

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Now that Pentecost has come and gone, we are well into that part of the Church Year known as “Ordinary Time.”

Many Catholics think that Ordinary Time means that the days, and especially the Sundays, that fall during this period are called “ordinary” because there is nothing special about them; that they are common, or simple, in comparison with the more notable seasons of the Church Year, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter. However, that is not the case.

The use of the word “ordinary” in Ordinary Time comes from the Latin word “*ordinalis*,” and means “something that is counted,” such as numbers in a series. Ordinary Time, then, consists of those Sundays and weeks in the Church Year that are counted and each assigned a number. There are always 33 Sundays in Ordinary Time, but there can be as many as 34, depending upon when Easter falls on the calendar. Each of the Sundays during those weeks are numbered from the 1st Sunday in Ordinary Time to the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time. In the United States, however, where the Epiphany of the Lord is transferred from its traditional date to a Sunday, and the Sunday after that is the Baptism of the Lord, there is no “1st Sunday in Ordinary Time,” since the feast of the Baptism of the Lord displaces it.

Ordinary Time is divided into two sections. The first section of Ordinary Time falls from the end of Christmas - which liturgically concludes with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord - and lasts through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. The second section of Ordinary Time, that section that we are now in, begins on the Monday after Pentecost, and lasts until the 1st Sunday of Advent.

The liturgical color for Ordinary Time is green, except for those memorials or feast days during the season that have their own color. The color green reminds us of living, growing plants and symbolizes our growth in Christ. This should be a spiritual goal for all of us during this season.

The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* tells us that the days of Ordinary Time “are devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects.” These weeks take us through the life of Christ, and invite us to a deep conversion of our own lives. During this part of Ordinary Time, all of the Sundays and weeks will have something important to say about the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world. That, of course, is far from anything that is ordinary or banal.

Perhaps the USCCB, from the prayer and worship page of its website, says it best:

“Ordinary Time is a time for growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are finally caught up in Christ. The goal, toward which all of history is directed, is represented by the final Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.”

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