

## SESSION 6 – THE CHURCH YEAR

PART 1 – BREAKING OPEN THE WORD (32<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME)

## CHECK-IN FROM LAST SESSION

Questions, comments, concerns (in person and online)

## MATTHEW 25.1-13 (THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS)

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As **the bridegroom was delayed**, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and **those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut**. <sup>11</sup> Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, **I do not know you**.’ <sup>13</sup> **Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.**

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

WHAT IS THIS GOSPEL READING TELLING US?

(1) WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT GOD?

(2) WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT US?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THIS PASSAGE? WHEN WAS THIS MOST LIKELY WRITTEN? WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THOSE FOR WHOM IT WAS WRITTEN?

WHAT CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC, AND HISTORICAL EVENTS INFLUENCED THIS PASSAGE?

WHAT TYPE OF WRITING IS IT? IS IT A SONG, POETRY, A STORY, A PROVERB?

WHAT WAS THE AUTHOR’S PURPOSE, INTENT, AND INSPIRATION FOR THE PASSAGE?

PART 2 – THE LITURGICAL YEAR (THE CHURCH YEAR)

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THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

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EXERCISE 1

We just finished the “celebration of Halloween.” As a culture, we do this every fall (October 31<sup>st</sup>). Of course, we know what this is, as children we dressed up in our favorite costumes, and then went through the neighborhood effectively extorting candy from our neighbors. As adults, certainly in the pre or no-children at home time of our lives, sometimes we celebrate the same holiday with costume parties.

Can you think of any other seasonal parties, or celebrations that you have throughout the year?

Where do they come from, and how do you celebrate them?

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LITURGY

The Church, when she speaks of worship, often uses the word. “*liturgy*.” This is especially the case when describing the Eucharist (the Mass). The word, “liturgy” comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*. Which, when we look at it more closely, it is a composite word combining *leos* (the people, the public), and *ergo* (to do, or duty). In other words, the word *liturgy* means public duty. In our present day, and secular context, this might include the duty to vote – to take part, and responsibility in democracy; another example might include military service.

In the life of the Church, this means our duty to serve, and worship God in a public way. The Church builds her worship of God around the Sunday liturgies. If you recall, we read in our previous sessions, “keep the Sabbath holy.” Christians since the time of Christ’s Resurrection gather to worship God on the first day of the week, the new beginning, of time, of Salvation History, really, of everything. For Catholics this means participating (not just attending) in the Mass.

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ECCLESIASTES 3.1-8 – A SEASON FOR ALL THINGS

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes (so Wisdom literature), like this:

For everything there is a season, and a time  
for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup> a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what  
is planted;

<sup>3</sup> a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build  
up;

<sup>4</sup> a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

<sup>5</sup> a time to throw away stones, and a time to  
gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain  
from embracing;

<sup>6</sup> a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

<sup>7</sup> a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

<sup>8</sup> a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

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POINT OF REFLECTION

ARE THERE SEASONS TO OUR OWN PERSONAL  
LIVES?

HOW DO WE LIVE THE SEASONS IN OUR MODERN  
WORLD, AND HOW MIGHT THAT BE DIFFERENT  
FOR OUR ANCESTORS?

HOW DO “SEASONS” AFFECT THINGS BEYOND  
OUR CONTROL?

So, to then, does the Church have a season for everything. Or more specifically, so to does the Church tell the story of Jesus Christ according to the “seasons” of His life (as they are presented in the four Gospels).

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ADVENT – SEASON 1 – WE SEE THE MOUNTAIN THROUGH THE CLOUDS

Advent, the first season of The Church Year, is a time of great expectations. As a parent this season might remind you of a time when you were expecting a child, especially towards the end of the pregnancy.

For the Church Advent is celebrated for four consecutive Sundays. This often becomes apparent to us when we walk into the Church, notice that the colours are now in purple, and the priest says something like “happy new year” to us. The focus of our readings and prayers during the Mass, like the whole of our prayer life outside of the Mass in this season is to share in the long-expected hope of the *Messiah*. If you recall our earlier session on the Bible, this *messianic expectation*, began centuries before Jesus Christ was born. Advent is a

time of joy and hope because, unlike the Jewish people who suffered exile, slavery, and many unjust foreign occupations, we know that he really came.

As Catholics we keep Advent separate from Christmas. We are called to avoid the chaos, and cliches of our culture. Advent is not a time of consumerism, of shopping, and decorating for Christmas. In fact, one of the challenges we have with this season is to not blend it into what our culture calls “Christmas” (the season of shopping that begins as the candy is taken off of the shelves at Halloween, and ends abruptly on Boxing Day!).

In Advent, we commonly make and light a wreath in our Church, and in our homes. We use this less as a decoration, and more as a place to gather and pray together ... as the time passes, we come closer and closer to celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our prayers reflect this.

