

Introduction to **ORDINARY TIME** during Fall



The Season

There is nothing ordinary about Ordinary Time, or is there? Ordinary Time is not about a ho-hum liturgical season, but rather, it is about ordinal, or counted, time. The weeks of Ordinary Time are counted and provide a rhythm to the year, punctuated by the seasons of Advent, Christmas Time, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and Easter Time. It is also punctuated by particular solemnities, feasts, and memorials of the saints along the way. Ordinary Time is filled with food for spiritual thought and reflection. During Ordinary Time, we learn to pray, receive encouragement and instruction, hear the stories of ancestors of the faith, and are plunged into Christ's paschal mystery.

The ebb and flow of Ordinary Time shapes the ebb and flow of our lives—if we allow God's grace to work with us through the prayers, readings, and celebrations that make up this season. We might say that it is in Ordinary Time that we find little “wiggle room” from the demands of discipleship. Each week, we face both what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ and who we are called to be as people of God. Each week, we are presented with a choice: to live and grow in this way of life, or to walk away. Each week, we recommit ourselves to journey with Christ and are nourished through the Eucharist, Word and sacrament, priest and the people.

Ordinary Time during fall has its own particular “rhythm within the rhythm.” As we approach the end of the liturgical year, our focus becomes a bit clearer, more serious, sharper as we walk with Christ,

acknowledging that our earthly lives will someday end, and that the kingdom of God will someday be established once and for all in Christ's glory. While we keep these “end times” in the back of our mind, we are given clear and compelling direction for our lives now, in this time and place, in the ordinary and not-so-ordinary moments of our lives.

Celebrating Ordinary Time during Fall with Teens

For teens, fall is a time to resume the ordinary routines of classes, sports, work, family life, activities, and friends. They are also faced with newness: a new grade, new classmates, new extracurricular activities. Ordinary Time during the fall guides them through a journey with Christ in which they will learn to apply the Gospel to their everyday lives. Just as the young people encounter Christ as he heals, teaches, prays, and blesses, they will recognize their call to do the same.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

The color for Ordinary Time is green, and this color remains constant throughout this season. It is juxtaposed, in some areas in the Northern Hemisphere, with the seasonal colors of fall: orange, purple, red, and gold. If yours is one of those areas, consider incorporating a few autumn leaves and flowers into your prayer space, acknowledging the beauty of creation and the way it reflects the magnificence of God's grandeur.



August 4, 2024

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #113B

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalms 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings. The handout for this Sunday's session is found online. Visit www.ltp.org/lwgr to access the PDF and JPG files. Send to teens by email or upload to social media before gathering for today's session.

Leader's Context

In last Sunday's Gospel reading (John 6:1-15), Jesus miraculously fed five thousand people. Now those same people are looking for him. Jesus recognizes their surface-level attraction to him but calls them to deeper understanding. He reveals that he is the Bread of Life. The young people are invited to look beyond what they see on the surface, in the world and in their faith, to recognize God at work in all things and his invitation to a deeper relationship with himself.

Q FOCUS: Seek the Creator, not just the creation.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Church celebrates the life of St. John Vianney on August 4. He is known as the Curé of Ars (the parish priest of Ars, a village in France). As a student, he struggled in school, which seemingly closed the door to the priesthood for him. He still felt God's call to the priesthood and studied privately until he could finally pass the required exams. John had a special gift for the sacrament of reconciliation and would spend most of the day hearing the confessions

of penitents. His ministry reached many people because they came to him for confession from all over. He is the patron saint of parish priests.

Church Teaching Connection

"The initial scene of the Gospel in today's liturgy . . . shows us some boats moving towards Capernaum: the crowd is going to look for Jesus. We might think that this is a very good thing, yet the Gospel teaches us that it is not enough to seek God; we must also ask why we are seeking him. . . . The Gospel's invitation is this: rather than being concerned only with the material bread that feeds us, let us welcome Jesus as the bread of life and, starting out from our friendship with Him, learn to love each other" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 1, 2021).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:24-35

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are

looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*" So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Today's Gospel begins with people almost frantically looking for Jesus—they even follow him across the sea! But they don't fully understand why they are trying so hard to find him. Jesus just performed a miracle where he fed five thousand people. Certainly, that would have gotten their attention, but they are now following Jesus because they want more food; they want to be satisfied at a different level.

