for the Second Coming, and a joyful attitude of getting ready for the birth of Christ. It is a season of great hope and expectation.

These blended themes are a summary of the lectionary readings. The scripture passages for the first half of advent speaks to us of hope for the future. They emphasize being alert and *watching* for the Lord's coming since the time of his coming is not known. The readings for the second half of advent focus on the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, where God's promise to his people was fulfilled in the act of being born into the human family.

The movement from watching for the glory of God to seeing the glory manifest in the Christ child arouses our imagination and awareness. We are invited to a mature expectation of the Lord's coming into our own lives. As Christians, we celebrate what already is, while standing in expectation of what is yet to be revealed. In essence, the reign of God is already among us but is not yet made manifest in its fullness. This waiting and watching clears a space in our hearts and souls that opens us to see the

mysteries of God show themselves in the joy of the advent season. During this time we learn that how we wait and watch for the Lord is as important as learning how to meet him.

“When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (Catechism of the Catholic Church #524)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What does watching mean to you?
2. How do you watch for the Lord's coming in your life?
3. How can Serrans express this watchfulness in their club activities?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

As the conception of Jesus was an Advent, a coming, this season becomes a time of joyful anticipation that Christ will offer us a new beginning by reaching out to cradle us in his loving forgiveness. Through God's merciful gift of love crooked ways are made straight, hardened hearts are filled with joy, and the disenfranchised are welcomed.

Bibliography

Griffin, Eltin. *Celebrating the Season of Advent*, England: Fowler Wright Books, 1989.

Howard, Evan Drake. *Rekindling the Hope of the Manger: An Advent Study*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1992.

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Vincent, Mark. *Untold Stories of Advent*, Kansas: Faith Life Press, 1993.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Christmas Season

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, we now know the joy of receiving the Christ Child in our hearts. Help us to hold Him with a reverent spirit so that we experience His continual presence in our lives. We pray that your holy birth inspires us to live in loving peace where we recognize the signs of good tidings and salvation to the world. Amen.

Scripture

“On that day, the root of Jesse set up as a signal for the nations, The Gentiles shall seek him out, for his dwelling shall be glorious. On that day, The Lord shall again take it in hand to reclaim the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria and Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, and Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the isles of the sea.” *(Isiah 11:10-11)*

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

More than any other time of the year, the Christmas season is a time of celebrating the great gift of salvation through Jesus. During this period we marvel at God’s unconditional love for humanity. The purpose of this program is to experience the gift of the Christ child and the true gifts God has given us.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

During the Christmas season we celebrate the coming of the Messiah into our lives and into the world of justice at the end of time. The unending love of God that is to be seen in the Bethlehem event of 2,000 years ago is present among us today. Consequently, the nativity story is more than an historical drama that is reenacted each year. It is also a time to reflect on how Jesus is born into our lives every single day.

While popular culture may be finished with Christmas on December 26th, the church has not yet begun to celebrate the fullness of the season. We embody the incarnational Christmas theme by continuing to tell the story. Because Jesus was born, God now resides in our flesh and blood, is in the pulsing of our needs and aspirations, and even in the shadows of our forgiven sins.

The scriptures for this season capture the events of history that the prophets uttered to their people. Their message is simple. *Believe in the creative, redeeming, purifying, loving, and blessing word of God.* By remembering the community’s return from exile, the prophets lay the foundation for the good news to be proclaimed as it reflects not only what God said to His people, but also who God is in history and how God acts.

These Christmas days are filled with specific festive events highlighting aspects of Jesus’ humanity. These include the birth of Jesus (Christmas), born of Mary (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God), who become a part of a human family (Feast of the Holy Family), was manifested to the nations (Epiphany), and revealed as God’s own beloved child (Baptism of the Lord). The Christmas season celebrates the appearance of God among us. It highlights the familiar bonds that foster relationships

and provides learning about life, receiving seeds of faith, experiencing communion, and being of service that Jesus understood as He grew in wisdom, age, and grace.

“Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest. The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.
The angels and shepherds praise him, and the magi advance with the star, For you are born for us,
Little Child, God eternal!

To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God." Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange":

O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 525-526*)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What does Jesus' birth teach you about God?
2. How has believing in the Word of God affected your life?
3. In what ways does your Serra Club proclaim the Word of God to others? Is a gift to others?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

Christmas does not merely celebrate the birth of a child but rather this great feast celebrates the birth of our Lord in our very flesh. These days reveal the divine manifestation and human discovery. They celebrate the dawn of salvation in a world shrouded with shadows of sin and darkness. We come to live in the true light and warmth of the Christ child, the greatest gift to us all.

The movement from the birth of Christ to the reality that He is now a part of our human world is a challenge to many of us. We are called to begin, continue, or assess how we have brought Christ in to the world through our actions and service to one another. The giving of gifts to family and friends must open to giving to the rest of humanity in whatever capacity we are able.

