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Ordinary X to Extraordinary X

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Ordinary time or the season in the liturgical calendar outside of Advent, Lent and the Christmas and Easter seasons, is a time when the church focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. The season celebrates the mysteries of Christ's life and death and looks forward to the salvation and eternal life that he brings. Green represents hope-----like the hope we feel when we see the first buds in springtime---and it is thus fitting that green is the liturgical color that marks this season.

Or, at least, that's the rationale the modern church gives for the rule about wearing green during Ordinary time. However, the reason might have been much more practical. Ordinary time is the longest liturgical season, and green plant dyes would have been one of the mostly widely available kinds of dyes. New shoots of spring and the lush grasses appear like magic, along with crops growing and harvesting to sustain all God's creation through out the year. This leads naturally to seeing green as a sign of hope and life.

Now in the earliest church, the clergy probably wore white (a kind of formal attire of Roman gentleman. As time progressed (along with the spread of Christianity, vestments became more elaborate. Various colors were tried out until the 13th. Century when Pope Innocent III established four official liturgical colors: green, white, red, and black. Rose and purple were added in the 16th century, after the Council of Trent.

Now what does all this have to do with today's Gospel of Mark? Well, over all not much, except that a little education to a captive audience is always good, plus after reading and meditating on the authors words I began to think more about how we can make the 'Green season' the one filled with renewed hope, and life from 'Ordinary' to extraordinary!

Remember when I returned to All Saints (my home parish) from my field work at Church of the Epiphany in South Haven? For those of you who weren't here last year, see me after church and I will give you a blow by blow account! Anyway, since coming back I often used a phrase that catches a 'holy' moment for me when wondering who was and who I became.

That phrase is: *I was self-willed, now I am Christ filled"*

It felt to me like an understandable statement, one I could share and explain comfortably to others.

In the Gospel of Mark, the author states in Chap. 5 versus 35-36

*"While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead", why trouble the teacher and further?
But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."*

Do not fear, only believe?!

This is what, I believe, (though in different wording), is behind my thought process in, 'Self-willed to Christ filled.

My wife and I are loyal watchers of the PBS news hour- at 7pm. We feel that we can believe their reporting, but are still very troubled by what they report.

Fear level, in many respects, is higher now than at any time in modern history. Truthfully because more countries have more and bigger ways to send us all away forever!

Now that I am no longer at the Academy I am reading a memoir on Francis! - First King of modern France.

As I am reading this book, I am amazed at what little difference there is in how their political system was attempting to run the world and how similar our political system is to it! They talked behind each other's back, they make promises that they had no intention of keeping, and their friends now will soon be their enemies and they will soon be defending themselves against the weapons they sold to their friends last month! I do not believe our leadership as studied our history at all or believe they have the intellectual know-how to do the same way and still think they can come out smelling pretty! More for defense, less on humanitarian efforts = defending a depleted waste-line.

Another rising concern for me, and I am sure many others, is that many Christian- right groups are beginning to fall in line with this form of stale thinking, remembering not what happened in the middle ages, when religion became politics and puppets to royalty and the pope.

So, during this season of Ordinary time, (the longest one of the year) is our chance as, a Jesus filled community of all God's children, is to take what I call 'self-willed' and the Gospels author refers to as 'fear-filled and turn into a community of Christ-filled believers!

If you happen to go into the vestry office there is a cement triangle made by John Fullenwilder that will soon be placed at the bottom of the stairs coming into to the nave. Once it is in place, when you leave by that doorway, you will be able to look down and see the words,

"Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

I can't wait to see that! And it is that simple - Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Being Christ-filled. It is our baptismal promise and responsibility.
For "our identity in Christ precedes all other.

I am truly tired of what is going on and I for one am ready to get on a different color horse. I believe by supporting one another and being Christ-filled, ordinary **can** become extraordinary.

In closing I read in the Sat. Holland Sentinel, a full-page article 'Reclaiming Jesus' with one of the original signers being our own Presiding Bishop- Michael Curry. I will post a copy out side Father Cory's office. This is what hope and life look like in ordinary or any other time.

Extraordinary!