



The Season of Ordinary Time II

Summer is a time of growth, no matter where one lives. But for some, summer is also a time of sumptuous greens. Simply to stand on a stretch of lawn and look into a stand of trees is to reveal shades of green too numerous to count. It's as though God, through nature, takes one color—green—and shows how much variety and delight can come from just that one thing.

Since green is the color associated with Ordinary Time, perhaps this notion of one and many also describes something of this liturgical season. The

“one” of Ordinary Time is the paschal mystery. During these long summer and fall months until Advent begins again we walk with Jesus (through the Sunday semi-continuous reading of either the gospel of Matthew, Mark, or Luke) toward Jerusalem and the events that unfold there at the end of Jesus' life. The weeks may stretch into months and the season may seem long, yet there is an amazing variety which unfolds both in the liturgy and in our lives. It's as though God, through the liturgy and Christian living, takes the paschal mystery and teaches us how dying to self brings the joy of new life, how self-giving always returns a hundredfold, how emptying of self results in being fully satisfied.

The “many” of Ordinary Time suggests there is no one way to live this season. There will be as much variety to our gospel responses as there are Christians who hear those gospels being proclaimed Sunday after Sunday. There will be as much variety to Ordinary Time as there are differing ways to encounter Jesus: in our own suffering and that of others, in the unexpected joy of a chance encounter with an old friend, in putting in a hard day's work and basking in the satisfaction of task well done.

WARNING: during Ordinary Time growth can be habit forming! Ordinary Time draws us into Christ and forms us in surrendering, in saying yes to whatever God asks of us. In this way we grow into being more perfect members of the body of Christ. In a sense we can say that Ordinary Time is truly a season of surrender. The surrender of Ordinary Time is a matter of giving ourselves over to the demands of the gospel. The good news of the gospel isn't an abstract concept but a way of living that gives depth and breadth to loving and caring for others. Nature clothes herself in green; we clothe ourselves in Christ and the dying and rising that demands and bestows.

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Lesson plan/activities/faith sharing

SCRIPTURE

Since we only get snippets of each gospel Sunday after Sunday, it may be helpful for us to take the gospel being read during this year (Matthew, Mark, or Luke) and read it through ourselves without stopping. Getting such an overview of a gospel might help us put each Sunday's selection into the broader perspective of the whole. It might help us cue into what is unique in this year's gospel and in this way we might be able to hear each Sunday's gospel with greater openness.

HISTORICAL NOTES

⇒ From about the seventh or eighth centuries we have evidence of the Sundays of the year being counted from a feastday. Within recent memory these Sundays of the second part of Ordinary Time (the first part occurs from the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord until Ash Wednesday) have simply been counted as Sundays *in* Ordinary Time. Instead of connecting to a feastday—even such a great one as Pentecost—these Sundays are “dominical” celebrations; that is, they focus us on Christ himself.

ACTIVITY

⇒ With younger children: have the children collect or bring things of nature with different shades of green. On a poster sheet form these greens into a “path” and along the way write ways the children can come closer to Jesus during their Ordinary Time journey.

⇒ With older groups: take a chapter of the gospel being read for the year and list the demands and rewards of gospel living the chapter suggests.

REFLECTION

⇒ Walking with Jesus to Jerusalem means to me ... gospel living means ...

⇒ The variety and growth of this long season unfolds for me in that ...

PRAYER

O God of creation, your radiance shines in the beauty and variety of nature: be with us on our paschal mystery journey so that we might become more like your Son who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. **Amen.**