

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST”—ORDINARY TIME THAT’S NOT SO “ORDINARY”—FR. STEVE LAPE

Now that the Christmas season is over (which runs from Christmas Eve through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which occurred this past Monday, January 8th), we have swung back into “Ordinary Time,” according to the Church’s calendar. When we usually hear the word “ordinary,” we may think of something that’s commonplace, regular, and perhaps even a bit unexciting, since we’re so used to it. The title of “Ordinary Time” is not meant to convey that understanding. The word “ordinary” comes from the Latin word “ordinalis,” which refers to a series of numbers. We could also think of the word “order,” which also came from that Latin term—putting things into a certain kind of pattern to make better sense or use of them. Thus, for the Church, “Ordinary Time” refers to the series of weeks on our Church’s calendar that are designated outside of the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Most of the Church’s calendar is made up of days in “Ordinary Time,” with 34 Sundays being designated for this time period. The 34th and final Sunday of the liturgical year (just before Advent starts a new one) is traditionally called the Solemnity of Christ the King, as we acknowledge our Lord and God Jesus Christ as the Rightful Ruler of the Universe, the One from whom all Creation has come into being.

Whereas Advent and Christmas make us focus more on the mystery of Jesus’ birth, and Lent and Easter bring us more into the mystery of Jesus’ suffering, dying and rising for our salvation, Ordinary Time is meant to get us thinking about Jesus’ everyday life between those two ends of His earthly life’s spectrum. Although the Bible is mostly silent about our Lord’s growing up years, up until He started his public ministry, we can use our imagination about things that He did which we can hopefully relate to in some way: being a part of a family, looking to his parents Mary & Joseph—for guidance, provisions and protection while Jesus was a boy, perhaps learning and applying carpentry skills He gained from his carpenter-father Joseph, enjoying various meals, mingling with neighbors & friends, visiting relatives, and going to worship with His faith community, as He learned the Jewish faith from his family. All of these kinds of happenings should help us reflect and become more aware that Jesus is present with us in whatever daily duties, events, or rituals we engage in. Whenever and wherever Jesus is, there is always something extraordinary going on. It’s up to us to recognize it, with the help of the Holy Spirit’s promptings in our minds and souls.

Green is the color used at Masses during Ordinary Time, since green alludes to things coming to life. It symbolizes hope and vitality. When we think of green, we may think of grass or leaves on trees, or green

vegetables that are meant to nourish us. As Christian disciples, let us hope that we can recognize Jesus always in our midst—in those we meet, in the places we go, and in the things we do, for our whole lives should be for Him!

