

Ordinary Time -- Not Seasonal

The liturgical season of Christmas comes to a close today with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and we begin what is called liturgically *Ordinary Time* {see the heading on page 33 of the songbook}. The first Sunday listed as *Ordinary Time* is actually the Second Sunday of *Ordinary Time*, as today's feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the first Sunday of this liturgical time. The term "*Ordinary Time*" may be misleading. In the context of the Liturgical Year the term "*ordinary*" does not mean "usual or average." Ordinary here means "not seasonal." That is, *Ordinary Time* is the part of the Liturgical Year that lies outside the seasons of *Lent-Easter* and *Advent-Christmas*. In *Ordinary Time* the Church celebrates the whole of the mystery of Christ, rather than one specific or particular aspect of it, as we do in the seasons of *Lent-Easter* and *Advent-Christmas*. This is another example of our Catholic "sacramental principle" at work as we use the yearly cycle of time to structure our prayer around the mystery of the Christ-life in its many dimensions. The scripture readings during the liturgies of *Ordinary Time* also help guide us in how to live our Christian faith in daily life. There are usually 34 weeks in *Ordinary Time* that is organized into two basic parts. The first part begins on the Monday following the Christmas season, which is this coming Monday, January 11, and runs through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten season, which is February 17th this year. *Ordinary Time* resumes after the Easter season, on the Monday after Pentecost, and continues until the First Sunday of Advent. During the Liturgical Year, the scripture readings at Mass for the seasons of *Lent-Easter* and *Advent-Christmas* have prominent themes, but during *Ordinary Time* the readings are not chosen according to such a theme. Rather, they present in an ongoing manner the life and work of Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the Gospels of either Matthew, Mark, or Luke. John's Gospel is read principally during the liturgical seasons. The liturgical color for *Ordinary Time* is green, the color of the living earth, a sign of life and hope. Despite its name, *Ordinary Time* is not ordinary at all as we gather weekly (but not *weakly*!) every Sunday as the Body of Christ to celebrate the extraordinary life and dignity bestowed on us by God in Christ.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
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