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# Seasoning the Seasons™

The Institute for Christian Formation, Inc.

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Ordinal Time

## Nothing Out of the Ordinary?

In our Liturgical Calendar we have the Incarnational Cycle (the Advent and Christmas Seasons), and the Paschal Cycle (Lent, the Triduum, and the Easter Season). The time outside of these special seasons is called Ordinary Time.

When we refer to something as being ordinary, we usually mean there is nothing special about it. It is routine. However, that is not the reason the time outside of the special seasons of the Church Year is called Ordinary Time. Here, the word "ordinary" refers to "ordinal" - a way of counting or ranking something. We are counting the Sundays and the weeks between the seasons of the Church Year. Thus we are able to keep track of where we are in our Lectionary Cycle and we can locate the appropriate prayers in the Roman Missal.

There are two blocks of Ordinary Time during the Church Year, giving us thirty-three to thirty-four weeks of Ordinary Time each year. The first block of Ordinary Time occurs between the Christmas Season and the Season of Lent. The second block of Ordinary Time is much longer, beginning at the conclusion of the Easter Season and continuing through the remainder of the Church Year. The primary liturgical color used during Ordinary Time is green, which expresses hope and trust.

Throughout the entire Church Year we are celebrating the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. The Sunday Lectionary Cycle is set up so that during Ordinary Time we have a fairly continuous reading of a given Gospel (Matthew, Mark, or Luke), as well as other New Testament writings. (The selection of the Hebrew Scriptures is a bit different.)

And there are wonderful feasts during these blocks of Ordinary Time. To say there is nothing out of the ordinary we are celebrating during these weeks is just extraordinary!



## Ordinal Time

- \* There are five seasons in our Church Year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, The Triduum, and Easter. Ordinary Time in the Church Year is the time between the Seasons
- \* The word "ordinary" in Ordinary Time refers to a way of counting or ranking something. Think of ordinal numbers. We are counting the Sundays and weeks between the Seasons of the Church Year.



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## First and Last



If you look at the Liturgical Calendar and begin to count the Sundays, you might be confused unless you understand how the calendar is set up. The calendar begins with the 1st Sunday of Advent, and moves through Advent and then the Feasts of Christmas. Then sud-

denly you find yourself at the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. What happened to the 1st Sunday in Ordinary Time? Well, the last Sunday in the Christmas Season is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (except in those years when Epiphany falls late, and the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on a Monday.) But the week-days after the Baptism of

the Lord are the days in the first week of Ordinary Time, and the following Sunday is the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The last Sunday of the Church Year - the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - is always the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, and we count backwards from there in numbering the other weeks in Ordinary Time.

## Year A

We follow a three-year Lectionary Cycle for our Sunday Mass readings. Cycle A is the Year of Matthew, Cycle B the Year of Mark, and Cycle C the Year of Luke. We hear from John's Gospel each year.

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in Cycle A, we hear the Gospel of Jesus' Baptism from Matthew's Gospel. The following Sunday, the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, our Gospel is John 1:29-34, which is John the Baptist's witness to

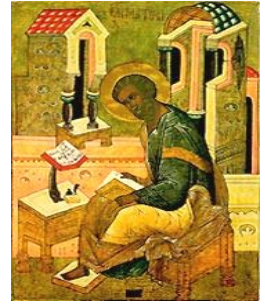
Jesus. On the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, we begin to hear about Jesus' public ministry. We hear from Matthew's Gospel each of the remaining Sundays in Ordinary Time during the Church Year, except when a Solemnity or Feast takes precedence.

During the three-year Lectionary Cycle, a rather sequential reading of various New Testament Epistles is the Second Reading proclaimed at Sunday Mass. During Ordinary Time in

Cycle A we hear selections from the First Letter to the Corinthians, the Letter to the Romans, the Letter to the Philippians, and the First Letter to the Thessalonians.

