



## THE TIME WE'RE GIVEN

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This summer I was given the difficult task of leading a CrossRoad session on the topic of “sanctification of time.” Why was it so difficult? Even though sanctification of time is a beautiful topic, I realized I didn’t have great answers to key questions: How do I spend my time? Do I manage my time well? Do I waste my time and if so, in what ways? *Am I sanctifying my time?*

In reading on the topic, a clear common theme arose: what we value most in life should be the guiding force that drives *the way* we spend our time and *with whom* we spend our time. This may seem obvious. However, when I sat down to identify my values and priorities, I was shocked to realize that much of my time was spent on things I do not value: Facebook/Instagram-scrolling, Netflix-bingeing, getting frustrated about things I can’t control like people who cut me off while I’m driving, or just going through the motions of my job without remembering there’s a person on the other end of that email, or a student is yearning for a conversation. My time was not spent taking moments to make that extra phone call to a dear friend I haven’t spoken to in a while, or journaling and reading at the end of the day; things that have always been life-giving for me. In confronting these realities, I was comforted by the

lessons I learned from our Orthodox faith’s perspective on time.

The Church gives us a beautiful example of how we can re-focus and sanctify our time through our liturgical life. The liturgical calendar shows us the event, person, and moment that should stand at the very heart of our time—our Lord’s Pascha. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes, “Pascha is always the end and always the beginning. We are always living *after* Pascha, and we are always going *toward* Pascha.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Church organizes its entire liturgical cycle around the first and most important event and the first and most important Person. It is because of this Person and this event that our lives take on new meaning and purpose. In Schmemmann’s words, “We are no longer people living in meaningless time that leads us to a meaningless end. We are not only given a new meaning in life, but even death has acquired new significance.”<sup>2</sup> Because of this, we know that *the way we spend our time here on earth matters.*

What if we really understood our time through that lens? What if, instead of either wasting time, or

1 Schmemmann, Fr. Alexander. *Liturgy and Life: Christian Development Through Liturgical Experience*. Dept. of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America. 1993.

2 Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*.

viewing other people/tasks as interferences with *our* time, we began with the assertion that, as Dr. Rossi says, “time is not our own...Christ is everything, including the giver and owner of our time. He is the Way we format our schedule, the Truth about the meaning of time, and the flow of Life that moves us through time.”<sup>3</sup> What if we looked at the way the Church structures its time and used it as a model for how we explore our own use of time?

While this topic was hard for me to explore, I am forever grateful for the task because it gave me an opportunity to ask myself: what event, person/people, belief, value, etc., guides the entire rest of my year, month, day, minute, in the way the Church allows Pascha to? Undoubtedly, Christ stands at the center of this because I know that *how I spend my time is either bringing me closer to Him or pulling me away from Him.*

Now I pause and ask myself: how can I sanctify my time so that it is spent focused on what I value most. This is not just a lofty goal; it is a hard reality. I am striving to “take the time, which is part of the natural creation, set it apart from earthly matters, make it holy, and offer it back to God through a life well pleasing to Him.”<sup>4</sup> Through this, I’ve discovered that there are ways to sanctify even the most mundane tasks of life; there are ways to sanctify our conversations, emails, morning routine, exercise, and friendships.

I came to the conclusion that the way we sanctify our time looks different for everyone, but it begins by taking a hard look at how we really spend our time and reflecting on concrete ways we can sanctify it. For me this meant I needed to:

- A. Identify the priorities, goals, and guiding principles of life, starting with Christ at the center
- B. View the present moment as a Sacrament (Read Dr. Rossi’s *Becoming a Healing Presence* to learn more!)
- C. Participate in the life of the Church more intentionally
- D. Remember that: “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”<sup>5</sup>
- E. Exercise mind and body—e.g., Reading more, exercising on a regular basis, keeping up to date with current events, etc.
- F. Acknowledge the ways in which I waste my time; write down all the things I wish I could do if I had more time...then swap!!
- G. Reflect on the moments, people, conversations, and places where time has been sanctified. MULTIPLY THESE!
- H. Find time to be still

I say all of this because *the way we spend our time does matter.* God calls us to be faithful servants of our time, talent, and treasure. Ineffective use of our time can frustrate or even inhibit us from being our most authentic selves—people made in the image and likeness of God. Sanctifying our time allows us to become people of integrity who make good decisions based on what we value. Ultimately, when we fix our hope on Christ’s Passion and Resurrection in the time we’ve been given, we allow time itself and our lives to become sanctified.

3 <http://www.pravmir.com/time-management-an-orthodox-perspective/>

4 <http://becomeorthodox.org/the-sanctification-of-time/>

5 <http://www.businessinsider.com/jim-rohn- youre-the- average-of- the-five- people-you-spend- the-most- time-with- 2012-7>