

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom



Extraordinary Feasts in Ordinary Time

Last week, the Church celebrated the Solemnity of Pentecost, which signals the end of the Easter Season. At the conclusion of the Easter Season, we enter Ordinary Time, which we will celebrate until the Solemnity of Christ the King (on Nov. 20, 2022), when the Season of Advent will begin.

One of the misconceptions regarding Ordinary Time is that it is *ordinary*. The word "Ordinary" has a similar root as the word "ordinal" from the Latin *ordinarius*, which means ordered. This definition of "Ordinary" is based on the fact that the Church counts the weeks of Ordinary Time – from 1 to 34. We had a few weeks of Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent, and the remainder (Weeks 10-34) begin after Pentecost.

The wisdom of the Church has given us several "extraordinary" feasts, as we re-enter Ordinary Time. These feasts include the Solemnities of the Trinity, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (Corpus Christi), and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as well as the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we celebrate our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is fitting to have this Solemnity follow Pentecost, where we (and the original disciples) were introduced to the Holy Spirit. The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity gives us a chance to not only recognize each of the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, but also the opportunity to celebrate one of the great mysteries of our faith – that our God is a community of persons – Three Persons, but One God. This great mystery of our faith gives preachers and teachers a chance to devise clever analogies (e.g. St. Patrick and the 3-leafed clover).

Following Trinity Sunday is the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ – Corpus (et Sanguis) Christi. This beautiful feast gives us the opportunity to celebrate another of the great mysteries of our faith – the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Although we celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist at every Mass. The Church has given us this special celebration to focus on the mystery of the Real Presence – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – of Jesus in the elements of the bread and wine.

We know that the Eucharist is a sign of Jesus' love for us, but the Church has chosen to extend our celebration of Jesus' love through the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The heart is a common sign of love. (How many heart-shaped cards and candies are given on Valentine's Day?) If we use the heart as a sign of the locus of our love, it makes sense that we would recognize the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a sign of His superabundant Love.

On the day that follows the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrate the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ever since the Annunciation, the hearts of Jesus and Mary have been inextricably linked. This was first evident in Simeon's blessing of Jesus and Mary during the Presentation in the Temple just days after Jesus' Nativity: Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." [LK 2:34-35]

After these "extraordinary" feasts, Ordinary Time continues and we focus on the life and ministry of Jesus. What an uncommon gift this Ordinary Time is!