

Spring 2016

From the Editor: Ordinary Time

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Recommended Citation

Fitzpatrick, P. (2016). From the Editor: Ordinary Time. *Spiritan Magazine*, 40 (2). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol40/iss2/4>

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Ordinary Time

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

We've been through the special Christian seasons – Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. We're back to Ordinary Time – the longest of all the seasons in our church calendar – thirty-four out of the year's total of fifty-two weeks.

What time is it? I look at my watch: 10:45 on this Thursday morning. Where has the morning gone to? So little accomplished, so much left to do. And I had intended to have this article ready by lunchtime. Time must be speeding up, or maybe it's just me – slowing down.

There's that book in the Old Testament – Ecclesiastes – that speaks about "a time for every purpose under heaven." The writer must have been a very programmed man. I know he was a man: women didn't write any of the books in the bible. They were probably getting on with the everyday chores around the house or at the well to have any time for sitting at a desk writing. Of course, the writer might have been a man who dictated his text to a woman scribe. Or is that a too up-to-date notion?

I look at our Spiritan calendar for 2016. I turn the page and discover that the first Sunday in June is the 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Yes, there it is – Ordinary Time. It will take us through the Sundays of 2016 up to November 13. Every year the church calendar offers us 34 weeks of Ordinary Time: 34 out of 52 weeks.

Little romance or ballyhoo

Ordinary Time has been described as "filled with work and worry, with coping and caring, with forgetting and not having a second to think ahead, without the high that accompanies our special seasons. There is little romance to it."

The writer went on to say, "Some people live their whole lives in Ordinary Time. That is why it is comforting to see it firmly in place in the liturgical calendar. Jesus himself logged a lot of Ordinary Time without the visitations and the ballyhoo. So we can be grateful for Ordinary Time and go with it."

There's a down-to-earth reality in that description of the day-by-day sameness in our lives. I recall the words of Harry Chapin's song, "All my

**Jesus himself logged
a lot of Ordinary Time
without the visitations
and the ballyhoo.**

life's a circle, Sunrise and Sundown ...
The years keep rolling round again,
The years keep rollin' by."

In circles, but forward

So then, we spend our lives just going round in circles? No – I think of a spring coil that gains strength because it goes round in circles. In circles – yes, but forward and onward too. Its recoiling motion adds to its strength.

Recoiling, pulling back, moving round in circles – ordinary time – more of the same – round and round we go? Maybe – but then there are New Year and Lenten resolutions ... who knows – this year might be different?

"There's a time for some things and a time for all things; a time for great things and a time for small things" – did Cervantes hit the nail on the head? Life is given to me a day, a week, a month, a year at a time: more of the

same – yes, but maybe like a long jumper determined to take a better run at it this time and make a longer jump?

New beginnings

Several times I've re-read Jesuit Fr. Walter Burghardt's words: "Sometimes we want the new beginning without the old ending. We find it very difficult to let go. You must let go of where you've been, whether it's turning 21, 40 or 65, whether it's losing your health or your hair, your looks or your lustiness, your money or your memory, your love or a possession you prize. You have to move on."

And then by chance I came across the following advice:

Take Time to think ...
it is the source of power
Take Time to play ...
it is the secret of unending youth
Take Time to read ...
it is the fountain of wisdom
Take Time to pray ...
it is the greatest power on earth

We are a people with short memories: Ordinary Time may well be the occasion of a never-to-be-forgotten incident: a first meeting, a sudden accident, a memorable sunset, the day we emigrated, our new school in a new found land, a new home and new friends.

Then there is "timeout". We need a rest and so we take a break: halftimes in most sports – two intermissions in a game of hockey!

The multiple-choice day, the multiple-choice supermarket, the multiple-choice TV – is there a multiple-choice life?

All of the above? None of the above? Do we let life lead us through our ordinary time – or do we take charge of our ordinary lives, in our ordinary time? ■