

## Ordinary Time: *What is it? How should we celebrate it?*

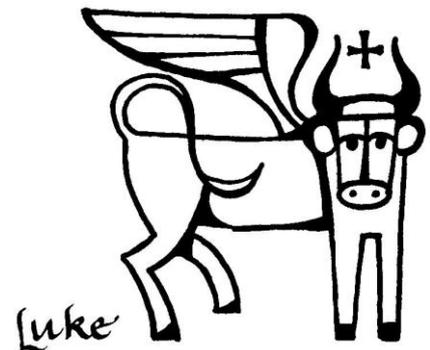
The Liturgical Year is divided into distinct periods of time. Two of these periods of time are relatively easy to define owing to the great feasts around which they are based: Christmas and Easter. The remaining two Liturgical Seasons pre-empt these and, are respectively, periods of anticipation (Advent) and repentance (Lent).

Much of the remainder of the Liturgical Year is given over to what we refer to as Ordinary Time.

So what exactly is Ordinary Time? For some, the absence of a specifically festive title leaves them with the impression that these Sundays are without focus or purpose. The reasoning at work seems to be: “no feast, no focus” or “no theme, no significance”. Perhaps the designation of the title Ordinary Time is a major part of the problem. Our everyday usage of language conveys the message that *ordinary* means *nothing special*. As a result, there is a misconception that these Sundays lack focus and content, and that they are simply a long stretch of weeks between important feasts and seasons.

However, *ordinary*, in this context, really means *ordinal*, and comes from the Latin *ordo*, meaning *in order*. The Sundays are counted in order as we chart our way through the Synoptic Gospel of that year – in 2004, Luke. In scriptural union with other Christian churches that use a Lectionary similar to ours, we move in an ordered and orderly fashion through the Gospel of the year. During these numbered Sundays of Ordinary Time the fullness of the paschal mystery is unfolded through the life and mission of Christ proclaimed in the Gospel.

Seen from the perspective of the Lectionary, the Sundays in Ordinary Time are only unfilled if the pages of the Synoptic Gospels are considered unfilled. The content of the so-called “Season of Sundays” is, therefore, nothing less than, and no one else but, Jesus himself. It is a time for us to meet Christ alive in our midst, and to come to know Him through the Gospel.



**The Responsorial Psalm** is the response with which the community welcomes the proclaimed Word of God. It is true that the essential response to the Word is obedience to God, yet in the liturgical celebration, the Responsorial Psalm ritualises the response of the celebrating community.

The community responds to the acclamation of Christ in his Word with the Responsorial Psalm. A parallel may be made between the biblical canticle with which the people of God in the Old Testament responded to God's deeds and the way in which the contemporary liturgical assembly responds to the Word, that commemorates the same deeds, with the Responsorial Psalm. The psalm expresses the assembly's acceptance of the Word through its praise, thanksgiving and petition.

Basing itself on tradition, the *General Introduction* to the Lectionary outlines the different ways of praying the Psalm:

As a rule the responsorial psalm should be sung. There are two established ways of singing the psalm after the first reading: responsorially and directly. In responsorial singing, which as far as possible, is to be given preference, the

psalmist or cantor sings the psalm verse and the whole congregation joins in by singing the response. In direct singing of the psalm there is no intervening response by the community; either the psalmist or cantor of the psalm sings the psalm alone as the community or else all sing it together.<sup>1</sup>

The psalmist or cantor should be encouraged to sing the psalm and the assembly to sing the antiphon. The Lectionary advises against a simple reading of the psalm and antiphon, and encourages worshipping communities to commit to an authentic singing of the psalm.

Shout joyfully to God,  
all the earth, sing a  
psalm to the glory of  
his name Alleluia

**Common Psalms** can be found towards the end of Volume I of the Lectionary (pp. 922 – 927). They are intended to provide a resource for communities that wish to begin singing the psalms and they can replace the psalm at any given Mass. The texts are arranged according to liturgical seasons, and include a considerable collection suitable for use during Ordinary Time.

The intention of the common psalms in the Lectionary is for communities to have a core repertoire of psalms that can be used over a number of weeks or during a liturgical season to allow the psalmist/cantor to gain confidence and for the assembly to get to know the particular psalm and be able to sing it from their hearts.

. . . in order that the people may be able to join in the responsorial psalm more readily, some texts of responses and psalms have been chosen, according to the different seasons of the years and classes of saints, for optional use, whenever the psalm is sung, in place of the text corresponding to the reading.<sup>2</sup>

The following outline highlights the various options available for using the common responses and psalms during Ordinary Time:

Common Response:	with a psalm of praise	<i>O give thanks to the Lord for he is good. We thank you, Lord, for the wonders of all your creation. O sing a new song to the Lord.</i>
	with a psalm of petition	<i>The Lord is close to all who call him. Pay heed to us, Lord, and save us. The Lord is compassion and love.</i>
Common Psalm 1:	Ps 18:8-11 r. Jn 6:68 or Jn 6:63	<i>Lord, you have the message of eternal life.</i> or <i>Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.</i>
Common Psalm 2:	Ps 26:4. 13-14 r.1	<i>The Lord is my light and my help.</i>
Common Psalm 3:	Ps 33:2-9 r.2 or 9	<i>I will bless the Lord at all times.</i> or <i>Taste and see that the Lord is good.</i>
Common Psalm 4:	Ps 62:2-6. 8-9 r.2	<i>For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.</i>
Common Psalm 5:	Ps 94:1-2. 6-9 r.8	<i>O that today you would listen to his voice, 'Harden not your hearts'.</i>
Common Psalm 6:	Ps 99:2. 3. 5 r.3	<i>We are his people, the sheep of his flock.</i>
Common Psalm 7:	Ps 102:1-4. 8. 10. 12-13 r.8	<i>The Lord is compassion and love.</i>
Common Psalm 8: (for the last weeks of the year)	Ps 144:1-2. 8-11. 13-14 r.1	<i>I will bless your name forever, O God my king.</i>
Common Psalm 9:	Ps 121:1-9 r.1	<i>Let us go to the Lord's house rejoicing.</i>

<sup>1</sup> *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, (Collins Liturgical Australia, Sydney, 1983), #20.

<sup>2</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, (Sydney: Australian Episcopal Conference, 1974), #36.