

ORDINARY TIME

Many of us use the Revised Common Lectionary readings for every Sunday of the year. This lectionary is a useful guide though, like anything else, it has its weaknesses. Advent marks the beginning of the church year. This is followed by Christmas and the season of Epiphany/. Then come Lent and Easter which culminates in the celebration of Pentecost which, this year, is on 19th May. From 26th May up to and including 24th November we are in what the lectionary calls "ordinary time".

This led me to wonder what ordinary time could mean. The word "ordinary" means, among other things, usual, normal, routine, nothing special. Ordinary people are those who are not famous, do not have royal titles, just go about their business. One could easily think that ordinariness is dull and boring. Yet it is in the ordinariness of life that we often encounter extraordinary things.

Most of us have particular routines: we get up in the morning; eat our breakfast; go about our daily tasks; have our lunch; more daily activities; dinner and bedtime. Yet ordinariness can be special and can give us great satisfaction. There are many who cannot get up in the morning or if they can, may need help to do so. We could easily take things for granted until we are no longer able to do everything we used to do, all the ordinary activities of life.

It seems to me, that the world revolves around ordinary people doing ordinary things: those who maintain public services; those who teach or who are medics. Most of them are not famous but without them, the world could not function.

Ordinariness challenges us to appreciate ordinary things: the beauty of nature; the song of the birds; the companionship of family and friends. And even though we do mostly ordinary things in churches, they could make an extraordinary difference in the lives of others.

During ordinary time this year, the lectionary will invite us to focus on the history of Israel during the monarchical period, which chronicles the lives of Samuel, David, and Solomon. They were all ordinary people who made mistakes, but who also accomplished some extraordinary things. And the gospel will focus mainly on the life and ministry of Jesus as found in Mark, and Jesus' encounter with ordinary people.

As we enter the summer season, I pray that we may experience joy in the ordinariness of our daily lives and in doing so, we might make extraordinary discoveries. Most of us are called, not to do spectacular things, but to live our lives as best we can. Clare Stainsby in StF 659 puts it well:

"You challenge some to leave their nets
And follow unfamiliar ways,
But most are called to live their faith
In humdrum tasks of working days."

May we find fulfilment in "humdrum tasks and working days" and in doing so, we may find new meaning in our ordinariness.