► **What are some reasons why people follow Jesus today?**

Jesus wants to move the crowd, and us, beyond the superficial and into the real reason to follow him. He doesn't just give them food to satisfy their hunger in

the moment, he offers himself as the Bread of Life who satisfies us for eternal life.

Many times throughout our day, we take for granted the things that we have that sustain us. We forget their true origin and simply see "things" instead of gifts from our Creator who desires our well-being on earth as well as our eternal well-being. We forget that many people have a hand in taking what God created and manufacturing it into resources that can be used to sustain life.

For example, at mealtimes, we see our food and eat it, while not thinking about the many hands that went into the making of the food. We don't see the farmer who planted the crops or the person who harvested it. We forget the people who processed that food and the trucker who delivered it. This goes on and on until the food reaches our table. It is far easier to deal with the reality of what we see in front of us than to look beyond and see how all things are linked.

► **Name a product that you use every day.**

Take a moment to think about how this product finally came to you. What might be involved in that process?

Remember that at the beginning of this entire process is God. He is the creator, and everything starts with him. His spirit infuses each person who has a hand in each step of the process.

While the crowd focused on concrete things, such as being fed by Jesus and the manna that was given to the Israelites in the desert, Jesus wanted them to see beyond that. It wasn't Moses who supplied the manna, it was God. This bread they eat isn't the bread they truly need. Rather, they need Jesus, who is the true Bread of Life.

When looking at something or interacting with it, how often do you think about God's role in it? We can look at the beauty of nature and be moved in our hearts. But if it ends there, we have fallen short of understanding who God is. God is greater than the stars and the beach. He made them, and in them is his beauty.

► **What are some ways we can more readily remember God when we encounter his work?**

We are all seeking to be fulfilled and satisfied. Jesus knows this. He is pointing us to find the deepest

satisfaction possible through a life with him. He is the true bread from heaven. If we eat this bread, we will never go hungry again because we will have everything we ever need.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 2.

Jesus is the true bread from heaven that satisfies every person.

The effort of many people goes into even the simplest of products, but God is at the center.

Creation reveals the creator. Let's always give the glory to God!

Act on the Word

Supply Chains

For this activity, you will need paper and pens or pencils.

If your group is large, divide the young people into smaller groups of five or six members so everyone can participate.

Share with the young people that this activity will help them reflect on the reality that many hands contribute to products they use every day. Remind them that as recently as 2021, as the world was going through the global pandemic, essential products were not created or delivered as usual because of "supply chain issues." This experience brought the reality of the world's interdependence to the forefront. Based on this recognition, the young people will reflect today on the processes that make everyday items available for them to use. At the end of this activity, everyone will spend time giving thanks to God for these items and for the different groups involved in the making of these products.

To begin, have each group pick a popular product the teens use daily (for example, a T-shirt, a smart phone, or a gaming device). Then invite the

young people to brainstorm all of the people who might be involved in the creation, production, and delivery of each part of this product from its beginning until it finally reached them. They can illustrate the steps of the process on the piece of paper.

Groups will then present their products and supply chains. Suggestions from the larger group can help fill in missing steps or materials in the process. Then ask the teens to reflect on what surprised them about the process, what group of contributors to the process might be most easily overlooked, and how the young people themselves are part of the process.

End the activity by leading the teens in prayer as they give thanks for the different groups mentioned in the activity and pray for them. Remind the teens that at the beginning, all throughout, and at the end of any process is God, who is the creator and bestower of all gifts.

If there is additional time, have the young people brainstorm ways to advocate for more just practices in the creation, manufacturing, and use of these daily products.

Closing Prayer

*Bread of life,
who gives us strength for the journey
and invites us to a deeper appreciation of God's
role in our lives,
lead us to your table,
where we may be nourished by your
banquet of love.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.*

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.