

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - JANUARY 18, 2026

This past Monday, we started the season of Ordinary Time.

The Church doesn't call this season "ordinary" because there is nothing special about it. Rather, the name "ordinary" comes from the Latin word, *ordinalis*, which means "numbered". This is the time of year when the Sundays are identified by numbers, like the "Second Sunday in Ordinary Time."

There are seasons of the year when we focus on special events in the life of Jesus. For instance, we just ended the season of Christmas when we celebrated Jesus' birth. In a few months, we will enter the season of Easter when we reflect on His resurrection. Ordinary Time is the time in between those other seasons when we reflect on the public ministry of Jesus. During this season, we read about all that He did during the three years that He preached, healed the sick, and cast out demons while He traveled from Galilee up to Jerusalem.

During Ordinary Time, we wear the color green, which is the color of hope. Just as we look forward to nature going from brown to green in Spring, we hope that the seeds that were sown in our hearts during the other seasons will take root and grow within us. It is a symbol of our hope that all the promises that God has made will come true for us both today and, ultimately, when Jesus comes again in glory.

There is something else special about this Ordinary Time. It is not just about what Jesus said, it is about how we are going to respond. We are not only challenged to listen to Jesus, but to put His words into practice. So, this Ordinary Time is not just about who Jesus is and what He did. It is also about who we are as baptized Christians and how we are to live out this gift of faith we have received.

The prophet Isaiah reflects this in today's first reading. Through him, God says to Israel: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Is 49:3 NRSV). From the time of Abraham, God set the people of Israel apart as His chosen people. There was no other nation to whom God revealed Himself so completely. It was not because there was anything special about them. It wasn't a privilege that they earned. Rather, it was a free gift of God. It was a gracious act of mercy.

By choosing Israel, however, God had a greater purpose in mind. He wanted to use Israel to show His power and glory to the whole world. By enriching Israel, He wanted to enrich the whole world. So He goes on to say, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant... I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49: 6).

That calling of Israel has been fulfilled. Through Israel, God has enlightened the whole world. In Jesus Christ, salvation has reached every corner of the planet. Israel is still God's chosen people. They are still precious to Him. But now every race and nation can enjoy what Israel has

enjoyed from Abraham on. In Jesus Christ, we can hear God's word and have intimate friendship with Him.

Like Israel, we are blessed by God so that God can bless the world through us. The wisdom we receive from God's word and the healing we receive from the sacraments are not for us to keep to ourselves. Christianity is not a self-help program or a path to self-fulfillment. Rather, we are called to be a light for the world. We are meant to be like Jesus in everything we do and say so that others will meet Him in us. And by meeting Him in us, they too will come to love Him.

Saint Paul picks up on this theme in today's second reading from the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians. He describes them in this way: "to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (1 Cor 1: 2 NRSV). To be sanctified means to be made holy. All of us are made holy through hearing God's word and receiving the sacraments. And we are called to be saints. That is, we are called to live out our holiness through prayer and good works. Sainthood is not something just for a privileged few. Being a saint is not like being in some kind of Hall of Fame for holiness. Rather it is both who we already are and who we are challenged to be.

That brings us to today's gospel. Once again we hear from Saint John the Baptist who played such a pivotal role in the seasons of Advent and Christmas. He is a wonderful model of what the Christian life is about. John's whole life was centered on Jesus, even when he only knew Him as "the one coming after me." He saw his whole mission in terms of preparing Israel to welcome Jesus.

That is what we are about too. It is not about us. Rather, it is about Jesus. The movement of holiness is from being self-centered to being Jesus-centered. It is from taking the focus off ourselves and our plans and putting it onto Jesus and His mission. It is a process of making our lives about nothing else than knowing Jesus and making Him known to others. And it is expressed beautifully in today's responsorial psalm, "Here I am, Lord. I come to do your will."

We can make this Ordinary Time extraordinary by following the examples of Isaiah, Saint Paul, and Saint John the Baptist. We can bring a springtime of hope to the world by pointing others to Jesus. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. He is the one who came to reconcile us to the Father. In Him, we find peace. Through Him we also receive the Holy Spirit who empowers us to share with others the love and joy we have found in our calling to be saints. We are the light of the world. Through us the love of God can enlighten everyone we come into contact with and transform the planet.