

## Understanding the Seasons

The Feast of the Ascension is celebrated forty days after Easter Sunday. It is always on a Thursday. The date for 2004 is May 20<sup>th</sup>. Ascension Day recalls our Lord's exaltation by being taken gloriously up into heaven. After his crucifixion and resurrection, Holy Scripture tell us he was seen for forty days before he ascended into heaven to be "seated at the right hand of God the Father." After Jesus' ascension, the disciples awaited the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. The color for the Feast of the Ascension is white symbolizing festival and joy. An appropriate symbol is a crown for the reign of our Lord.

**The Day, or Feast, of Pentecost** celebrates the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples as they were gathered in Jerusalem. The story of Pentecost is related in Acts 2. It is often called the "birthday of the Church" because of the new covenant with God given to all believers.

Pentecost is from the Greek word for "fiftieth day." It was the Greek name for the Hebrew Feast of Weeks, which fell 50 days after Passover. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the calling of the Hebrews into a covenant relationship with God at Mt. Sinai.

The Day of Pentecost falls 50 days after Easter. In 2004, the Day of Pentecost is May 30<sup>th</sup>. Another traditional name for the Feast of Pentecost is Whitsunday. This name probably comes from the white robes worn on the day of baptism (White-Sunday). The Feast of Pentecost is one of the appropriate Sundays for Baptism.

The color for Pentecost is red symbolizing the tongues of flame that signify the Holy Spirit. Symbols are a dove, wind and tongues of fire. It is appropriate for the story in Acts 2 to be read in several languages. The congregation can be invited to wear red on Pentecost Sunday. You can also incorporate kites, pinwheels, fans, wind chimes and mobiles into the liturgy. Many churches release ladybugs at Pentecost because of the red color and their benefit to the environment.

Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost. It celebrates the doctrine of the Trinity, the belief that God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Spirit. The color for Trinity Sunday is white for joy. Symbols include an equilateral triangle and three interlocking circles.

**The Season after Pentecost** is the longest of our church seasons. These numbered weeks after the Feast of Pentecost are sometimes referred to as "Ordinary Time" because they are not associated with a particular thematic season like Advent or Lent. The Season of Pentecost begins with Trinity Sunday and ends on the last Sunday after Pentecost, which is the Sunday before Advent begins. The numbered proper to be used on each of the Sundays after Pentecost is determined by the calendar date of that Sunday (see BCP pg. 158).

The liturgical color is green symbolizing growth and fruitfulness in the Christian life. Numerous saints', feast and holy days fall in this season, including:

- ?? St. Barnabas on June 11
- ?? St. Mary Magdelene on July 22
- ?? Mary and Martha of Bethany on July 29
- ?? The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ on August 6
- ?? Clare of Assisi on August 11
- ?? David Pendelton Oakenhater on September 1
- ?? Holy Cross Day on September 14
- ?? Hildegard of Bingen on September 17
- ?? St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist on September 21
- ?? St. Michael and All Angels' on September 29
- ?? St. Francis of Assisi on October 4
- ?? Teresa of Avila on October 15
- ?? St. Luke the Evangelist on October 18
- ?? All Saints' Day on November 1

For biographical and liturgical information on these see the book Lesser Feasts and Fasts published by the Church Publishing Company, [www.churchpublishing.org](http://www.churchpublishing.org). On the web: [www.satucket.com/lectionary](http://www.satucket.com/lectionary); [www.cresourcei.org](http://www.cresourcei.org); [http://www.saintgeorgeschurch.org/cal\\_seasons.htm](http://www.saintgeorgeschurch.org/cal_seasons.htm)

*This information is adapted from The Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education (Cowley Publications) by Joseph P. Russell. The Rev. Joseph Parker Russell III – Joe to many - was Canon for Christian Education in the Diocese of Ohio for many years, and one of the shining stars of Christian Education in the Episcopal Church He was the first member of NAECED. He died on March 17<sup>th</sup>. “May light perpetual shine upon him.”*