

You know there ARE some perks to aging. Here are a few. People don't expect you to remember things. Kidnappers are not very interested in you. People no longer view you as a hypochondriac. People don't expect you to remember things. No one expects you to run into a burning building. There's nothing left to learn the hard way. Your joints are more accurate in calling for rain than the National Weather Service. People don't expect you to remember things. In a hostage situation, you are likely to be released first.

We have entered the Season called 'Ordinary Time.' Sounds boring, and even more boring when we understand that ordinary in this case just means 'counted' – the 'counted' Sundays, like ordinary numbers. So between the Incarnation/Christmas and Resurrection/ Easter, all the mysteries of Christ are tucked into about 34 weeks. It is over half the calendar year, and Ordinary Time is stark in its simplicity, except, as we all know, there is no such thing. (some help from Phyllis Tickle, ORDINARY TIME, p. 14-15)

As we have entered this season, we might feel like the little girl who wrote "Dear God, Please put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now. Amanda." But my first point. From the perspective of an incarnational faith – a faith that says God comes to us in flesh, in the ordinary, the daily, the mundane, Ordinary time, ordinary life, is actually extraordinary, precious, sacred, and it is enough. (adapted from FORGOTTEN AMONG THE LILIES, Rolheiser, p. 127)

It is estimated that during a lifetime, an average homeowner cooks 35,000 meals, makes 30,000 beds, vacuums a rug a mile long and a quarter mile wide, and cleans 7000 plumbing fixtures. Who are they kidding – if the homeowner is a male, he doesn't do any of that stuff! But the point remains. So much of our life consists of doing the same thing. A teacher faces the same students every day. A business person goes to the same place of business every day. If we work in an office, we sit before the same desk and the same computer – and we see the same boss – every day. Parents of newborns change diaper after diaper day after day for 2 years or so. What we do with these routines – how we approach them – puts the glory in life – the glory that dwells in these routine duties, in doing our tasks faithfully.

No less a saint than Therese of Lisieux admitted in her STORY OF A SOUL that Christ was most abundantly present to her not "during my hours of prayer....but rather in the midst of my daily occupations." (THE QUOTIDIAN MYSTERIES, p. 14) She also realized that she was not capable of doing great things, so she would do little things – with great love. When we perform our monotonous duties and minor chores with patience and love, we achieve true greatness, even holiness. And we receive the Lord's approbation: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Second, even the bible is full of ordinary people, though we often overlook them. But here's just one example – when we speak of the great Patriarchs – we say "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But Isaac's life is pretty much covered in 1 chapter whose most exciting feature is some squabbles over some wells. We might say that Isaac was the Calvin Coolidge of his day. As we know, "Silent Cal" wasn't noted for much other than being quiet and sleeping 11 hours a day. When someone reported to Dorothy Parker the news that Coolidge had died, she replied, "How can they tell?"

Isaac was the ordinary son of a famous father, and the ordinary father of a famous son. Alexander Maclaren began a sermon on Isaac by noting, 'The salient feature of Isaac's life is that it has no salient features.' (Expositions of Holy Scripture [Baker], 1:202) Isaac was kind of blah. He wasn't bold like his father Abraham, who made a daring raid against the kings of the east. He wasn't shrewd like his son, Jacob, who stole his brother Esau's birthright, or a gifted leader like his grandson, Joseph – you know – the one with the

fabulous technicolor dreamcoat. Yet God used Isaac to work out His covenant promises. His life shows us that there's hope for us ordinary people. (adapted from HOMILETICS, Jan-Feb 2018, p. 32)

Gunilla Norris wrote a book called BEING HOME: A BOOK OF MEDITATIONS. She says that nothing is too common to speak to us. From dusting she gleams the divinity of our creaturely love of touch as she writes: "I want to be a lover of surfaces all day today. Let this be the prayer: that my hands not be ashamed to give and to receive a passionate exchange....to luster and to be lustered.....and so come to feel Your inward touch."

From climbing the stairs, she writes "From climbing the stairs comes a lesson on spiritual ambition: Help me to love a slow progression, to have no prejudice that up is better than down or vice versa. Help me to enjoy the in-between."

And on ironing, she writes "A lesson in mercy emerges from ironing: Under this heat the cloth begins to life flat, pressed. To iron things out.....I think of how easily acts of management can slide into power. In one instant of believing that I know best, I can place myself outside of Your mercy, The crease will be in the wrong place."

There is holiness to be discovered, uncovered, in our ordinary, day-in and day-out routines – bathing, cooking, cleaning, working, playing, studying, sleeping. It is the dailiness that sanctifies us. This struggle for the heights in the midst of the mundane is the very essence of the spiritual life. The interesting thing is that we are inclined to believe, perhaps, that we are struggling for the heights, scrambling goat-like up the mountain of life, pushing ourselves to ever higher summits of development. What if the truth is just the opposite? What if the real enterprise of life is to learn to live at the bottom of our mountains and find them beautiful? To live in Apex and Cary and Holly Springs and find them our personal holy land? What if we ourselves will never be great stars, great achievers, great doers, great personalities, great Monsignors?! Then what? Then we shall be just like everybody else. Then we shall have to find our best accomplishment in being our best self, a dull but nevertheless noble pursuit. Great epics, it seems, are written about ordinary types who became extraordinary people by dealing well with what they could not best. They wrestle in the dark with dragons, angels, and gods and survive to tell the tale.

Holiness is the call to survival in life, to the rock-bottom demand that we take the worst of what life has to offer and turn it into the solid rock of goodness. The world is full of such ordinary, unproclaimed saints – people who survive paraplegia and multiple illnesses, tragedies, and death, bankruptcy and disgrace – and live to try again. It is a majestic calling, this taking of the clay of life and turning it into porcelain for the rest of us to see. It is the alchemy of the soul, and it takes time, ordinary time, a lifetime of ordinary time. (adapted from THERE IS A SEASON, Joan Chittister, p. 12-13)

Point three. There is no point three. It's an ordinary, just 2 point kind of Sunday. And I'm ordinary timed out.....So let the church say Amen.