Bibliography

Harries, Richard. *A Gallery Of Reflections: The Nativity of Christ*. Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Lent

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

God of mercy, give us patience in this season of reconciliation. Stand by us when our imperfections and selfishness get in the way of truly loving you, our neighbor, and caring for the world around us. Continue to bestow your generous love upon us. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

“For they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of an iron furnace. Thus may your eyes be open to the petition of your servant and to the petition of your people Israel. Hear them whenever they call upon you, because you have set them apart among all the peoples of the earth for your inheritance, as you declared through your servant Moses when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.” (1Kings 8:51-53)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

Lent is a period for the instruction of the catechumenates. It is also a period of reflection for the baptized as well. In Lent every Catholic has the opportunity to relive his or her baptism experience and deepen its meaning through the process of prayer, fasting, and works of charity. This program presents the Lenten experience within the context of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

Lent is a journey of faith during the time from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday. The seasons of Lent take their shape and meaning from the process and rites of conversion. The readings, prayers, and seasonal practices are interpreted and celebrated in the light of our baptism into Christ’s dying and rising. During this time we take special care to follow God’s will in our daily lives and in the larger world.

Three themes hold this six-week season together. *The mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the implications of this mystery for those preparing for baptism and a spiritual renewal of faith and conversion for those already baptized.*

It is at this time of our liturgical year that the whole church goes on retreat. This annual spiritual renewal prepares us for the celebration of Christianity’s most fundamental belief: Jesus was raised from the dead and is Christ the Lord. Lent becomes our time of reconciliation where we ask God for forgiveness and seek to follow Christ in all things. Lent is also a challenge to conversion because during these forty days we prepare to renew and personalize our baptismal commitment. It is a time to move forward toward the light of Easter and the light of Christ in our lives.

During this season we listen carefully to the word of God and reflect on its meaning for our lives. The scriptures give us insights into the reality of salvation history. We see that there is no greater blindness than self-deception and sin. Yet being tempted is part of being human and overcoming temptation is part of belonging to Christ. These scripture readings call us to journey into the paradox of belief and unbelief. The transformation of sinful people into faithful disciples shares in the transfiguration of

Jesus. Our challenge as we experience the tension is to always see and hear the deeper spiritual realities in what Jesus is saying and doing.

Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning." By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* # 540)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you do to foster your spiritual renewal of faith?
2. How do you participate in the Church's Lenten Retreat?
3. How important is Jesus' death and resurrection in Serra's mission to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and to participate in the University of Christian Principles?

Closing Reflection

God's call and response in faith is the rhythm that has marked this season as an epic saga of salvation history. In the glory of Christ Jesus, the perfect one is sustained so we might all have life. Through the thirst and desires of our Lenten fast and abstinence we find the refreshment we are truly seeking in the person of Jesus.

Bibliography

Hays, Edward. *The Ascent Of The Mountain of God: Daily Reflections for the Journey of Lent*. Kansas: Forest Of Peace Publishing, 1994.

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Easter Triduum

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Father, for your glory and our salvation you appointed Jesus Christ to be your eternal High Priest. May the people He gained for you come to share in the power of His cross and resurrection, for He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture

“Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come. Through him (then) let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.” *(Hebrews 13:12-15)*

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

The Easter Triduum (three days) and its inclusion in the Holy Week liturgies is the climax of the Church's year and its celebration of the great events by which humanity was released from sin and reunited with God. This program highlights the Triduum as the transition moment in our faith and its importance in our lives.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a "year of the Lord's favor." The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time, but since its fulfillment in the Passover of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the culmination of history is anticipated "as a foretaste," and the kingdom of God enters into our time. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #1168)*

The three days of the Easter Triduum begin as the season of Lent comes to a close. The Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. These three days are the center of the entire year for Christians. They are best understood and enacted as a single liturgy that celebrates Christ's Passover from death to a new life. The dominant themes of the scriptures focus on the detailed events of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the Last Supper.

The resurrection of the crucified Christ is the point on which the weekly and annual cycles of the Christian calendar turn. In fact it supplies the clue to the whole history of salvation. Every Sunday and every Easter day is a commemoration and celebration of the resurrection of Jesus and an anticipation of the day when the Lord will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and finally establish the kingdom of God.

To this end the Easter Triduum is usually seen as three distinct liturgies that are experienced as one movement. The church proclaims the direction of these days by the opening antiphon of Holy Thursday, which comes from Paul's letter to the Galatians (6:14):

“We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for he is our salvation, our life, and resurrection; through him we are saved and made free.”

This verse sets a spiritual environment for the whole Church to enter into the Triduum.

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What religious traditions have you enjoyed in the past, but watch with pain as they faded away? How did you adjust to their absence?
2. What new religious traditions had you resisted at first but finally came to accept and appreciate? How did you adjust to them?
3. How is your Serra Club participating in the rebirth of our Lord? How does your group accept and appreciate this?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

As we finish our Lenten retreat we enter with Jesus into the events of his betrayal, crucifixion, death and resurrection. In some way we enter two very profound mysteries when we participate in this summit of our Christian faith. First, we gather around the mystery in which our lives are played out. We experience in our own lives the mystery of conversion, as we die to those aspects of our life that prevent us from experiencing the loving presence of God. Secondly, as members of the Body of Christ we share with Christ the horror of his death and his hope in the resurrection. In essence we measure these three days by our own *rebirths, our own return*, as we participate in the very life of God.

