**Being Ordinary**

**While it takes courage to achieve greatness, it takes more courage to find fulfillment in being ordinary. There are no managers or agents to pave the way. Instead, we are on individual quests for what is ultimately satisfying in life. Every now and then, those quests produce quite a surprise. For the joys that last have little relationship to achievement, to standing one step higher on the victory platform. The sun rises and sets in glorious color over every square inch of the earth, in full view of every living creature. You don't have to jump higher than anyone else to see it. What is the adventure in being ordinary? It is daring to love just for the pleasure of giving it away. It is venturing to give new life and to nurture it to maturity. It is working hard for the pure joy of being tired at the end of the day. It is caring and sharing and giving and loving, because we trust our ordinary lives in the hands of an extraordinary God. There are no Oscars or medals awarded for any of these pursuits. But then, no piece of gold or bronze statuette can sum up their worth. *(Marilyn Thomsen, in Signs of the Times)***

**Be regular and ordinary in your life, like a bourgeois, so that you may be violent and original in your work. *(Gustave Flaubert)***

**I claim to be no more than an average person with less than average ability. I have not the shadow of a doubt that anyone can achieve what I have, if that person would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. *(Mahatma Gandhi, in his autobiography)***

**It’s the common man who keeps the wheels turning, but let’s not forget that it was the uncommon man who invented the wheel. *(Don Fraser, in Denton, Texas, Record-Chronicle)***

**And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad. *(C. S. Lewis)***

**It is extraordinary how extraordinary the ordinary person is. *(George F. Will, Washington Post Writers Group)***

**The people of Eastern Europe were looking for freedom -- not nobility -- when they took to the streets. That freedom includes the freedom to be ordinary -- to live and love, raise families and go to work, grow flowers and read novels -- to do all the things that people choose to do when they are left alone to choose. Human life and human longings are precious. And, contrary to the caricature of capitalism retailed on the nation's opinion pages, those longings include more than the desire for blue jeans and consumer electronics. Religion, art and science flourish best in a free society. *(Virginia I. Postrel, in Reason)***

**There are no great men, only great challenges that ordinary men are forced by circumstances to meet. *(Admiral William F. Halsey)***

**The name Hollywood, California, is famous all over the world – but Hollywood got its name in a very ordinary way. According to the Smithsonian News Service, when Hollywood was settled in 1887, two people who moved there were Mr. and Mrs. Horace Wilcot. One day, Mr. Wilcot planted some holly bushes – and Mrs. Wilcot then named the area “Hollywood.” Little could they have known then that the name “Hollywood” would become known just about everywhere. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 54)**

**I can't believe that God put us on this earth to be ordinary. (Lou Holtz, the only coach in college football history to lead six different teams to bowl games)**

After physicist Richard Feynman won a Nobel Prize for his work, he visited his old high school. While there, he decided to look up his records. He was surprised to find that his grades were not as good as he had remembered them. And he got a kick out of the fact that his IQ was 124, not much above average. Dr. Feynman said that winning the Nobel Prize was one thing, but to win it with an IQ of only 124 was really something. Most of us would agree because we all assume that the winners of Nobel prizes have exceptionally high IQs. If Feynman had known he was really just a bit above average in the IQ department, would he have had the audacity to launch the unique and creative research experiments that would eventually win him the greatest recognition the scientific community can give? Perhaps not. Maybe the knowledge that he was a cut above average, but not in the genius category, would have influenced what he tried to achieve. After all, from childhood most of us have been led to believe that ordinary people don’t accomplish extraordinary feats. Most of us fall short of our potential because of little things we know or assume about ourselves. And the most self-defeating assumption of all is that we are just like everyone else. *(The Best of BITS & PIECES, p. 10)*

**Roger Cardinal Mahony of the Los Angeles archdiocese has been phenomenally successful in prying money from the wealthy to fund an educational project for minorities. But the cardinal is not to the manner born. Under his white Roman collar lies a blue one. Mahony’s father worked two jobs to feed his family during the Depression. “We were poultry farmers. Feeding chickens and scraping droppings is part of my background,” Mahony says. “I’m still somewhat astounded at my elevation to cardinal, but I think it reflects how Jesus in the Gospel chose ordinary people to do his work.” *(John Peer Nugent, in Los Angeles Magazine)***

**Upper classes are a nation's past; the middle class is its future. *(Ayn Rand)*Ordinary people, extraordinary products:**

**Brillo pad – invented by costume-jewelry maker**

**Crock-Pot – by an engineer**

**Cardboard milk carton – by a toy-factory owner**

**Bread-slicing machine – by a jeweler**

**Food blender – by a drugstore owner**

**Saran Wrap – accidentally, by a Dow Chemical lab worker.**

***(World Features Syndicate)***

**“The best things in life are nearest: Breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life’s plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.” He portrays contentment with the simple and ordinary. But what about the experiences that are “downers”? *(Robert Louis Stevenson)***

**I do not want to be presented as some deity. I would like to be remembered as an ordinary human being with virtues and vices. *(Nelson Mandela, in Reader's Digest)***

**The simplest and most effective way to sanctity is to disappear into the background of ordinary everyday routine. *(Thomas Merton)***

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