

Welcome to Ordinary Time!

(Column 1: January 7, 2019)

By Lucia A. Silecchia

“Ordinary time.” This is a season of the year – and season of life -- that is deeply, dreadfully underrated.

As a child, I dreaded the days after Christmas. Trees were dragged to the curb with faded tinsel hinting of glories just passed. The longest vacation of the school year gave way to cold, holiday-deprived Januaries. Beloved Christmas music abruptly left the airwaves. Easter joy, summer road trips, 4th of July celebrations, and the springtime panoply of graduations, First Communions, Confirmations, family birthdays and weddings all seemed so far away.

To make matters worse, this new season bears what looks like the blandest of names: “ordinary time.” Such a mundane, plain word is the moniker attached to most of the year – and most of our lives.

Now, though, ordinary times look different to me. I still love the highlights of the year – the special seasons and celebrations that reflect unique moments in our relationships with God, with each other, and with the passage of time itself. These special seasons and holidays help to order life around the sacred and secular exclamation points in the paragraphs of the year.

Yet, with age, I have come to appreciate that the ordinary is sacred and special too. It is in ordinary time that loved ones are born on otherwise unremarkable mornings. It is in ordinary times that heartbreak is soothed by the embrace of friends. It is in ordinary times that sunrises burst from darkness to greet new days and brilliant sunsets bid the days farewell. It is in ordinary times that the first crocus blooms and the last autumn leaf falls. It is in ordinary times that a stranger smiles, a sermon touches the soul, and tears fall on the graves of loved ones. It is in ordinary times that a simple coffee with a friend becomes an hour cherished forever, dinners with family become memories treasured like no others, and in a walk by a mighty ocean or past a mild creek, the beauty of the world seems brand new again. It is in ordinary times that kittens entertain in ways only they can, a routine telephone call unexpectedly becomes a final conversation, and a hastily written note becomes a cherished possession. It is in ordinary times that the quiet heroism in sleepless nights and second shifts is lived and the small, unseen triumphs of daily life are savored.

Ordinary time is not the season of the great getaway, but the season of home. It is not the season of the majestic cathedral, but of the parish church that the heart calls home. It is not the season of the gourmet meal, but of comfort food savored with love and good company. It is not the season of the costly grand gesture but the time for home baked pie, handwritten love letters, and corner store carnations wrapped in newspaper and a rubber band.

In its modesty, ordinary time invites itself to be overlooked or, even, wished away in anticipation of the next special something. Yet, it is in the small, simple, and, yes, ordinary things that the treasures of life can be found and the wonder of life unfolds like the tentative stretch of an infant's fingers or the unassuming buds of summer berries.

Welcome to the blessing of ordinary times.

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