

COLORS OF THE CHURCH

Color, like music, plays an important role in the life of God's worshiping people. Just as music is the "handmaiden to theology," liturgical color complements the message of the seasons and occasions during the Church Year. Taking a familiar seat in the nave of his/her church preceding worship on any given Sunday, the worshiper's emotions and intellect are immediately engaged by color. Liturgical colors aid in establishing a climate in which Law and Gospel may be heard and received.

Color, like light, which is its source, is most helpful when it is pleasing as well as stimulating to the senses. However, let's never forget its primary role in divine worship: Color allows us to see the Light of Life, Jesus Christ. It serves to communicate the message of salvation. And communicate it does when it reinforces a specific "colorful" chapter in the life of our Lord and His Church, retold annually by the Church calendar. **LW**

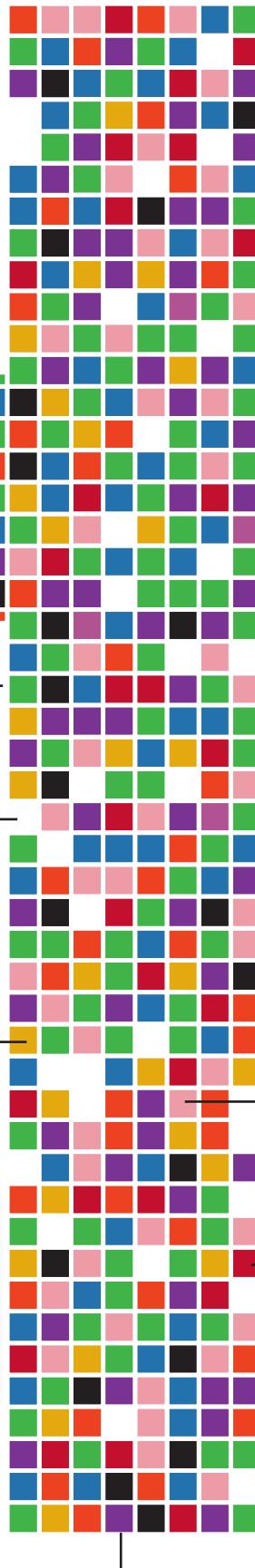
PURPLE is a penitential color, appropriately used during Lent and, still in many parishes, during the season of Advent. The forty days of Lent, including the six Sundays that fall during this season, use this deep, rich color that has come to represent somberness and solemnity, penitence and prayer. Jesus, the King of the Jews, wore a purple robe only once. As the soldiers mocked and tormented Him, the Scriptures record they placed on Him a "purple garment" in order to ridicule Him. So, purple is used as a vivid reminder of the contempt and scorn Christ endured and the subsequent sacrifice He made for our eternal salvation. Ecclesiastical purple should remind all Christians of their daily need to humbly give attention to leading a life of repentance.

SCARLET (a vivid red or orange) is called for use during Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday. It is a color worth investing in because it stands in contrast to the traditional red that is used on festival Sundays. Scarlet's use during the somber days of Holy Week helps to offer a different message. As the Manual on the Liturgy points out, "scarlet is a color anciently associated with the passion ... the color of blood" (p. 25).

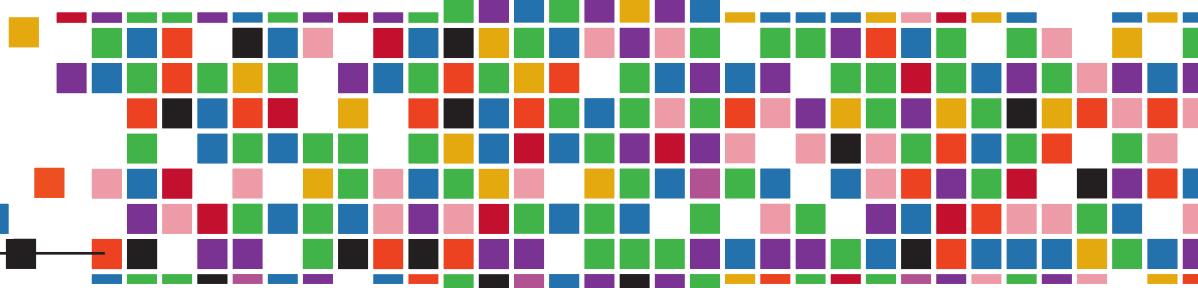
BLUE is the more contemporary color increasingly used by many congregations in their observance of a new Church Year. Advent, a preparatory time of waiting and watching, communicates the message of hope. Blue — the color of the sky — helps convey that powerful message. Our Christian faith rests on the hope that Christ, who came in history assuming our flesh, will also return on the last day of time from that same blue sky He ascended long ago.

GREEN is the most common color seen during the year, especially during the seasons of Epiphany and Pentecost. The days of Epiphany may entail a total of, but not more than, eight Sundays. The season of Pentecost, on the other hand, can last from 22 to 28 Sundays. Green is the appointed color for all but a few of the Sundays during these seasons. Consequently, green may be used an average of six to eight months of any given liturgical year! Finally, Epiphany's message of Christ's revelation to the Gentiles along with the season's traditional emphasis on extending Christ's kingdom calls for the use of green — the color symbolic of growth.

CH YEAR



The calendar calls for the use of **BLACK** only twice: on Good Friday and Ash Wednesday. Black is the absence of light. Good Friday, or Black Friday in combination with Ash Wednesday, call for sober reflection on the cost of our redemption. Without Christ's sacrifice on the day the sky turned dark and hid the light of the sun, there would be no bright light of Christ to live in, nor new life in Christ to enjoy.



GOLD is the optional color for Easter Sunday. It is also the suggested color for the last Sunday in the Church Year. Its use may not be popular yet, but its emphasis is undeniable. Gold represents value and worth. The golden festival of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the event that gives our lives meaning and worth. He is worthy of our praise as we adorn His altar with the color of splendor.

RED is a power color and is appropriate for use on Pentecost Sunday. On this day we remember the power and fire of "the Lord and Giver of Life," who revealed Himself as the promised one. The color red communicates the motif of the strength and power the Holy Spirit gives God's people. Red is also the traditional color for the heroic martyrs of the Church whose red blood shed in defense of the Gospel offers perpetual encouragement for God's people to be resolute in living the faith. Additional uses of red are Reformation Sunday; Holy Cross Day (Sept. 14); on such festive occasions as dedications, anniversaries of a congregation and its physical structure and festive days celebrating the office of the public ministry, such as ordination and installation.

WHITE is the color of purity and completeness. The theme for the "great fifty days" of Easter is supported by the use of white. This color, used primarily during these Sundays, assists in bearing the message that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Christ's triumph from the grave on Resurrection day is the cause for our rejoicing, and white reinforces that message of joy. White is the appointed color for such festive Sundays as Christmas and its twelve days; Epiphany (Jan. 6) and the first Sunday following it, observed as the Baptism of Our Lord; the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, also known as Transfiguration Sunday; Holy Trinity Sunday; and twenty-one minor festivals and occasions listed on the Church Year calendar.

ROSE is a color used in some of our congregations. It was historically used but twice in the year: on the third Sunday in Advent (Gaudete) and the fourth Sunday in Lent (Laetare). The introits for both of these days summon the Church to joy. On these days, the fast is "lightened," and the joy of the upcoming festival (either Christmas or Easter) shines into the days of the season of preparation (Advent or Lent) with hope and expectation. Even in congregations that do not put rose upon the altar, the third Sunday in Advent is still marked with the rose candle.