On the last Sunday of the Church Year, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, we hear Matthew 25:31-46 proclaimed, which is Matthew's account of the Last Judgment.

The First Reading each Sunday of Ordinary Time is from the Hebrew Scriptures, chosen by the Church in relation to the Gospel.



**St. Matthew  
the Evangelist**  
16th Century  
Location: Andrei  
Rublev Museum,  
Moscow

## Year B



Lectionary Cycle B is the Year of Mark, the first Gospel to be written, and the shortest Gospel. Unlike the other two synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Luke), Mark's Gospel has no narrative of the birth of Jesus. On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we hear the account of Jesus' Baptism from Mark's Gospel. The following Sunday, the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Gospel proclaimed is John 1:35-42, which tells of Jesus call of his first disciples, Andrew and

his brother Peter. The next Sunday, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, we begin our weekly Sunday proclamation of the Gospel of Mark, hearing about Jesus public ministry.

Something interesting happens during the Sundays in Ordinary Time in Year B. Because Mark's Gospel is the shortest Gospel, we have an interlude during the summer when we hear from John's Gospel. The 17th-21st Sundays

in Ordinary Time, we hear from chapter 6 of John's Gospel - the story of the multiplication of the loaves and the Bread of Life discourse.

On Sundays in Ordinary Time in Cycle B, our Second Reading comes from the First and Second Letters to the Corinthians, the Letter to the Ephesians, the Letter to James, and the Letter to the Hebrews. On Christ the King, the Second Reading is from Revelation.

## Year C



Year C is the Year of Luke. On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we hear Luke's account of Jesus' baptism. On the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, we hear the Gospel of the Wedding Feast of Cana (John 2:1-11). The following Sunday, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, we begin to hear about Jesus' public ministry.

Just as in years A and B, we again hear selections from the First Letter to the Corinthians in the Second Reading at Mass on Sundays in Ordinary Time. The other New Testament Letters we hear proclaimed as the Second Reading on Sundays in Year C include the Letter to the Galatians, the Letter to the Colossians, the concluding chapters of the Letter to the Hebrews which weren't proclaimed in Year B, the Letter to

Philemon, the First and Second Letters to Timothy, and the Second Letter to the Thessalonians.

The Gospel for the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, is Luke 23:35-43. This Gospel passage is from Luke's Passion narrative, and is a segment from the crucifixion of Jesus in which Jesus is mocked as King of the Jews. Yet the "good thief", one of the two criminals crucified with Jesus, asks Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes into his Kingdom. The Second Reading on this Sunday is Colossians 1:12-20.



## Winter

While there are two blocks of Ordinary Time each year, the first falling between the seasons of Christmas and Lent and the second beginning after the season of Easter and continuing through the remainder of the Church Year, for our purposes here we will look at Ordinary Time in Winter, Summer, and Autumn.

Winter Ordinary Time begins after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and continues until Ash Wednesday. Since the date of Ash Wednesday is determined by the date of Easter, Winter Ordinary Time can be a very short period of just over three weeks or a month longer when Easter falls as late as is possible. But recall that Ordinary Time is full of wonderful feast days. No matter how short or long Winter Ordinary Time might be, there are feasts which always fall during this time, such as the Conversion of Saint Paul on January 25th, the Presentation of the Lord on February 2nd with the wonderful tradition of Blessing of Candles, and the Memorial of Saint Blase on February 3rd with the tradition of Blessing of Throats. When solemnities (our highest ranking feast days) and Feasts of the Lord fall on Sundays in Ordinary Time they replace the Sunday Ordinary Time liturgy.

During Winter Ordinary Time we are also, “unofficially” as the case may be, celebrating the carnival season which concludes on Shrove Tuesday, or Mardi Gras!



