

To me, February has always seemed like the longest month of the year. I know it has the least amount of days and the daylight is getting longer, but it always seems like the coldest and darkest and longest time of the year.

Granted, maybe Southport will be different (after all, this is the furthest south I've ever lived), but I'm not really looking forward to February.

Recently, though, a friend reminded me that this is also the best month for anticipation. The kind of anticipation that makes "waiting" seem more like a **good** thing.

Waiting for spring and flowers.

Waiting for fresh produce to return to the farmer's market.

Waiting for warmer weather and sunnier days.

And waiting for Lent to begin.

This year, Easter is towards the end of possible Easter dates, which means Ash Wednesday isn't until March. As a result, we get all of February to continue through the liturgical season of "Ordinary Time"—time when the altar is dressed in green.

Ordinary time is not named for the ordinariness of the time of year. Instead, it is named for the Latin term *ordinalis*, meaning numbered series. Ordinary time is the weeks that are numbered, and it is when we, as the church, live out our ordered lives—the times when we are neither feasting (like Christmas and Easter time) nor fasting (like during Advent and Lent).

Instead, Ordinary time is about watchfulness and expectation—specifically for the Second Coming of Christ.

For me, I'll also be watching for those first signs of spring, with the expectation that those signs will come earlier than I'm used to (certainly earlier than in Chicago, where it snowed at the end of April!)

I'll also be watching for those signs of growth in the parish—signs of spiritual growth, as we get ready for what comes next: the season of Lent—of penitence and "spring cleaning" of the spaces not just around us but also inside of us.

And I'll be wearing green at the altar, to indicate the growth and life that is the Church, even in these "ordinary times" of no feasting and no fasting.

Hopefully, I'll see you there, in the church pews, enjoying these ordered weeks, and also, out, in town, living our ordinary lives as Christians (or as ordinary as we can be, considering all that is going on around us). As we all wait and watch, in anticipation, of what God has planned for each of us.