

THE CATHOLIC GUIDE TO

# ORDINARY TIME



**Ordinary Time** is the season of the Church year when Catholics are encouraged to grow and mature in daily expression of their faith outside the great seasons of celebration of Christmas and Easter and the great periods of penance of Advent and Lent.

**Ordinary Time** is a time to deepen one's prayer life, read the Scriptures, unite more deeply with the Lord in the Eucharist, and become a more holy and whole person.

**Ordinary Time** is a period when average people like you and me strive to become the extraordinary messengers of the Gospel that we have been commissioned to be through our baptism.

**Ordinary Time** is this day, this moment. **Now.**

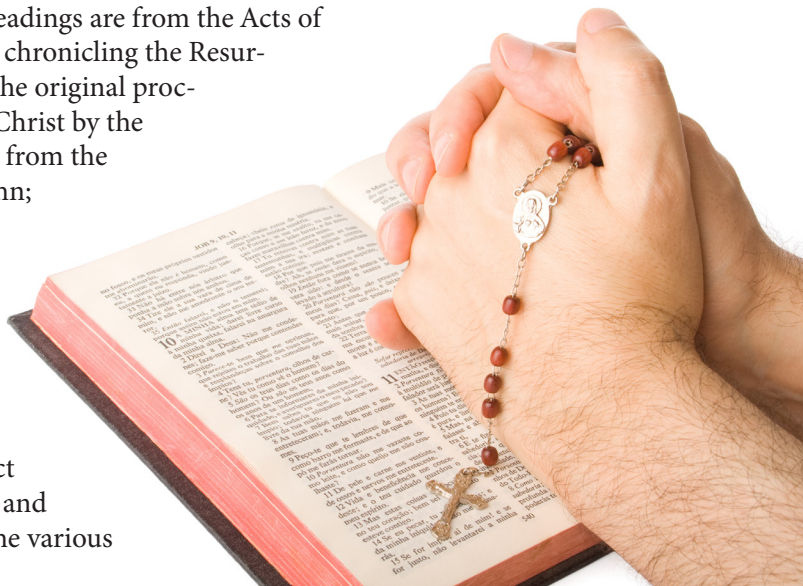
In this section, you will find resources that will help all aspects of your Ordinary Time spiritual life, from daily meditations to prayers, and much more.



## WHAT IS "ORDINARY TIME"?

The season of Ordinary Time begins on Monday (or Tuesday if the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on that Monday) after the Sunday following Jan. 6 and continues until the day before Ash Wednesday, inclusive. It begins again on the Monday after Pentecost and ends on the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent. It consists of 33 or 34 weeks. The last Sunday is celebrated as the solemnity of Christ the King. The overall purpose of the season is to elaborate the themes of salvation history.

The various liturgical seasons are characterized in part by the scriptural readings and Mass prayers assigned to each of them. During Advent, for example, the readings are messianic; during the Easter season, the readings are from the Acts of the Apostles, chronicling the Resurrection and the original proclamation of Christ by the apostles, and from the Gospel of John; during Lent, baptismal and penitential passages are focused on. Mass prayers reflect the meaning and purpose of the various seasons.





## 6 IDEAS FOR ORDINARY TIME

**A**dvent has its wreath, its candles, its hymns — all of which culminate in Christmas. Lent has ashes, fasting, Stations of the Cross — followed by the Resurrection. It's easy to be energized and excited about the Faith during the high holy days. But Ordinary Time? It's just so, well, ordinary.

How do you stay involved and engaged when Sundays seem to run together and the next liturgical high point is weeks or months away?

Attending daily Mass, saying the Rosary, and going to confession more frequently are all very good practices to incorporate during Ordinary Time. But for something a little different, try one or more of these six ideas, which are both a little different and deeply rooted in our traditions.

### 1. Create your own novena

A novena, nine days of private or public prayer intended to obtain a special grace, favor, or blessing has long been a part of the Church's devotions. You can find novenas for everything from world peace to healing, most of which are directed to end on a particular feast day of Mary, Jesus, or a prominent saint. But you can create your own novena, choosing your own ending day and devotional activity. For instance, create a birthday novena. Do something special for the nine days before your birthday or the birthday of someone you love; you can certainly say a prayer like the Hail Mary or Our Father, but you might also light a candle, read a poem, work on a piece of art, or plant a flower. Whatever you do, place yourself in the presence of God and offer your activity with your whole heart, mind, and soul.

### 2. Keep a gratitude journal

Some scientific studies have shown that people who regularly “count their blessings” are happier than those who don't. Often we are so focused on the neg-

atives in our lives we overlook the positives. So, during Ordinary Time, take a small notebook and, once a day, write at least five things you are thankful for. They don't have to be earth-shattering — a cup of coffee will suffice. Then, on Sunday, read aloud your list, saying before each item: “God,





I thank you for ...” It seems like a simple activity, but it can literally be life-changing as a concrete, permanent record of the blessings of your life that is hard to overlook even when you are feeling down.

