

Dear Listeners,

It was wonderful in our last episode of Questions of Faith to get so many questions on the liturgy and on our liturgical seasons. When we begin to live liturgically, we begin to live more and more the life of the Church, and to live fully in the Church is to be fully part of the Body, which is to be fully joined to the Head, which is to live in intimate relation with Christ . . . what a good thing it is to live liturgically then!!!

One of our questions was about Ordinary Time, and Mrg Tony Rogers — a guest who I always learn a great deal from — told us that we think about ordinary not so much as bland or mundane, but as ordinal.

Ordinary Time, then, is called "ordinary" not because it is common or mundane 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 and living out the Christian mysteries.

It's appropriate, therefore, that there is no First Sunday in Ordinary Time, though there is a first week. The first week of Ordinary Time is preceded by the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, thus all of Ordinary Time is a living out of the gifts of baptism, Christ has baptized the entirety of our lives. The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time always features either John the Baptist's acknowledgment of Christ as the Lamb of God (which we had this year) 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!

For those who want to read on, and think a little further about the extraordinary drama of the Christian, and the entry of God into our human affairs, I hope you enjoy this wonderful reflection by the great writer, Dorothy Sayers:

*The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man – and the dogma is the drama. That drama is summarized quite clearly in the creeds of the Church...The plot pivots upon a single character, and the whole action is the answer to a central problem: 'What think ye of Christ?'...*

*"The Church's answer is categorical and uncompromising and it is this: That Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, was in fact...the God 'by whom all things were made'. His body and brain were those of a common man; his personality was the personality of God, so far as that personality could be expressed in human terms. He was not a kind of demon pretending to be human; he was in every respect a genuine living man. He was not merely a man so good as to be 'like God' – he was God...*

*If this is dull, then what, in heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting? The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore – on the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations*

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*to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him 'meek and mild', and recommend him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies. To those who knew him, however, he in no way suggests a milk-and-water person; they objected to him as a dangerous firebrand. True, he was tender to the unfortunate, patient with honest inquirers, and humble before heaven; but he insulted respectable clergymen by calling them hypocrites. He referred to King Herod as 'that fox;' he went to parties in disreputable company and was looked upon as a 'gluttonous man and winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners;' he assaulted indignant tradesmen and threw them and their belongings out of the Temple; he cured diseases by any means that came handy, with a shocking casualness in the matter of other people's pigs and property; he showed no proper deference for wealth or social position; when confronted with neat dialectical traps, he displayed a paradoxical humor that affronted serious-minded people, and he retorted by asking disagreeably searching questions that could not be answered by rule of thumb. He was emphatically not a dull man in his human lifetime, and if he was God, there can be nothing dull about God, either...*

*“‘And the third day he rose again.’ What are we to make of this? One thing is certain: if he were God and nothing else, his immortality means nothing to us; if he was man and no more, his death is no more important than yours or mine. But if he really was both God and man, then when the man Jesus died, God died too; and when the God Jesus arose, man rose too, for they were one and the same person...There is the essential doctrine, of which the whole elaborate structure of Christian faith and morals is only the logical consequence. Now we may call that doctrine exhilarating, or we may call it devastating; we may call it revelation, or we may call it rubbish; but if we call it dull, then words have no meaning at all.”*

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