

Ordinary Time 2017
A Time of God's Extraordinary Grace

During the past several weeks we have passed through an extraordinarily rich period of the Church's liturgical life—the seasons of Advent and Christmas, which culminated with the Feast of the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. But on Tuesday of this week, we returned to that liturgical season the Church calls her “Ordinary Time.”

Ordinary Time is a period of thirty-four weeks. This year Ordinary Time begins on Tuesday, January 10 and continues until Tuesday, February 28, when it will be interrupted by the seasons of Lent and Easter. Ordinary Time will resume on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday, June 5, and continue until December 2. This sequence can be summarized in this way.

Ordinary Time Begins January 10 — Lent and Easter — Ordinary Time Resumes June 5

The season of Ordinary Time focuses our attention on the ministry of Jesus rather than on a particular mystery such as the Incarnation, which we celebrate at Christmas, or the Resurrection, which we celebrate at Easter. In addition to focusing on Jesus' ministry and proclamation of the kingdom of God, Ordinary Time celebrates feast days in honor of Mary, the Apostles, and the Saints to remind us of the Christian holiness to which we have been called.

During Ordinary Time, the Sunday Lectionary employs a three year cycle during which we read from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For example, last year we read through the Gospel of Luke during the Sundays of Ordinary Time. This year we will read from the Gospel of Matthew, and next year from the Gospel of Mark. In addition to reading from the Gospel of Matthew during 2017, we will read large sections of the following letters during Ordinary Time in 2017: 1 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians.

We will hear a good portion of the New Testament read on the Sundays of Ordinary Time in the coming year. But if we are to benefit from what we hear, we need to prepare for what we will hear each Sunday. We can do this in several ways. First, I suggest that we read through the Gospel of Matthew slowly and meditatively several times this year, making this Gospel the focus of your prayer life for 2017. Second, I suggest that we read Paul's Romans and 1 Corinthians. Third, I suggest that we read the Sunday readings in advance as they appear in our weekly email distribution. Next week.

Ordinary Time is quite ordinary when compared to Advent, Lent, and Easter, but it can be an extraordinary time of grace if we take advantage of this time to become familiar with our Lord's ministry. Ordinary Time teaches us that every time and season is filled with God's grace.

Our challenge is to accept that grace so that our ordinary lives will be filled with God's extraordinary love for us. *Father Matera*