

What Ordinary Time Means In The Catholic Church

Because the term *ordinary* in English most often means something that's not special or distinctive, many people think that Ordinary Time refers to parts of the calendar of the Catholic Church that are unimportant. Even though the season of Ordinary Time makes up most of the liturgical year in the Catholic Church, the fact that Ordinary Time refers to those periods that fall outside of the major liturgical seasons reinforces this impression. Yet Ordinary Time is far from unimportant or uninteresting.

Why Is Ordinary Time Called Ordinary?

Ordinary Time is called "ordinary" not because it is common but simply because the weeks of Ordinary Time are numbered. The Latin word *ordinalis*, which refers to numbers in a series, stems from the Latin word *ordo*, from which we get the English word *order*. Thus, the numbered weeks of Ordinary Time, in fact, represent the ordered life of the Church—the period in which we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) or in more severe penance (as in Advent and Lent), but in watchfulness and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ.

It's appropriate, therefore, that the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (which is actually the first Sunday celebrated in Ordinary Time) always features either John the Baptist's acknowledgment of Christ as the Lamb of God or Christ's first miracle—the transformation of water into wine at the wedding at Cana.

Thus for Catholics, Ordinary Time is the part of the year in which Christ, the Lamb of God, walks among us and transforms our lives. There's nothing "ordinary" about that!

Why Is Green the Color of Ordinary Time?

Likewise, the normal liturgical color for Ordinary Time—for those days when there is no special feast—is green. Green vestments and altar cloths have traditionally been associated with the time after Pentecost, the period in which the Church founded by the risen Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit began to grow and to spread the Gospel to all nations.

When Is Ordinary Time?

Ordinary Time refers to all of those parts of the Catholic Church's liturgical year that aren't included in the major seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. Ordinary Time thus encompasses two different periods in the Church's calendar, since the Christmas season immediately follows Advent, and the Easter season immediately follows Lent.

The Church year begins with Advent, followed immediately by the Christmas season. Ordinary Time begins on the Monday after the first Sunday after January 6, the traditional date of the Feast of the Epiphany and the end of the liturgical season of Christmas. This first period of Ordinary Time runs until Ash Wednesday when the liturgical season of Lent begins. Both Lent and the Easter season fall outside of Ordinary Time, which resumes again on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday, the end of the Easter season. This second period of Ordinary Time runs until the First Sunday of Advent when the liturgical year begins again.

Why Is There No First Sunday in Ordinary Time?

In most years, the Sunday after January 6 is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. In countries such as the United States, however, where the celebration of Epiphany is transferred to Sunday if that Sunday is January 7 or 8, Epiphany is celebrated instead. As feasts of our Lord, both the Baptism of the Lord and Epiphany displace a Sunday in Ordinary Time. Thus the first Sunday in the period of Ordinary Time is the Sunday that falls after the first week of Ordinary Time, which makes it the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Ordinary Time is anything but ordinary

This is a time of conversion, maturation, and quiet growth. It comprises the longest time on the liturgical calendar when the faithful consider the fullness of Jesus' teachings and miracles while on this earth. One symbol often found in Ordinary Time is comprised of two fish and a basket of bread — symbolizing Jesus' "Loaves and the Fishes" miracle. (See Matthew 14: 13-21.)

The second season of Ordinary Time follows the celebration of Pentecost; the gift of the Holy Spirit moves us to do God's work. The Spirit does for us and the Church what Jesus did for his disciples — he left them with his love, fire, and Spirit to share with the world. Trinity Sunday is celebrated the first Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Trinity, gives us fullness in Christ — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The next Sunday is *Corpus Christi*, which commemorates the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith and many parishes celebrate Eucharistic processions or Holy Hours at this time.

The final Sunday in Ordinary Time is the feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, traditionally called the feast of Christ the King. We reverence our Lord as the King of all — and pray that all on earth may praise him now — as we look forward to living with him eternally in heaven forever.

The season of Ordinary Time that occurs in the warmer months may prompt us to link our daily prayers with the enjoyment of nature:

- pray outdoors when taking a walk
- plant a small sprig and watch it grow
- wake up early and enjoy the sunrise using Morning Prayer (*Lauds*)
- incorporate a family prayer time, such as the Rosary, on outings

Why Is There No Ordinary Time in the Traditional Calendar?

Ordinary Time is a feature of the current (post-Vatican II) liturgical calendar. In the traditional Catholic calendar used before 1970 and still used in the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass, as well as in the calendars of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the Sundays of Ordinary Time are referred to as the Sundays after Epiphany and the Sundays after Pentecost.

How Many Sundays Are There in Ordinary Time?

In any given year, there are either 33 or 34 Sundays in Ordinary Time. Because Easter is a moveable feast, and thus the Lent and Easter seasons "float" from year to year, the number of Sundays in each period of Ordinary Time vary from the other period as well as from year to year.

Explore the Communion of Saints

There is a wonderful harmony between the mystery of Christ and the celebration of the Saints. Ordinary Time is a great time to explore the lives of the saints on their feast days. As we follow the saints feast days and share their stories with our children, we can find significance in their lives that can be related to our own.

This was compiled from a couple locations of the internet by Deacon Jim Multeri.