

Along the track

Nothing Special

There's an ad on television that, apart from trying to flog us a product, reminds us of the special moments in life we so often take for granted – dinner with friends, or at home with family, visiting grandma and so on. When we are asked, what did you do last night or over the weekend we so often reply “Nothing special.” Yet these are the special moments that make life worthwhile, that help us understand who we are and that give our lives purpose and meaning.

Every year in its calendar, the church singles out special seasons to celebrate – Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. But, outside of these special times, it invites us to live out and celebrate *Ordinary time*. Perhaps we might mistakenly think of that as ‘nothing special’ time, to equate that with ‘boring,’ just life going on, same old, same old day after day. But nothing could be further from the truth. Ordinary time doesn't have big feasts to celebrate, the out of the ordinary as it were, but it asks us to be more sensitive to the ebbs and flows of our own daily lives, to appreciate them, to celebrate them and to give thanks for them.

At this time, after Christmas and Easter, Advent and Lent, ordinary time gives us the chance to reflect on those ‘big feasts’, as it were and how they find their place in our lives and how our lives find a place in them. For example, how does Easter, that great season of hope, come alive in my daily life? What are the things that give me hope, the events, the people that make life worthwhile now and into the future? How does the renewal time of Lent find its way into the ‘nothing special’ time.

How are our ‘ordinary days’ enriched through encounters with the love of God through the people, the daily events, the challenges, the joys – are we sensitive to those or do we just take them for granted and miss their message? Is each day ‘nothing special’?

Sometimes it takes the ‘out of the ordinary’ to shake us out of that way of thinking, an illness for example. When we regain health and energy after an illness, perhaps we have had to take time off work, and out of our normal routines and rhythms, nothing can be more comforting than returning to the ordinary – back home again, back to the old routine, the normal stuff of everyday life, back to the familiarity of work. Only after it has been taken away and then given back, do we realise that the simple appreciation of daily things is a treasure. And within that lies an important message that we are with God when we are in the present moment and God is with us.

During Ordinary Time, the Church's prayers and readings from the Sacred Scriptures are about Jesus' public ministry, his day-to-day life as it were. If we don't know the way of Jesus how can we celebrate it? How can we live it?

These readings remind us to accept others generously, to forgive, to be a healing presence, to be peacemakers, to be people of joy, to be the person who really does listen to others, to be patient and not judgemental, to be the person who lives humbly by not being the person who brags about success but rather wants to rejoice in others' good fortune too. These readings offer us the opportunity to refocus attention on loved ones, to do some evaluation on my personal convictions, and assess where my life is going and what changes I'd like to make.

Pope Francis tells us: “Today does not repeat itself: this is life. Place all your heart, your open heart, open it to the Lord, not closed, not hard, not hardened, not without faith...”

So this is life, what we experience each day. Some days are out of the ordinary, they bring with them new experiences, the wonder of something new. But most days are ordinary and within them lasting happiness and peace may lie.

Pope Francis again: “We go home with these two words only: ‘How is my ‘today’?...’ But how are you, my today, in the presence of the Lord? And how is my heart? Is it open? Is it firm in the faith? Is it led by the Lord? With these two questions we ask the Lord for the grace which each of us needs.”

Regards
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