
In the middle months of a secular calendar year, we find ourselves in what is identified as “ordinary time” in the church’s liturgical year. As we likely have been told many times, the liturgical “ordinary time” refers to a way of counting (the Latin word *ordo* meaning “an ordering”) the Sundays from one to thirty-four. These are the Sundays that are outside of the special seasons of Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter.

Yet for us Christians, there is a kind of lovely paradox in living within what we call the “liturgical season of ordinary time.” While in many ways it may seem that all time is ordinary (since time is always countable), in other ways we can view all time as rather extraordinary. The ordinariness of time is caught up in our usual round of family or community life, of work and recreation, of the accustomed interaction of friends, neighbors, and fellow-workers. Some people try to break out of the day-to-day routine by deliberately scheduling in a special time for a dinner out, a day-trip to an unfamiliar town, or a different recreational activity such as biking or bowling.



A number of people find each day an adventure and cannot imagine that there are some who would call life ordinary. These people find a newness in the changing weather of this day, in the surprising interactions with their own children or friends, and even in the messages of the mail, the internet, and the iphone. They have retained a certain childlikeness that retains a wonder about life in all its forms. For them life is not so much ordinary, that is, “countable,” as it is caught up in “moments” that have no countable passage. For example, moments of insight and moments of being inflamed by love—spiritually identified as consolations—are truly beyond the countable.

We Christians are blessed and graced to recognize these kinds of “moments” in prayer during which we feel caught up outside of time in our relationship with God. Surely it does not happen all the time; in fact, the “ordinary” is our “slugging away” at our prayer time. We can also know these moments when we are engaged in our various times of joy, happiness, and love. The wonder of it all is that these moments for us—those who are caught in finding life ordinary and those who are gifted to live in wonder—are actually moments that happen in the ordinary course of our daily living.

Perhaps that is why it is important for us to enter fully into the paradox of our church’s liturgical season of ordinary time. There is the reality of the ordinary and there is also the reality of the moment. The church’s liturgical year reminds us that God is always present to us both in the ordinary and in the moment. We need only to pray each day of our liturgical year to be graced with the gratitude that finds God in all times and places.

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