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#### CHRISTMAS – SEASON 2 – OUR GUIDE ARRIVES

Traditionally, and for many ancient Christians today Christmas is 12 days long. You might recall the Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. For Roman Catholics today, it begins at sunset on December 24<sup>th</sup> and ends with the Baptism of the Jesus Christ (technically, we celebrate this on the first Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January, so, 12+ days). It is a busy time in terms of the life of the Church. For many in our culture the season ends December 25<sup>th</sup>, for Christians this is exactly the opposite – it begins. For the next 12+ days, everyday is literally Christmas. In the middle of this season we celebrate another important feast, the Feast of Solemnity of Mary.

The season is marked in white. It is a time of glory. The music we sing at Church changes, just like they did for Advent. Really, it is a time to celebrate that God not only became a human being, but also, an infant child. God dwelled in the womb of Mary, like we all did with our own mothers, he was born, and in his case, was circumcised – he was a Jew.

While the season officially ends when we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, we do come back to it 40 days after the birth of Jesus. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, when the rest of the world turns its attention to a rodent in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania (Groundhog day, which is also originated as a modern Christian festival), Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Presentation, A time when Jesus, as an infant, was presented in the Temple (Luke 2.22-38) – as the first born sone, this was a requirement of the Law of Moses.

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ORDINARY TIME – SEASON 3 – ON THE FERTIL FOOTHILLS

So called Ordinary Time represents the longest season (or seasons of the year). There is a total of 34 weeks (35 if you include the Feast of Christ the King). Unlike the other Liturgical Seasons, Ordinary Time is not consecutive. It “fills in the gaps” between the other seasons.

This is a time when we reflect upon the life of Christ. His teaching, miracles, and more. It is focused on the time of his ministry on earth (which we date as three years, sometime in his early 30’s).

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LENT – SEASON 4 – IN THE VALLEY

Lent is a penitential season. Penitential comes from the word, penitent, meaning one who repents. It is a time for all of us individually, and collectively, to renounce our sins, ask God for pardon, and then live our lives as people who have been, in fact, pardoned! Like Advent this season is marked in purple, not as a royal colour, but rather, as a penitential colour. In Lent we reflect upon the price that Jesus will pay for our sins.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, and then last for 40 days (not including Sunday) and ends with Holy Week (the week before Easter that starts with Palm Sunday). As Catholics it is a time of prayer (we normally, add to our prayer life), of fasting, and of giving alms. It is also a time when we prepare for and participate in the Sacrament of Penance (if we do not already do so in a habitual way).

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THE EASTER TRIDUUM – SEASON 5 – REACHING THE SUMMIT

In Latin, the word Triduum means three days. As Catholics the celebration of Easter is one continual three-day celebration. It begins on Holy Thursday (in the evening) when we retell the story of the Last Supper (according the John); when Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. We mark Friday as “Good Friday.” The day that Jesus was betrayed, condemned, and murdered on the Cross. As Catholics we remember this Friday literally every single Friday of the year with fasting, prayers, and abstinence. The Triduum ends late in the evening of Holy Saturday when we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at the Easter Vigil. This is the time of the year when the Church most commonly accepts new members through Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, and First Communion.

This celebration includes two colours. Red, commonly associated with martyrdom, in this case the death of Jesus Christ. White, like Christmas, celebrating the glory of God. This season is the “highest” season of the year.

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THE EASTER SEASON – SEASON 6 – RESTING ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN

The Easter Season begins on Easter Sunday and ends at the Feast of Pentecost. Like Lent, it is long, 50 consecutive days. In this time when we celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death, the life of the Church (we read a lot from the Acts of the Apostles), and the glory of God. Like Easter and Christmas, we dress in white, and like all the other seasons, it has its own music and prayers.

Easter is who we are, if we go back to our earlier session on the Nicene Creed, this is where it comes from:

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the  
dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty,  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and live everlasting.  
Amen.

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POINT OF REFLECTION

HOW DO THE SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR  
(THE LITURGICAL SEASONS) EMPHASIZE  
DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE NICENE CREED?

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THIS STATEMENT OF  
FAITH, HOW IS THE SEASON OF EASTER A YEAR  
WITHIN A YEAR?

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SUNDAY

As a final note, as Catholics we cannot overstate the importance of Sunday. Sunday is a gift, not a burden. God gives us rest, recreation, family. God calls us to orient our lives toward him. Without Sunday, without the Eucharist, we are lost among the many mountains in our world. We lose sight of who we are. We can lose respect for creation, for the lives of others,

and for our own lives. The Catholic Faith is not a spectator sport, we are not invited to sit on the sidelines as life goes on.

CLOSING REMARKS

1. *Journal Entries – notes for next week*
2. *Online followers*
3. *The Mass*
4. *Session 7 – The Gospel of Mark*

+Final Blessing