## Summer



**The Dormition**  
13th Century  
School: Novgorod  
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Once the Easter season concludes on Pentecost Sunday, we begin the second big block of Ordinary Time, which will take us through the remainder of the Church Year. So why aren't the two Sundays which follow Pentecost numbered as Sundays in Ordinary Time? Because they are solemnities, and replace the Sunday liturgy of Ordinary Time. The first Sunday after Pentecost Sunday is always the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity and the next Sunday is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. So even though these are weeks in Ordinary Time, the Sundays are not numbered as such. And the Friday after the Body and Blood of Christ is always the Solemnity of the

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus!

The Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, or the Midsummer Nativity, is celebrated on June 24th. This feast has been celebrated throughout the centuries with wonderful traditions such as all-night bonfires!

In addition to the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, two other solemnities which occur during Summer Ordinary Time include the June 29th celebration of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles and the August 15th celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These solemnities, along with the August 6th Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, replace the Sunday Ordinary Time liturgy when they fall on a Sunday.

## Autumn

Our second block of Ordinary Time during the Church Year continues from the summer through the autumn, until our Church Year concludes. On September 8th, exactly nine months after our celebration of the Immaculate Conception, we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. September 14th is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which replaces the liturgy for the Sunday in Ordinary Time

when it falls on a Sunday, as do the November 1st Solemnity of All Saints, the November 2nd Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day), and the November 9th Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

Among the many wonderful saints' days during these months of Ordinary Time are such celebrations as the Memorial of the Archangels on September 29th, the Memorial of the Guardian Angels on Octo-

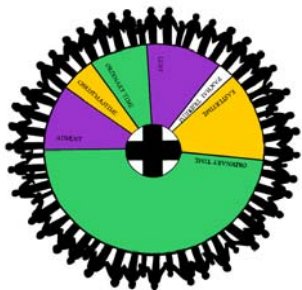
ber 2nd, and the Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi on October 4th, which is often celebrated with the Blessing of Pets.

November finds us remembering in a special way all those who have died, as our Church Year winds down and our Scriptures look to the end times. Our final Sunday of the Church Year is the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe, whose reign is forever!



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***Seasoning the Seasons™*** is a mark of the Institute for Christian Formation, Inc. These resources are created to help us more deeply immerse ourselves in the Liturgical Calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. There are resources for the Liturgical Seasons, Feast Days, and other special occasions in our Church Year.

The Institute for Christian Formation, Inc. (ICF) is a non-profit corporation that assists the faithful – families, catechists, parishes, schools, etc. – with holistic faith formation centered on Jesus Christ revealing himself to us in Word (Scripture), Sacrament, and the Liturgical Calendar. Founded in 2004, the ICF strives to assist Catholic Christians in celebrating and handing on faith in a manner authentic to our Roman Catholic tradition.

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## Following Jesus

As the Church Year unfolds, we find ourselves following Jesus. Sunday, the first day of the week, has always been the day that Christians have gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. And it is Sunday that gives structure to our Liturgical Year.

The Scriptures proclaimed on the Sundays in Ordinary Time provide us with the opportunity to immerse ourselves in Jesus' public life and ministry. Just as Jesus called his first disciples, so, too, does he call us. Just as Jesus healed and taught, so, too, are we part of the Church's ministry of healing and teaching today. Through our weekly celebration of the Eucharist, we are fed and nourished as we grow as members of the Body of Christ.

We are formed, as well, by the weekday Scripture readings. Rather than a three-year cycle like our Sunday readings, the weekday readings are found in a two-year cycle. Odd numbered years are assigned Cycle I, while even numbered years are assigned Cycle II. During the weekdays in Ordinary Time, the Gospel remains the same each year, while the first reading is different.



**Jesus Christ Feeding the 5,000**  
16th Century

**Location: Philantropinin Monastery, Ioannina  
Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos**

The various feasts and saints' days we celebrate throughout the year also help us to follow Jesus and better understand God's purpose. As we journey from year to year, God is indeed working in us and through us:

*God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year; God is working his purpose out, and the time is drawing near; Nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be; When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.* (Text: Habakkuk 1:14; Arthur C. Ainger, 1841-1919, alt.)