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Living as Catholic Christians: Word, Sacrament, Calendar

The Institute for Christian Formation, Inc.

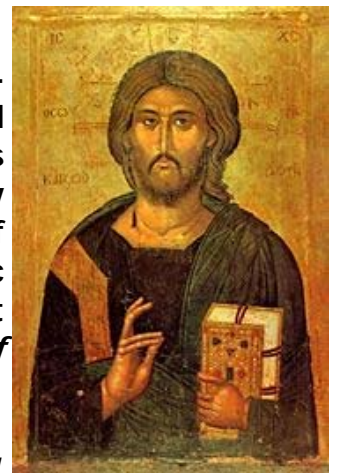
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Word, Sacrament, Calendar

Catholic Christian Faith Formation

Catholic Christians are formed in faith via Word, Sacrament and Calendar. We are a Church of Scripture and Tradition.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God. The Word is Sacred Scripture. Christ speaks to us in the Scriptures, both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Scripture is the Story of the People of God. As Christians, Scripture is our family story. We need to know this Story to understand our story and to know who we are as a people of God. You could even say that Scripture is the *"textbook"* for Catholic Christians. Our Catholic Christian formation is rooted in Scripture – it is rooted in Jesus Christ. As Saint Jerome said so well, *"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."*



Christ the Savior & Life-Giver
14th Century
Metropolitan Jovan-Zograph
Art Gallery, Skopje, Macedonia



As Catholic Christians we are not only a people of the *"Book"*, but we also have a rich sacramental and liturgical tradition. Sacraments are outward signs. Signs and symbols are tangible and concrete. We taste the bread and wine – the Body and Blood of Christ. We smell the sacred chrism. We touch and feel the holy water. We see the

light of the candle.

As a sacramental people, baptism is the first sacrament we celebrate. It is extremely important that we know and appreciate our baptismal identity – our identity as sons and daughters of God. In essence, in baptism we become Christ. Jesus is called Christ because he is the anointed one of God. The Greek word *"Christos"* means the *"anointed one"*, just as does the word *"Messiah"* in Hebrew. Recall that in baptism we are anointed priest, prophet and king. We have become the anointed one. We have become *Christos*.

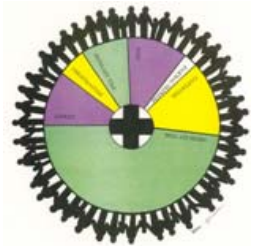
The symbols of baptism – water, oil, white garment, light – not only frame, but indeed permeate, our lives as Catholic Christians. We begin our life in Christ experiencing these four symbols. We sustain and nourish our



life in Christ through the Eucharist. And each time we come to the Table of the Lord, we can again recall our baptism. For the very altar we approach has itself been sprinkled with holy water, anointed with chrism, clothed with a white cloth and adorned with light when it was consecrated. And at our death, when our body is brought to the church for the last time, the casket will be sprinkled with holy water, clothed with a white pall, placed by the lighted Paschal Candle, and finally surrounded with aromatic incense. We should never lose sight of our baptismal identity and dignity.



As Catholic Christians we are people of Water (and indeed all sacraments and sacramentals) and the Word. What orders this for us is the Calendar – not a secular calendar, but our Liturgical or Church Calendar. In our Church, Scripture is not read randomly, but rather in a Lectionary Cycle as “ordered” by the Calendar. We keep the Seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Triduum, Easter), we keep Sunday as the first day of the week – the Day of the Lord, and we keep the feasts and festivals of our Lord, his Mother and all the Saints. And in so doing the Calendar keeps us, and orders our lives, and forms us in our faith. If the Scriptures are our textbook, the Calendar is our lesson plan!



Word, Sacrament and Calendar: these are what form us in our faith and define us as Catholic Christians. For by immersing ourselves in Word, Sacrament and Calendar we encounter Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, revealing himself to us each and every moment of each and every day.