



THE ANCIENT PRACTICES SERIES

*joan chittister*

# THE LITURGICAL YEAR

*the spiraling adventure of the spiritual life*

**A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK**

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# STUDY GUIDE

## THE LITURGICAL YEAR

JOAN CHITTISTER

*“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

JEREMIAH 6:16

### CHAPTER 1: THE SPIRALING ADVENTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

In what ways would following the liturgical year more closely help you focus on your own spiritual growth?

## CHAPTER 2:

### A LIVING MODEL, A REAL LIFE

How would focusing on the way Jesus lived his life change the way you live “the Christian life”?

How could reliving and celebrating moments from our faith’s history add to our sense of community?

## CHAPTER 3:

### THE YEAR THAT GIVES MEANING TO EVERY OTHER YEAR

In what ways does following the events of Christ’s life remind us that he shared the same life we do and shared the same concerns?

## CHAPTER 4:

### THE COMPONENTS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR

How would focusing on the four major kinds of celebrations help us adhere to the community of Christians and instill in us a seriousness of our faith walk?

Is following a church year spiritually helpful or not? And if so, in what way?



## CHAPTER 5:

### SUNDAY

Do you still celebrate Sunday in the way you did as a child? How has it changed for you? For your community? Is this a better experience for you or not?

How is Sunday the central feast of the liturgical year?

## CHAPTER 6:

### HUMAN TIME, LITURGICAL TIME

How would following the liturgical year cause you to set your goals higher, both in your faith and your daily life?

What is the difference between human time and liturgical time? Is this a conflict for you or a spiritual experience? Why?

## CHAPTER 7:

### THE PLACE OF WORSHIP IN HUMAN LIFE

In what ways does community worship remind you that humans are capable of great good, even divinely driven actions?

How do you respond to the call to be a better, even “resplendent” human?

## CHAPTER 8:

### CALENDARS

How would you define the difference between celebrating Christ's birth and celebrating his birth *date*? Is the celebration important to the development of a spiritual life or not?

## CHAPTER 9:

### ADVENT: THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF WAITING

How can celebrating the 40-day "waiting period" of Advent help us learn to trust God's time in our own lives?

In what way is "waiting" a spiritual practice?

## CHAPTER 10:

### THE VOICE OF ADVENT

Which "coming" are you waiting for? How does Advent prepare our hearts for the greatest joy ever experienced?

## CHAPTER 11:

### JOY: THE ESSENCE OF IT ALL

In what ways could you use the anticipation of Advent to turn your interests and concerns outward toward both the civic and faithful communities?

How could you cement these changes in your life, using them to build true joy?

## CHAPTER 12:

### CHRISTMAS: THE COMING OF THE LIGHT

How can the celebration of God's divine presence among us add depth to our spiritual walk?

How do the sun and the son come together to add another layer to the meaning of Christmas?

## CHAPTER 13:

### THE CHRISTMAS SEASON: STARS TO STEER BY

What regular activities could you add to your personal or family celebrations that would extend your celebration of the season into January?

How would this add depth to the faith walk of each member of your family?

## CHAPTER 14:

### CHRISTMASTIDE: THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME

As you celebrate each of the minor feasts, what element do you take away that draws you closer to God, closer to living a fuller Christian life?

## CHAPTER 15:

### ORDINARY TIME I: THE WISDOM OF ENOUGHNESS

If the season of “Ordinary Time” pushes us toward a deeper contemplation of our spiritual lives, how can we incorporate that deep consideration into our daily lives? How will it affect the way we interact with our family and our colleagues?

Why is the celebration of ordinary time as important as the celebration of the feast days?

## CHAPTER 16:

### ASCETICISM

*Denial. Sacrifice.* How do you react to these terms? In what ways can words that normally have a negative meaning in our western culture be seen as words of growth, depth, and balance?

## CHAPTER 17:

### LENT: A SYMPHONY IN THREE PARTS

Lent is a call to review and renew our commitment to Christ. How will you use this season to re-energize your devotion to Christ?

What are the three parts of lent? How are they different from one another?

