

## Liturgical Colours and Seasons

Celebrating the Church's year



### TARGET AUDIENCE

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#### Overview

This Object teaches students about the liturgical calendar; its seasons and the colours and symbols that represent them. The colours are dealt with in detail.

The multimedia element is a graphic depiction of these components.

#### Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Crafting the Art of Liturgy' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the art, beauty and celebration as well as the roles of the ordained ministry and of the liturgical assembly.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Art in the Liturgy' watch the video 'Bringing Beauty to the Liturgy'. The content of the video is developed further in the case studies: the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, USA; and the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Hamilton, New Zealand. The case studies can be accessed by clicking on the 'View Case Studies' arrow.

*Where appropriate, use this material with the students.*

#### Supporting Content

*This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.*

The colour of the liturgical vestments changes from time to time. This is because the Church uses different colours to indicate the season or feast that is being celebrated. The different colours are drawn from creation to remind those participating in a liturgy of the different blessings of God. The colours used are *white* (or gold), *purple* (or violet), *green*, *red* and *rose pink*.

#### White

White (or gold), since it is a festive, joyful colour, is used during the *Christmas* and *Easter seasons*, and on major feast days, such as, on the celebrations of the Lord other than of his Passion, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Holy

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### Supporting Content

Angels, and of Saints who were not martyrs, and on the Solemnities of All Saints. Because white symbolises the Resurrection, it is also the colour often used for *funerals*.

#### Purple

Purple (or violet) symbolises repentance and penance. Vestments of purple or violet are used during the seasons of *Advent* and *Lent*.

The colour reminds us of the violet flower that bows its head and is a symbol of humility. Lent is the season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is a quiet season for reflection. The colour of Advent is more of a rose-purple, like the sky just before sunrise. This is the time of year when the Church waits in joyful hope to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

Purple or violet dye was very expensive. An early Christian, Lydia from Thyatira, made her living from the purple dye trade and was able to support St Paul in his missionary work (Acts 16: 14-15).

#### Green

Green is a sign of life in nature and as such it represents growth, life and hope. Green is the colour worn most often during liturgies in Ordinary Time. It symbolises the graces that draw people into the life of God.

#### Red

Red symbolises both blood and fire. It is the colour that is used on *Passion (Palm) Sunday*, *Pentecost Sunday*, and for celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is also the colour that has traditionally been associated with martyrs – those who have shed their blood for their faith – and so it is worn on the *feast days of martyrs*.

#### Rose pink

Rose pink is an optional colour that may be used on the *Third Sunday of Advent* and the *Fourth Sunday of Lent*. On both of these days, the Entrance Antiphon calls us to rejoice, so the pink vestments mark a softening of the penitential tone of the season.

### For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

- 1 **Invite the students to undertake the following research assignments:**

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### For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

- Choose a few dates throughout the year at random. See if one or some of these dates is a saint's feast day. If you have more than one, select the saint you are most interested in. Write an account of their lives, why they were canonised, why they interest you, and how you are inspired by them.
  - Research and write about one of the liturgical seasons; include information on its symbol, colour, celebrations and ceremonies, significant events etc.
  - Create a representation of the Church's liturgical year featuring its seasonal colours.
  - Research the relationship between key feasts and the seasons of nature in the Northern hemisphere e.g. Christmas. Explain the association with Jewish festivals and former pagan feasts.
- 2 **Project this [webpage](#), or print it out, so all the students can read the words of Pope Benedict XVI together.**  
Read and reflect on what Pope Benedict XVI said about the [Easter Triduum](#).
  - 3 **Invite the students to research the Advent wreath and to then make their own. The article '[Advent Wreath – Background and How To Make Your Own Wreath](#)' may assist students in completing this task.**  
Make an Advent wreath and research the history and meaning of it.

### Teacher Professional Development Resources

Vatican Council II, [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, \*Sacrosanctum Concilium\*](#), Chapter V: The Liturgical Year