### 3. Focus on God’s abundance

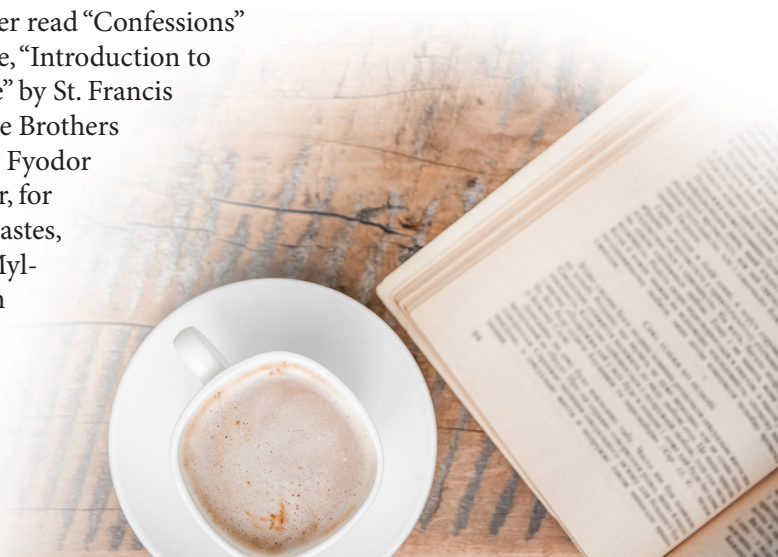
One year a woman decided that since so many things seemed to be going wrong in her life, she would concentrate on the ways God showed his providence in a tangible, practical manner. Every day she e-mailed a friend to relate what “abundance” God had provided. Sometimes it was a small thing — finding a quarter on the sidewalk. Other times it was larger — being given a washing machine when hers broke, for example. And sometimes it was nonmaterial, such as having a neighbor offering cleanup by blowing the leaves from her yard. But as the days went by, it became obvious that God was continually showering abundance on her. It became a daily joy to see what new gift God had for her that day.

### 4. Act out your faith

One of the reasons our faith can become stale is because it can become too cerebral. Instead of “doing,” we spend most of our time “thinking.” So put your faith in action. No, that doesn’t mean you have to start vigils at abortion centers or volunteer at soup kitchens — although those things are good and may be just what some people need. You can act out your faith in smaller, more homey ways as well. For instance, Jesus told us that if we have two coats, we should share with those who have none. Most of us probably have at least two coats in our closets, so paring down our clothes could be a great place to begin. During Ordinary Time, simplifying, eliminating, and giving away those things that we no longer use can become a great act of faith ... and a great faith-builder.

### 5. Read something with moral value

Have you ever read “Confessions” by St. Augustine, “Introduction to the Devout Life” by St. Francis de Sales, or “The Brothers Karamazov,” by Fyodor Dostoevsky? Or, for more modern tastes, “Mr. Blue” by Myles Connolly, “In This House of Brede” by Rumer Godden, or “The Shack” by William P. Young? In the





weeks when the Church is not preparing for something special, we have the time to read what others have written about God, faith, and the meaning of life. We don't have to agree with everything we read, but reading morally engaging literature is one of the best ways to keep our faith vital and vibrant.

## 6. Keep the Sabbath

The weeks of Ordinary Time are ideally suited to creating family rituals that keep the Sabbath as a special day. Without the pressure of holidays and holy days, we can design our own personal practices that make Sunday a day to anticipate. As with most things, these don't have to be elaborate. Perhaps stopping at the doughnut shop on the way home from Mass and letting everyone pick their favorite could become a "tradition." Reestablish a sit-down family dinner on Sunday evenings, even if you are sitting down to eat takeout. Read aloud or listen to a book on tape. Just find something you and your family can enjoy and save that activity for the Sabbath.

Ordinary Time is only ordinary if we think of it that way. If we consider these weeks not as long boring stretches between the good stuff, but as a time to try new things and refocus our energies on our spiritual growth, Ordinary Time can become one of our favorite — and most rewarding — times of year.



## ORDINARY TIME THROUGH THE WEEK

Early Church history and tradition teaches that each day of the week has a theme which can help us to celebrate Ordinary Time. Here are some fun and simple activities you could choose to celebrate!

### Sunday — The Weekly Easter

Prepare first. Spend Saturday evening cleaning, laying out Sunday clothes, preparing food, and planning for Sunday. Then:

1. Go to Mass as a family.
2. Designate certain music to listen to or sing that praises God.
3. Designate special toys to play with only on Sunday.
4. Brainstorm activities that are family favorites — biking, cooking, movies, games, etc. Choose one each week.
5. Cook a special dessert or recipe — set aside budget restrictions or nutrition for that day. FEAST!

### Monday — Honor the Holy Angels

Monday has been traditionally dedicated to honoring the holy angels. This includes guardian angels and archangels. Making mention of this at morning prayer and evening dinner could allow for fruitful spiritual discussion.

