

Taken from the 1948 Shorter Prayer Book

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR ACCORDING TO THE USE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE CHURCH'S CALENDAR is planned to remind us of the great events of the gospel story, out of which Christian worship springs. Thus Sunday is the weekly memorial of the Resurrection of our Lord.

For every Sunday and the chief commemorations in the year a Collect, Epistle, and Gospel are provided. The Collect often sets the note of the day's worship. The Gospels and Epistles are respectively from the gospel story and usually from the pastoral messages of Apostles to their people.

The Psalms are read through in daily portions every month at Morning and Evening Prayer, but special Psalms are selected for congregational use on Sundays, and 'proper' Psalms are set for the chief festivals. The lectionary provides for the orderly reading of the Bible morning and evening throughout the year, with special lessons for Sundays.

The sequence of the Church's year is as follows:

Advent prepares us to celebrate Christ's first coming and warns us that he will come again to judge quick and dead.

Christmas, the anniversary of our Lord's birth, leads to

Epiphany (January 6) which, with the following Sundays, speaks of the glory of God revealed in Christ.

Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima, so-called because they precede Easter by approximately seventy, sixty, and fifty days, bridge the interval between the Epiphany season and

Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, and lasts, excluding Sundays, for forty days, recalling the forty days of our Lord's temptation. It is a season of penitence and fasting in preparation for Easter. The Fifth Sunday in Lent, called Passion Sunday, foreshadows

Holy Week which, opening on Palm Sunday, leads our thoughts through our Lord's Passion, from his entry into Jerusalem, through the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, to his Crucifixion on Good Friday, and his lying in the grave on Easter Eve.

Easter, the festival of the Resurrection, is kept for eight days, the 'octave'. Its date varies according to the date of the Passover full moon. The season of rejoicing extends through the forty days after Easter to

Ascension Day, when Christ is proclaimed the Lord of all life ; and then to

Whitsunday, when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the Church. The series ends with

Trinity Sunday, which declares the fullness of the Christian revelation of God. The following Sundays to Advent are named 'after Trinity'.

Holy Days and Saints' Days. Other events in our Lord's life are also commemorated during the year. Saints are remembered on special days; and on November 1, All Saints' Day, the list closes with the vision of the Church triumphant.

Rogation Days. On the Sunday before Ascension Day and the three following days we pray God to bless man's labour to produce the necessities of life.

Ember Days. At the turn of each season three days are fixed for prayer on behalf of the Christian ministry. Ordinations usually take place at these times.