

On Ordinary Time, and Father's Day

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Per a Minnesota parish's website that I came upon when I Googled "Ordinary Time," this interval on the Church calendar "has two parts, but it remains one season. The first part begins right after the feast of the Epiphany and runs until Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday...The second part begins the Monday after Pentecost and runs until the First Sunday of Advent." OK...

But why is it called Ordinary Time? According to thereligionteacher.com, the term "comes from the Latin word *ordinalis*, which means 'numbered.' Ordinary Time...signifies a numbered (or ordered) list of Sundays that anchor our daily lives in the Catholic Church." OK again, and per the USCCB, "Ordinary Time is a time for growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are finally caught up in Christ..."

All of which means, of course, that Ordinary Time is hardly ordinary. And really, how could it be, especially this year, given these past two Sunday celebrations? As noted, OT technically began May 29th — the day after Pentecost — so the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity that we celebrated back on June 4th and then the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ that we celebrated last Sunday, June 11th, were both celebrated in Ordinary Time. More extra-Ordinary than Ordinary if you ask me.

And today, we have another extraordinary thing going on: Father's Day! While its origins go back to the early 1900s according to an online Farmer's Almanac account, it was tagged "...as a holiday to be celebrated on the third Sunday of June by President Lyndon Johnson's Executive Order in 1966." Then Richard Nixon (six years later) "signed an official proclamation setting Father's Day permanently on the third Sunday in June nationwide." Seems good things do come to those who wait...

This is the day, of course, when we celebrate all things paternal: fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, etc. It's also the day we celebrate the bonds formed between a given person and anyone else in that person's life who has nurtured him or her in a fatherly way, whatever that means. I never caught a fish with either of my children, but I taught Sarah how to throw a baseball, and I taught Paul how to make a cherry pie. Little things, but I sense each child is the better for it, and I know I am.

And while the nation toasts fatherhood today, it's fitting that we toast Fatherhood, too. As in, our priests. God's words to the Israelites via Moses in the first reading are timely and fitting: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Well, the twelve apostles listed in the Gospel are in a sense our very first priests, chosen by Jesus for a very priestly assignment: to shepherd his people and to spread the Good News. Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, Zebedee's sons James and John, and the rest answer this call. It is a call that falls to all of us, yes, but it falls in a special way to our ordained clergy who wear the paternal title. Returning to an earlier premise, then, I'd say that all fatherly types who love and guide their children — and all priests who love and guide their flocks — are anything but Ordinary. Yeah. They are extra-Ordinary, for sure... Happy Father's Day.