*Learn and recite these prayers together:*

St. Michael the Archangel,  
defend us in battle;  
be our defense against the wickedness  
and snares of the devil.  
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray.  
And do you, O prince of the heavenly host,  
by the power of God  
thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits  
who prowl about the world  
for the ruin of souls. Amen.

#### Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day (or night) be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

### Tuesday — Honor the Apostles

The apostles are the focus on Tuesdays. This is an opportunity to get to know the men that our priests and bishops have followed. Their lives and personalities are revealed in the Gospels.

### *Learn and recite the **Act of Faith**:*

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

#### *More to do:*

1. Read about the apostles. Skim the Gospels for any reference.
2. Memorize their names.
3. Mark their feast days with a celebration.
4. Choose one as an intercessor for your priests, pastor, and bishop, and pray often for them.

### **Wednesday — Honor St. Joseph**

St. Joseph is honored on Wednesdays. He is patron of families and especially fathers. Great topics for discussion are fatherhood, being a hard worker, and knowing Jesus intimately.

#### *Learn and recite the **Act of Hope**:*

O my God, relying on your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

#### *On Wednesdays you could also:*

1. Have a Dad's Day.
2. Learn about temperance.
3. Discuss obedience.
4. Pray a St. Joseph prayer.
5. Make a family-tree centerpiece.

### **Thursday — Reverence for the Holy Eucharist**

We focus on the holy Eucharist on Thursdays. The Eucharist is at the source and summit of our faith and should be the center of our lives. God allows his people to meet him face-to-face in this sacrament. It is said that if one understands the Eucharist, all other truths will fall in line.



*Learn and recite the **Act of Charity**:*

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

*You could also:*

1. Attend Mass as a family.
2. Do some spiritual reading.
3. Spend time with the Blessed Sacrament.
4. Read the Acts of the Apostles.

## **Friday — Meditate on Christ's Passion and Death**

This day we remember the passion of Our Lord. This emphasis is so essential to the Church that she asks us to make some sort of sacrifice on this day (even outside of Lent). Traditionally, abstinence from meat has been that sacrifice, but there may be others more appropriate to your family's circumstances. Some examples: abstinence from sweets, television, videos, or other forms of entertainment. You may also encourage the family to make a sacrifice together. First, decide if abstinence from meat is truly a sacrifice in your family. If not, decide on something that is.

*On Fridays you could also:*

1. Review the Stations of the Cross.
2. Banish bickering.
3. Recognize the sacrifices of others.
4. Study the virtue of fortitude.

## **Saturday — Honor the Blessed Mother**

This day is dedicated to the Blessed Mother. Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* states: "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship" (56). At Fátima, Mary asked all people to honor her on the first Saturdays of five consecutive months by attending Mass and confession, saying the Rosary, and meditating for fifteen minutes on one or more of the mysteries of the Rosary. Even if you are unable to make this devotion, any special remembrance of the Blessed Mother would be a step in the right direction. You could simply place fresh flowers before an image of Mary or pray a decade of the Rosary after dinner. Any gesture will be gladly accepted by Our Lady, who longs for our love and affection.

*As a family you could also:*

1. Make a Marian shrine In your home.
2. Start a novena.
3. Thank a spiritual mother.
4. Memorize a prayer to Mary.
5. Write Mary a poem.





## ORDINARY TIME TRIVIA

### **It Wasn't Always Ordinary**

During much of the Church's history, Ordinary Time was referred to as the "Season after Epiphany" and the "Season after Pentecost." It wasn't until the new Catholic calendar took effect in 1969 after the Second Vatican Council that the term "Ordinary Time" came into common use in the liturgical calendar.

### **The Cardinal Difference**

It's tempting to think that Ordinary Time got its name because it is, well, ordinary, or non-exceptional, but that's not really the case. Ordinary Time means ordered, or numbered, time and is derived from ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) as opposed to cardinal numbers (one, two, three).

### **No First Sunday of Ordinary Time?**

If you go to Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which is celebrated on the Sunday after Epiphany, you may be startled to see the next Sunday is the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time. What happened to the First Sunday? It's a little confusing. The Sunday Masses for the Baptism of the Lord are the very last celebrations of the Christmas season. However, Evening Prayer that night is the first liturgical marker for Ordinary Time. Therefore, the first part of that Sunday is Christmas and the second part is Ordinary Time. The next day, Monday, is the First Monday of Ordinary Time. Therefore, the next Sunday has to be the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, because it is the Sunday of the second week in Ordinary Time.

### **There's Always Something to Celebrate**

Even though Ordinary Time doesn't build to a single great feast like Advent or Lent, it is not without its high points. The Assumption of Mary (Aug. 15), All Saints (Nov. 1), and Christ the King (Nov. 22) are just a few of the important celebrations that fall during these weeks.



# Our Sunday Visitor



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