

Ordinary Time 2015
The 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 Monday of this past 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 Monday, January 12 and continues until Tuesday, February 17, when it will be interrupted by the seasons of Lent and Easter. Ordinary Time will resume on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday, May 25, and continue until November 28. This sequence can be summarized in this way.

Ordinary Time Begins January 12 —Lent and Easter— Ordinary Time Resumes May 25

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 Matthew during the Sundays of Ordinary Time. This year we will read from the Gospel of Mark, and next year from the Gospel of Luke. In addition to reading from the Gospel of Mark during 2015, we will read large sections of the following letters during Ordinary Time in 2015: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, the Letter of James, and the Letter to the Hebrews.

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 Mark slowly and meditatively several times this year, making this Gospel the focus of your prayer life for 2015. Second, I suggest that we read Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, as well as the Letter of James and the Letter to the Hebrews. Third, I suggest that we read the Sunday readings in advance as they appear in our weekly email distribution. Next week, I will summarize some of the main themes of St. Mark's Gospel in order to help you read the Gospel with profit and delight.

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*