

Funny, isn't it, how we humans use some curiously un-descriptive terms to describe people and things?

Take, for instance, the intended-as-a-compliment "You know that Joe, he's a regular guy." We get the idea—Joe's appreciated as a good person, an authentic, down to earth fellow. But I'm not sure he's particularly flattered by a word that in our culture can mean everything from "standard and NOT extra-strength" to "not suffering from intestinal distress."

Or, "Sarah is such a stand up gal."

What? She doesn't fall down all the time? She can get on stage and make people laugh with a 15-minute comic routine?

And, of course, the case where, for many folks under 25, (and residents of Boston), the terms "sick," "bad" and "wicked" are high praise

Literal interpretations can get us into trouble, indeed.

The same is true of "Ordinary Time."

Ordinarius, which, simply means, "numbered or ordered in sequence."

In the Church Year, there are 33 such numbered Sundays nestled between the feasts and seasons of the year.

The Liturgical Calendar that we Catholics observe is a carefully crafted set of seasons and cycles which, in a literary, theatrical way, unfold the story of the relationship between God and

Resurrection, there is nothing ordinary, plain or mundane about these weeks.

A major focus of the Second Vatican Council (celebrating this year its 40th anniversary) was the strategic calendaring/placement of scriptural readings to be opened and explored each week within the major seasons and this ordinal time between them. The scholars of the Council developed the Liturgical Calendar, which, through its gradual unfolding in a three-year cycle, brings to the Eucharistic Table, the 45

What's so Ordinary about Ordinary Time?

Humankind.

The story focuses, of course, on the two great Mysteries of our faith: The Incarnation, and the Resurrection, and is played out in the feasts of Christmas and Easter that celebrate those Mysteries.

Those feasts are surrounded by a preparatory period (Advent and Lent) and a post-feast developmental period (Epiphany and Easter.) The weeks not included in those preparatory or developmental periods are numbered, ordered, and called Sundays in Ordinary Time.

Perhaps a more appropriate descriptor would be ordinal time, because, as we gather in prayer, in word, in song, in the works of Incarnation and

Books and 150 Psalms of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the four Gospels, Acts and Letters that make up the 27 books of the Christian writings.

In the new calendar, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were assigned their own "year" in a 3-year series. Assigned as Year A-Matthew, Year B-Mark, and Year C-Luke, each year's readings take on a different twist, a different cast, which reflects the personality, background, and experience of each primary writer. John's Gospel is sprinkled in amongst the years, featuring prominently in all years around the Easter Season.

In this year, Year C, through the seasons, feasts and ordinal time, we explore Luke's Gospel.

Luke writes his account as a gentile, a Syrian physician. By culture a Greek and a student of Ethics, unlike Matthew Mark and John, Luke lives in, and speaks to, the Hellenistic world, bringing the perspective of an educated, accomplished man who sees himself as a citizen of a broader and more culturally diverse Universe Jewish world that was the focus of the other writers.

His account of Jesus' life is the most complete, with the most detail. As a healer himself, Luke's telling stresses the reconciliatory nature of Jesus' ministry and teaching. He reminds readers of Jesus' call to mercy, forgiveness, generosity, inclusivity and compassion.

Though the theme of social justice is central in all the Gospels, Luke's account is the strongest and most counter-cultural in its condemnation of injustice, inequity, greed, and the marginalization of women.

So, through our readings, our music, our prayer, our lives in the real world, we know that there is nothing ordinary about this time. For it is in this time that we are invited, embraced and challenged by a God of extraordinary love, a God who calls us to extraordinary Life.