

Ordinary Time

January 10 – February 21, 2012



The Year of the Church settles into the time of growth, the Season of the Year, sometimes called “Ordinary Time.” But this longest phase of the year of grace is in no sense “ordinary.” The dignity of Sunday, insisted on by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, is meant to shine forth, prolonging the joy of Easter and Pentecost, to celebrate the whole mystery of Christ.

- Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year by Msgr. Peter J. Elliott.
San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002.

This period of Ordinary Time covers the time between the Christmas and Lenten seasons, a time of quiet while creation enjoys a period of cold and rest in anticipation of the renewal of spring.

Ordinary Time begins on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 after a break of six weeks for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. We will celebrate the first to the seventh weeks of Ordinary Time during this period, with the seventh week being interrupted for Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Ordinary Time will return after the Easter season on May 28.

During this brief season, there are no holy days of obligation nor are there any feasts that fall on a Sunday. There are no solemnities during this period this year, although the patron saint of the parish may be marked during this season as a solemnity.

There is an important feast, however, the Presentation of the Lord, celebrated on February 2. There is another feast: the Conversion of Saint Paul on January 25. This year, the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter on February 22 is actually Ash Wednesday so it is not celebrated. The patron of a diocese is celebrated as a feast if it falls during this time.

The Sunday readings this year come from Cycle B, which features a continuous reading of Mark’s Gospel. The first readings throughout the season are chosen to complement the Gospel. The second readings will feature a semi-continuous tour through chapters 6-11 of 1 Corinthians and the beginning of 2 Corinthians.

The weekday readings this year come from Year I. These first weeks of Ordinary Time feature the beginning of Mark’s Gospel. The first readings come from 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and the New Testament Letter of James.

The liturgy also allows for two very popular blessings in this period. On February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, candles are blessed. On February 3, Catholics are treated to the famous Blessing of Throats in honor of the Feast of Saint Blaise.

Outside of the liturgy, there are a number of observances at this time of the year. In the United States, there is National Vocation Awareness Week (January 8-14), the Day of Prayer and Penance for Life (January 23; a day later this year since the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* is on a Sunday), and Catholic Schools’ Week (January 29-February 4).

International observances include the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25), World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2 worldwide; February 5 in the United States), World Day for the Sick (February 11), and World Marriage Day (February 12).