

AN EXTRAORDINARY ORDINARY TIME

By Betty Slack

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Eccles. 3:1). As you know, we are now in the church’s liturgical season of Ordinary Time. This is one of six seasons of the liturgical year, along with Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and Easter. When we celebrate the church’s festive holidays and reverent seasons, we focus on specific events in Christ’s life – His birth, death, and resurrection, and we have traditions or activities associated with each. But what about Ordinary Time? What is its purpose and how do we mark this time in our church year?

The very term Ordinary Time can make us think that this season is unimportant, routine, commonplace, or nothing special. But, in fact, the word ordinary derives from ordinal, which means counted. And the root stem is the Latin word *ordo*, from which we get the English order. So the weeks of Ordinary Time are numbered (e.g., the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time, the 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time.) There are two sections of Ordinary Time, the first and shorter section extends from the end of the Christmas season to the beginning of Lent. The second, longer section (the section we’re in now) comprises the weeks between Pentecost and the beginning of Advent.

During this long, somewhat quieter season of the Church’s calendar, the readings concentrate on Christ’s teaching and ministry. We are given time to reflect on our lives as Christians and to consider how we are responding to Christ’s call to discipleship. The liturgical color for Ordinary Time is green, a color often associated with hope, growth, and new life. Thus, even the color of Ordinary Time reminds us that this season is one during which we grow and mature in the daily expression of our faith so that when we come to final Sunday of Ordinary Time we can joyfully celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Many of us have traditions or activities to celebrate the seasons of the year, but there don’t seem to be any special activities associated with Ordinary Time. Still, there may be some ways in which we can turn our Ordinary Time into something extraordinary. For example, consider opportunities to care for and appreciate the Earth such as joining St. Mary’s Garden Ministry or walking through the beautiful meditation garden, pausing at the shrines to reflect and pray. Ordinary Time opens us to rest and renewal during the less structured summer days. Here we can explore a new hobby, or as our youth group is modeling, volunteer our time to those in need. Ordinary Time can be an extraordinary time to deepen our faith as we live the life to which Christ calls us.

