

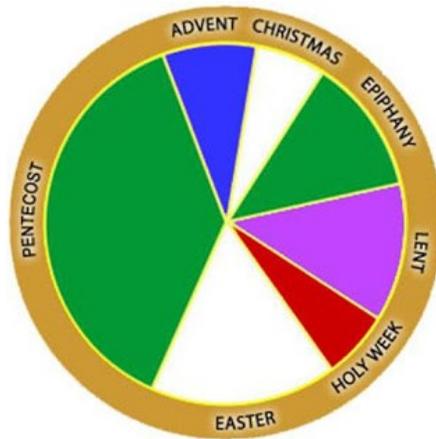
From Fr. Fleming's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You may think that “the holidays” begin with Thanksgiving and end with New Year’s Eve and Day - but the Church follows a different calendar and counts its days in a different way. In fact, this weekend the Church inaugurates a new year, a new liturgical year, which it refers to as

The Year of Grace 2018

A Year of Grace begins on the First Sunday of Advent and ends on the Saturday following the annual celebration of Christ the King - which we celebrated last weekend on November 26. In the “liturgical year” the church annually recounts and celebrates the mystery of Jesus Christ beginning with preparing for and celebrating his birth (Advent and Christmas) and his revelation to us Gentile (non-Jews) at Epiphany. About six weeks later, the liturgy brings us to the heart of the year which is Easter, preceded by a season of preparation (Lent) and followed by 49 days (a week of weeks) of Paschal joy culminating with the feast of Pentecost. From Pentecost (in the spring) until Christ the King (in the fall) the Church follows the life of Christ through the teaching of scripture, particularly the gospels. Of course through the whole year are various and many celebrations of Christian beliefs and the lives of the saints.



And how about YOU?

The Year of Grace is *offered* to us - it's up to us to avail ourselves, to take advantage of, to open our lives to the grace God never ceases to offer us: on an annual, monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, minute-by-minute calendar and clock. God's grace never abandons us - the liturgical year is meant to prompt, nudge, push, even shove us in the path of grace to grow in our humanity and in our faith before God and our neighbor. So when I pose the question: *And how about YOU? Will this be a Year of Grace for you?* Only *YOU* have the answer!

Let's seize the moment! We're fresh from Thanksgiving and the warmth of family and friends - and Christmas is just round the corner - a holiday that even non-believers observe and keep! We're in a season of giving thanks and praise and a season for remembering how God's Word became flesh and came to dwell among us as an infant, born in a manger in Bethlehem. What better time of the year than this to make some “new year's resolutions” about our prayer, our faith and our spiritual life? What better time than this to pray that a new Year of Grace will make a real difference in our own lives and in the lives of those around us?

So let's not wait until January 1 - or Ash Wednesday! Let's begin to resolve now, today, while this letter is still in our hands - let's resolve now to make of the year ahead a year of growth, a year of generosity, a year of gains, a year of grace!

Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming