

KNOW YOUR PARISH PRIEST

Lay Catholics tend to know what their parish priest does for them, such as celebrating mass, giving sermons, hearing confessions, organising the services for deaths and marriages, being on call 24 hours per day and many others. It is a full-time job.

At a recent funeral, a non-Catholic friend asked me why we stand, sit, and kneel during mass and why the priest wears special robes, and I tried to explain it all.

It also made me wonder how many lay Catholics know what is required during a mass, such as the colour of vestments to be worn by the priest and why prayers such as the CREED and GLORIA are sometimes used but not always. Why do some prayers always remain the same and others change? There are also masses for different occasions such as funerals, weddings, special feast days and seasonal requirements, yet all are made up of two major liturgies:

The Liturgy of the Word.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist.

In simple terms, a liturgy is a religious service that uses prayers, readings, and actions. As I thought about this, I remembered that the things used during a mass are all based on a calendar document created by the Holy See in Rome called the LITURGICAL YEAR (LY). The following is just an introduction.

Throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has been blessed by people who have shown their exceptional love of God and their neighbours through selfless actions. We call them saints. The Holy See has allocated days throughout the year to remember and celebrate them and has done the same for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

This is detailed on each day in the LY, taking into consideration what is special in each country worldwide. In the UK, a diocese provides a special small version to each of its parish priests. It's called an ORDO.

Another consideration the Holy See has deemed appropriate is how special a particular day of remembrance is. It does this by giving each one a specific title. These are:

SOLEMNITY

FEAST

MEMORIAL

SOLEMNITIES

These are considered the highest-ranked feast days in the local LY and are used to celebrate a mystery of faith, such as an event in the life of Jesus, his mother Mary, his father Joseph or an important saint. The

feast day begins with the vigil on the evening before the actual date. During mass, the GLORIA and CREED are always said.

All Holy Days of Obligation are Solemnities, but not all Solemnities are Holy Days of Obligation.

FEASTS

These are the second rank and used to celebrate certain saints, Archangels and the Apostles. During mass, the GLORIA is required on these days, but not the CREED.

MEMORIALS

These are the lowest rank in the liturgical calendar and consist of the celebration of most of the saints. During mass, the GLORIA and CREED are not said on these days.

An important detail in the LY is which parts of the Bible should be read daily during mass. The LY contains so much important information that the Second Vatican Council revised it in 1969, adopting a three-year cycle of readings using every day of the year.

2020 was year A, 2021 was year B, and 2022 was year C. The cycle then began again in 2023 as year A.

We mentioned that all Holy Days of Obligation are Solemnities when Catholics are obliged to go to mass, such as on Sundays. Can you remember the names?

- Nativity of the Lord
- Epiphany of the Lord
- Ascension of the Lord
- St Peter & St Paul
- The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- All Saints

According to a decision of the Bishops' Conference (1984), holy days which fall on Saturday or Monday are transferred to Sunday.

With all this and more to consider when a mass is to be said, we should be extremely thankful that our parish priest always knows the details that should be considered. Do we give him the credit due for this and all the other things he's expected to provide on our behalf 24 hours a day? He's a great gift from God, and we should remember to show him our gratitude and pray for him daily.