

Dear Friends,

Now that the Christmas season is over, we have entered into another season known as “Ordinary Time.” There is nothing fancy or flashy about this season. It is ordinary. Things return to normal again. Green is the color of this season, which is nice because it’s so cold and snowy outside. Green is at least a symbolic promise of warmer days to come.

I want to write about the first reading for Monday of the first week of Ordinary Time, Hebrews 1:1–6, because it has an extraordinary message about Jesus Christ, and his purpose in coming into the world. Here are the first three verses of that passage.

Brothers and sisters:

*In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways
to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he spoke to us through the Son,
whom he made heir of all things
and through whom he created the universe,*

*who is the **refulgence** of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.*

As you can see, I have bolded the word “refulgence.” This is not a word we see very often. The word refulgent is a Latin word dating back to the 16th Century that means to flash back, or shine brightly.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds his readers that during the Old Testament times God spoke only in partial ways to the prophets, because that was the only way people could understand the message. When a message is filtered through other people, it always gets changed a little bit. Something gets lost in the translation.

Jesus is, however, the true revelation of God’s presence in the world. His life reflects in a powerful way the brightness of God’s loving presence in the world. It is akin to watching a child grow up and seeing how much that child reflects images of what is seen in her parents.

Obviously I don't know what it would be like for a parent to raise children. I can only imagine that there are qualities parents hope their children will adopt, and qualities they hope won't be part of their children's lives. As I get older, though, I slowly discover how much I am like my parents. I see images of their goodness, their personality traits and mannerisms. Some of these qualities I didn't always like very much growing up and now have to accept as part of me. These qualities are so much a part of my life they help to define who I am. I am, so to speak, the refulgence of my parents. My life reflects the imprint of their lives. That's the way life works.

On a deeper, spiritual level, our lives also reflect the life of Christ present in the world. We are the refulgence of God's glory in a world that needs to see the light of hope, the light of joy, the light of eternal salvation.

When we look at life from that perspective there is nothing ordinary about these days. We are in Ordinary Time. However, these are extraordinary times we live in right now and in all the hurry of work, the changes going on in our culture, the struggles of being involved in a difficult war and the pains of economic strife, we reflect the glory of God who is intimately present in us. And that is very good news.

We have to look deeply into our lives to discover the divine qualities God has given to us. They are there. We are the refulgence of God's glory in the world. We reflect brightly his presence in the world. There's nothing ordinary about that.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel