**Holidays of Ordinary Time**

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

As I turned the calendar from December to January, I had a familiar, sinking feeling. Compared to December, January looks bleak. It seems like a long time until festivities once again fill our days.

At times, I am tempted to muster greater excitement about Candlemas. Not only would this give me a plausible excuse to keep my Christmas decorations up until February 2, but it would also make all of January seem more festive. I am grateful for the ways Valentine’s Day and St. Patrick’s Day punctuate the long winter. Yet, I am also aware that Easter is unusually late this year – delaying our next great celebration.

For those who are holiday-ed out, January may bring a well-needed return to normalcy and, yes, to ordinary time. But, for those still seeking celebrations, I have a modest proposal for the new year.

Many of us have likely received 2025 calendars from our parishes this season. These calendars feature religious art for each month, information about liturgical seasons, and Mass schedules for our parish churches. However, for nearly every day of the year, these calendars also announce the feasts, solemnities, observances, memorials and other celebrations of the Church year.

Some of these are well known and popular – like the aforementioned St. Patrick’s Day, our Holy Days of obligation and grand celebrations like the Easter Triduum and Christmastide.

However, there are also many other days for more obscure observances or the feast days of lesser-known saints. So, perhaps, the long, quiet days of January are a good time to leaf through our calendars and pick one day each month to celebrate a holiday that has special meaning for us. It could be a day that we celebrate with our families – or observe in the quiet of our hearts. But, picking one special day each month gives us a chance to seek the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Some may be easy choices. If we do not do so already, we may pick as special holidays the feasts of our patron saints, or those of our loved ones or our parishes.

If we work in a particular field or carry a specific cross, we may choose to celebrate the saint who is the patron of that occupation or for those who bear that suffering.

If we are praying for someone carrying a child, we may celebrate the Annunciation with particular devotion. If we have loved ones celebrating Baptism, First Holy Communion or Confirmation this year, perhaps we might celebrate the Birth of St. John the Baptist, or the Feast of Corpus Christi, or Pentecost with special joy.

If we are particularly grateful for the beauty of nature that surrounds us, St. Francis’ day might be one of our holidays.

There may be a saint who is the patron of our ancestral country or of a religious order whose devoted members taught us in school or minister in our parishes.

If we are celebrating marriages or engagements, the Feast of the Scared Heart of Jesus may be an inspiring reminder of divine love. In compassion for those we know who are suffering illness, we may honor Our Lady of Lourdes this year. We may choose to celebrate St. Joseph’s solemnity in honor of our fathers, in gratitude for workers, or in prayerful intercession for the universal Church.

All of us find ourselves in different places as a new year dawns. Our hearts and souls may yearn for different things as we look ahead to see – with hope and hesitation – what 2025 may hold.

Perhaps if we fill our 2025 with twelve special days that we choose now, when they arrive we can bring those hopes and hesitations to God in a special way. I have picked my twelve special days and hold them close to my heart. (And, yes, this year, Candlemas is one of them!) I hope that you, too, may find some special days to punctuate your journey through ordinary time.

Wishing you a joyous new year!

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