



Ask, Father James:

Why is this period of the Liturgical year called "Ordinary Time?"

This Time of the liturgical year is called "ordinary" not because it is commonplace but simply because the days weeks falls outside the major seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter, etc. Whenever the Church isn't celebrating one of these major seasons, it is Ordinary Time. We fall back into Ordinary Time right after Pentecost Sunday and it will continues until the First Sunday of Advent. Of the Thirty-three weeks of the church's year, 'ordinary time' is the longest season of the church's liturgical year. It runs on the church's liturgical calendar when it is not preparing for celebrating the major seasons of Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

The term "Ordinary" simply translates the Latin word *ordinalis*, or ordinal which refers to numbered series. Unlike other seasons, the weeks in the Ordinary time are numbered; for instance, we are in the tenth week in ordinary time at this time. *Ordinalis* is the root of "*Ordo*" or Ordered life of the church — the period when we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) nor in more severe penance (as in Advent and Lent).

We Roman Catholics and the Byzantine Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics use the three-year Roman Missal Lectionary worldwide. The cycles reminds us that 'we are temporal creatures, and we do not receive all of God's gifts at once.' The repeating cycles of ecclesial life can be seen as evidence of the sustaining grace of God. 'Ordinary-time ecclesiology keeps the church on the creaturely side of the God-world equation.

During the Ordinary Time, the church delves deeper into how scripture and the life of Jesus (not the major events like Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost) could help us grow in our Christian life. The readings are intentional, nurturing the congregations to better understand who they are and what they are called to become. By placing these stories of Jesus' daily life in the framework of the liturgical readings of the ordinary time, congregations can learn to use the deep resources of scripture and tradition to interpret their own individual and communal stories.

However, whatever the season, the Word of God remains the same. The readings in the Lectionary follow the liturgical seasons of the year to evoke, deepen and enrich congregational experience. For instance, Advent is about the transformation of our hearts from the way we live our ordinary, everyday lives. pointing us to the possibility and hope of a fresh start; but in the ordinary time, the green vestments and green altar cloths traditionally symbolizes growth; pointing us to God's work(s) of regeneration. The focus of whatever season or liturgical time we are in transmits the lessons intended.

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