

Friends of the Center

Ordinary Time?

Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated the last great feast of the Christian year, Pentecost. Now we look forward to the new festive cycle that will begin near the end of the year, when throughout Advent we will be preparing to celebrate the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ –Christmas. The Christian year of feasts and other special observances revolves around two foci: the Christmas cycle, and the Easter cycle, which that has recently ended after taking us throughout Lent and Holy Week, leading to Pentecost. Between those two cycles are the two periods that have traditionally been called “ordinary time.”

That very name makes us think of boredom and routine. Nothing special happens on these days! It is time to rest from the confession and lamentation that prepared us for Holy Week; to rest from the joy of Easter; and to rest also from the rejoicing of Pentecost...

But not so! What we celebrate in the great feast days did not end when the festivity itself passed. What we lamented in times of confession and repent is still there after those times have passed.

John Chrysostom, one of the greatest preachers of all times, commented on Paul's words to the Corinthians, “Let us celebrate the feast” (1 Co 5.8). He pointed it out that Paul “did not say this because it was either Easter or Pentecost, but rather to point out that for Christians every time is festal time” (*Hom. on 1 Corinthians*, 15.3). And he was right. The Word who became one of us on that first Christmas, while still being fully divine, is also still fully one of us. And the Spirit who was outpoured on that first Pentecost is still being poured into our lives every day.

Yet, we do not see it. We do not see it, because the incarnation does not seem to be a miracle without angel choirs singing “Glory to God in the highest.” We do not see it, because we imagine that the Holy Spirit is at work only when pouring “extraordinary gifts” upon us. We do not see it, because we imagine that God is not present in the ordinary.

And when we do not see it, the ordinary becomes routine and boredom, as if God were not in it.

But Christian doctrine teaches otherwise: our God is not only the Lord of the extraordinary, but also of the ordinary. “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.” The presence of God may be seen even in the extraordinarily ordinary regiment ruling the stars in their movements. The Word became human. And because the



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Word became human, God's presence is also in every human life, in every human flesh, in every human joy, and even in every human pain. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, blows from where he wishes, when he wishes, and as he wishes; but he is always blowing –always speaking through our tongues, be they extraordinary, or just our common speech of every day.

Christmas has passed. Easter has passed. Ascension has passed. Pentecost has passed... But the feast remains! Here and now, on this sunny morning in which I write these lines, in that cloudy day in which you may be reading them, in that threatening night, in the most ordinary times of our life, our God is there!

Therefore, with Paul and with Chrysostom, with all the sisters and brothers throughout the ages, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, in the most extraordinary times, and in the most ordinary, “Let us celebrate the feast”!

– Justo L. González, Ph.D



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