

RECTOR'S PINT

I have mentioned the theme of 'ordinary' time before, in 2018 and then very briefly only two years ago, but I believe it's worth revisiting.

The Church's major festivals are not spread regularly throughout the year, but in a way that's a good thing. Following Christmas, there is a gallop through Epiphany to Lent, and then on to Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter, the heartland of the Christian year. Then follow Ascension and Pentecost, but after that we enter 'Ordinary time' in the Church's year, the two parts of the year that fall outside the great seasons of Advent and Lent. The second period of Ordinary time begins after Pentecost (this year on 28 May) and ends with the first Sunday of Advent, so it is by far the longest season of the Christian year.

Of course, plenty of things do happen during this time. We are entering the wedding season, and we have quite a few in the Benefice this year. In June there will be two church and village fetes, one in Great Milton, on the 10th of June, and the other in Little Milton on the 17th of June.

The inter-village tug of war on 24th June, and this year it's in Little Milton. It's always a lively event, and the prize is hotly contested! The Open Gardens Day in Great Haseley was hugely popular last year, and will return on the 25th of July. Sadly, I will miss both of these as I had already booked my summer break before the dates were decided. In the autumn, we will celebrate our Harvest Festivals and Remembrance Sunday, and although these are not 'official' festivals of the Church they are much loved features of the calendar for many of us.

Whilst the great Festivals are a tremendous focus, for a minister like me, Ordinary time is a bit of a relief! There is plenty to do of course, but there is a break from the big 'extras' alongside the day-to-day responsibilities. As I have reflected before, although the word 'ordinary' actually stems from the Latin *ordinalis*, from which we get the word 'order', 'ordinary' can also be understood as 'everyday,' those times when nothing big or significant happens. Although the big festivals which fill our churches are really uplifting, it is perhaps in this 'ordinary' or day-to-day life when we see God most at work in our lives. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops puts it in rather more colourful terms: 'Ordinary time is a time of growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are caught up in Christ'.

Either way, it is, in fact, an important season, albeit more a paced spiritual marathon, rather than a hasty sprint!

I wish you God's blessing, however 'ordinary' that might seem.

Simon