Ordinary Time

Anyone mowing their lawn this summer is given a clue as to what is symbolised by the use of green in church. Green is the prevalent colour of nature when everything is growing and flourishing as it should. And as green is the most common colour in nature so the church uses green for what is called ‘Ordinary Time’.

The term ‘Ordinary Time’ came into use in the Church in the 1970s as a way of describing time that was not penitential or festive. Many sources suggest that Ordinary Time is derived from the word *ordinal*, meaning "numbered," since the Sundays of Ordinary Time, as in other seasons, are ordered numerically. So Ordinary time does not need to be "ordinary," and is not somehow a "break" from the Liturgical Year. The opposite is actually true: Ordinary Time celebrates the mystery of Christ in all its aspects.

Ordinary Time, symbolised by the colour green, should be a time of growth in faith, and just as grass, trees or other plants need water and other nurture if they are to show healthy green growth, so our faith needs the nurture of prayer and worship if it is to flourish. And just as growth in nature happens slowly so we must not expect instant results in our life of prayer, and by results I mean growth in holiness.

All time, we believe, belongs to God, and yet God has made for us a world to live in that changes with the seasons. There is a natural rhythm to life that is reflected in the Church calendar, and which finds expression in the colours used.