

Did You Know...

✠ News and trivia from our parish and the Catholic Church ✠
-- contributed by the Christ Child Church Women's Club --

Christ Child Catholic Church

Dedicated to Growth in Christ and to the Challenges of Loving Service

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Isn't it Just Called the Calendar?

Most folks think of it as a wall-hanging, or a grid on their smart-phone or computer screen. And, aside from our dates and appointments, the most deep thinking any of us normally do is to try and figure out how many days are in February this year (only 28).

But our standard-without-a-second-thought calendar actually has a rich and storied history. In fact, up until the mid-1700's, the world was riven by different calendars and standards.

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar decreed the use of the 'Julian' calendar; this useful but imperfect device held sway until 1582. At that time, Pope Gregory XIII introduced his variation (Gregory/Gregorian, get it?).



But why all the fuss and bother? Precision, and the passage of time, provide the answers. The Julian calendar assumed that one Earth year was exactly 365.25 days -- but in fact, the true time of Earth's orbit is about 11 minutes less than that. Consequently, in only 130 years or so, the Julian calendar becomes "ahead" by a full day. Left uncorrected, summer would eventually be occurring in December.

The Pope was not concerned as much about snowstorms in "summertime", as he was about the already-noticeable drift of Easter away from the Spring Equinox. The new calendar realigned the holy day with the celestial day.

Pope Gregory's adaptation was a more complex formula for "leap years" than the simplicity of the Julian system (add one day every four years), and it reduced the error to about 26 seconds.

But by 1582, the Julian calendar had already stacked up 10 days worth of cumulative errors (1628 years times 11 minutes) -- so every country who shifted from Julian to Gregorian had to actually skip some days in their year.

There are some vague reports about objections and resistance in some areas, but in general, the conversions were regarded benignly, much as Benjamin Franklin opined in 1752 (the U.S. conversion year):

"It is pleasant for an old man to be able to go to bed on September 2, and not have to get up until September 14."

To make matters even more confusing, not every country made the transition at the same time; conversions occurred around the world from 1582 all the way to 1927!

JULIAN 1582		October			Gregorian 1582	
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

by Asmdemon / wikipedia

So what about those 26 seconds? Well, our descendants must deal with that in 4909, when another day's worth of errors will have accumulated.

As I write this in mid-April, Easter is just behind us, and it's clear that we can still be thankful for two things. Firstly, we didn't have to give up 14 or 15 days

to get 'aligned' with Easter this year; that's lucky -- our bosses probably would have charged us vacation time <grin>.

And secondly, we can know and deeply understand that the love and blessings of Jesus are timeless, and will always transcend any of the trivial day-tracking methods that we -- his humble servants -- might devise.

Still Curious? See these links ---

[Julian vs Gregorian
Gregorian -- 6 things](#)

--- *Karin and Greg Ills*

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