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## From the Editor: Daily Life and Ordinary Time

Patrick Fitzpatrick

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# Daily Life and Ordinary Time

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

**"O**utside the church there is no salvation" – it was embedded in us through our learning of the catechism.

We knew that answer by heart – it was only seven words long.

We took it to heart – many reduced it to: "Outside the Catholic church there is no salvation." Were our Protestant neighbours in danger of not being saved?

We took it to heart – small numbers joined the Spiritans (the then Holy Ghost Fathers) or another missionary society so as to go on the foreign missions and convert people – thereby "saving souls."

Was "saving souls" what really animated us? It certainly gave us a sense of purpose and the yearly numbers of so many baptisms "in pagan lands afar" were proudly displayed in our study hall.

We brought our inherited Catholic customs overseas with us and lived by them. We educated others as we ourselves had been educated. Our way was the way. What other way did we know? And in its own way it was a good way – but was it the only way?

Many were "converted" to our way. We baptized them every year. We brought them up as members of our church – after all "outside the church there is no salvation" so come and join the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

Then many began to think differently. Many questioned what they had taken for granted. Others regretted that the catechism question-and-answer approach was giving way to a more open-ended presentation of the gospels and the stories about Jesus and his way of approaching people.

"How many did we convert today?" would not have been uppermost in Jesus' mind. Numbers would appear to have been of secondary importance to him. What really counted was that he made his Father known: "I have made your name known to those you gave me from the world."

They in turn carried his words, his stories, his priorities, his way of life north and west into the small towns of Turkey and Greece and eventually to Rome, northern Italy and across Europe. Ordinary people with little influence, excluded from

high society, told others what Jesus of Nazareth meant to them.

Ordinary people in Ordinary Time: thirty-four out of fifty-two weeks in our church calendar. Day Seven was different – on that day they assembled to retell the stories they had heard from the missionaries who walked among them. "Write it down" someone said and so they began to have the written words we know as the "gospels", the "good news."

The Saturday sabbath they had inherited gave way to the Sunday resurrection as their holy day. For them as for their ancestors time was set aside each week to remember that God breaks through ordinary life. Otherwise they might have forgotten Jacob's words: "God was in this place and I never knew it."

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Then and now some are tempted to confine God to his one day a week. But that was not what they inherited from their founder – he found reminders of God in everyday life and in the most ordinary of things: the birds of the air, lost sheep, a sower sowing, a mustard seed, lost and found coins, fishing with a net, a caring Samaritan, a son who wonders if he'll be welcome back home.

It has been said, "Jesus makes no new things – he makes all things new." Does our religion – our prayers, our helping one another, our time spent with a shut-in, our phone call to keep in touch, our going to church, our going to work, our stroll along a beach or a river bank, our invitation to a meal – does our religion enable us to live daily life differently?

Jesus spent more time with people outdoors than in a synagogue. He invites us to journey with him in a world "charged with the grandeur of God." ■