## CHAPTER 18:

### ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE VOICES OF LENT

What are your Christian roots? What in your current faith community helps ground you, giving you balance and a place in which to question and grow the depth of your faith?

## CHAPTER 19:

### SUFFERING

In what ways has the suffering in your past allowed you to grow spiritually?

Are there ways in which you have become complacent in your faith?



## CHAPTER 20:

### HOLY WEEK I: HOPE TO MATCH THE SUFFERING

As you embrace the events of Holy Week, what comparisons do you see in your own life, such as the comparison between personal commitment and public success?

In what ways does Christ's journey toward sacrifice and resurrection reflect your own spiritual walk?

## CHAPTER 21:

### HOLY WEEK II: FAITH TESTED TO THE END

By fully embracing the three days before Easter, the hope of the empty tomb can be abandoned in the solemn focus on the crucifixion. How can you honor the sacredness of the “dark days” while maintaining an eye on the life to come?

## CHAPTER 22:

### HOLY THURSDAY

Holy Thursday is about mixed emotions—celebration giving way to fear and sadness. What times in your own life reflect such emotional conflict?

What changes occurred in your life and spirit because of this conflict?

## CHAPTER 23:

### GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday is a day of sadness and loss, a reminder that our own lives need to be examined and changed. In what parts of your own life does your personal commitment to Christ need to be re-examined?

What changes could revitalize your walk with God?

How would your spiritual life be different if we did not celebrate Good Friday?

## CHAPTER 24:

### HOLY SATURDAY: THE LOSS THAT IS GAIN

Holy Saturday is a day of emptiness, a time when all seems hopeless—yet great gain will arise from this loss. What moments in your life have you suffered a loss of hope, of your dreams?

What gain came from your ability to conquer those times, spiritually and emotionally?

## CHAPTER 25:

### EASTER VIGIL, EAST SUNDAY

The feast of Resurrection is the rebirth of hope, a light casting away all darkness, and a reminder that we are more than mortal. What steps will you take to ensure that you will live life in the light of the risen Jesus?

What new hopes do you have for your spirit, your faith, and your life in him?

Are you a Good-Friday Christian or an Easter-Sunday Christian? Which is more truly the fullness of the feast?

## CHAPTER 26:

### CELEBRATION

The liturgical year builds in times of celebration, moments in which we celebrate our life in Christ with rest and play. In what ways can you embrace this joy?

How do you observe the Sabbath as a time of joy in God's presence?

In what ways do you draw others to you, sharing this remarkable time of joyful living?

## CHAPTER 27:

### PASHALTIDE: THE DAYS OF PENTECOST

The author refers to the fifty days of Pentecost as “one hot point of experience.” How will you embrace the joy and glory of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life during the days of Pashaltide?

What does it mean to you to have been changed by the Holy Spirit in your life and spirit?

## CHAPTER 28:

### FIDELITY

How will remaining dedicated to following the feasts of liturgical year keep us grounded—and faithful—to the life Jesus wants us to lead?

## CHAPTER 29:

### ORDINARY TIME II: THE WISDOM OF ROUTINE

Why does the routine of our everyday lives matter?

How does the way we behave, the habits we keep daily, affect our spiritual growth, our hope in Jesus?

## CHAPTER 30:

### MODELS AND HEROES

Who are your role models and heroes in your Christian walk? How has being around them and admiring their lives in Christ changed your faith journey?

What role models in the feasts of the liturgical year inspire you?

## CHAPTER 31:

### THE SANCTORAL CYCLE

The saints are ordinary people who have been inspired to extraordinary actions by their love of Christ. How can a celebration of their lives inspire us to stand firm and stay grounded in our daily lives?

## CHAPTER 32:

### MARIAN FEASTS

To examine Mary's life is to acknowledge and embrace God's ability to use anyone to achieve his plans. How does her life reflect God's presence in humans, in his creation?

How does it emphasize God's divine and human nature in the incarnate Christ?



## CHAPTER 33:

### EPILOGUE

Following the liturgical year lets us follow Christ's footsteps, meshing us with his life. In what ways will this change you and the way you reveal your faith, your commitment to the world?