Bibliography

Bruteau, Beatrice. *The Easter Mysteries*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995.

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Easter Time

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Jesus, you give your Church constant growth by calling new members to your family. Continue to call us to conversion and help us to live out with faith the baptismal promises we received. Amen.

Scripture

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we preach), for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (*Romans 10:8-13*)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

Easter time is the time when the unfolding mystery of God and the Church take place. This program emphasizes that through Jesus’ resurrection we begin to fully enter the paschal mystery and integrate it into our every day lives.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

“On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ’s Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.

On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed. Since that day, the kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humanity of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the “last days” the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #731-32*)

Easter is the season of Alleluia; a hopeful sign of the time when all we will do is rejoice in God and be fully in His presence. This oldest season practice of the church draws heavily on the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse for its scriptural readings during the great fifty days. The readings focus on the followers of Christ as they celebrate in the gift of the spirit, spread the good news of salvation, and work toward the life of heaven on earth. Throughout the season of Easter the scripture readings are of parallel and progressive selections. Material is presented on the life of the primitive Church, its witness and growth, its spirit of joyous faith, and its encounter with the risen Christ.

The scriptural message states that it is not a celebration of one man’s victory but a universal triumph of that One Man on behalf of all of us. Easter is the heart of our Christian faith. We are all born anew in Jesus’ death and healed by his suffering. Without a strong unswerving belief in the resurrection of Christ we could not be a people of the resurrection and bring the Good News of Easter to others. We

share the great joy that accompanies the promised gift of everlasting life. Like the disciples we don't do this alone. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide our lives and our church. During Easter we struggle with the huge mystery of the resurrection and the urgent necessity of carrying on Jesus' work of peace and healing, forgiveness and nurture.

Jesus' glorification in the Christian assembly is the central theme of the Easter season. It celebrates a *resurrection faith* that delivers us from the slavery of time, sin, death, and loss, which serves as an instance of courageous witness. Those who have been baptized, anointed, and admitted to the table at Easter are led more deeply into the very mysteries that they have now celebrated. The fifty days taken as a unit celebrates God's gathering of a scattered people to Himself by joining them to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Eastertime is not just a remembrance, but is also recognition of the actual person of Jesus Christ in our midst, when we are gathered together in him whose very person is itself the feast.

(The facilitator can read the discussion questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you know that you have faith?
2. Why is Easter a faith experience?
3. How important are other Serra members in my journey of faith?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

These fifty days can only begin to unfold their mystery and meaning when we accept the new life brought to us by the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Its joy is ours now, if we take the time to embrace our new life, and celebrate it to the fullest as we reflect on it daily. The result is an incredible realization that we can alter this world's illusion of perfection and help shed the light of Christ on our world, by being that light, to our highest ability at the moment.

Bibliography

Boyer, Mark Rev. *Day By Day Through The Easter Season*. Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1987.

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Ordinary Times

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Father, keep before us the love and compassion of your son Jesus. Help us to be like him in work and deed, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture

“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces. A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak.

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace...He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-13)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

During Ordinary Time no particular theme is covered. Instead we are exposed to an overall sense of Jesus work in the world revealed in varied scripture readings. We are challenged by Jesus’ call to discipleship as we participate in our work, relationships, fears, sorrows and joys. This program seeks to offer us an understanding of the Church’s cycle of readings as a means for growing in discipleship.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

“In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1171*)

During the Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent, we focus on Jesus’ calling of His disciples and His works of healing and teaching. Similarly, during the post-Pentecost Ordinary Time, we again focus on the task of bringing Christ into the world in practical ways with a strong emphasis on social justice.

The two seasons of Ordinary Time reflect an ordered progression of weeks that are not a part of the major feasts and seasons. This allows us to focus on the *sacredness of everyday life* that we are not able to do when we are preparing for or celebrating an extraordinary feast or season. The recognition and celebration, beauty and goodness of our everyday lives focuses on the simple things that fill our lives between the peaks and valleys. Ordinary Time is a time for reaching out, learning, growing, and maturing as Christians.

Depending on the year, the scripture readings of Ordinary Time are taken from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The seasons of Ordinary Time are also marked by the feast days of many

people the world knew as ordinary, but we now call extraordinary. We use this time to examine how these people, the saints, lived the message of Jesus Christ and we try to imitate their lives.

(The facilitator can read the discussion questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. In Jesus' life what holds the most meaning for you?
2. What characteristics do you admire most in Jesus?
3. How is your involvement in Serra an expression of discipleship?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

The best way to experience and appreciate ordinary times in the liturgical life of the church is to remember that before the religious individual or community can begin to do or say anything, God with infinite love has already spoken it and acted upon it. While all the high holidays celebrate something profound in Jesus' life it is during the ordinary times that we are truly called to respond to God, who already effected how we are as a people of faith.

Bibliography

Neufelder, Jerome, Rev. *The Church Year In Prayer*. Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985.

Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

Wright, Wendy. *The Time Between: Cycles and Rhythms In Ordinary Time*. Nashville Tennessee: Upper Room Books, 1999.

Whalen, Michael. *Seasons & Feasts Of The Church Year*. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.