

THE CHURCH PRAYS WITHOUT CEASING

All Time is Holy

Session Seven



Objective: To give the participants an understanding of:

1. Time is a gift from God who lives 'out of time'
2. Prayer happening somewhere at every moment of the day
3. The Liturgical, Festal and Church cycles

The object of this lesson is to realize that our time is a great gift from God, who exists outside of time. The purpose isn't to memorize cycles or names of services, but to understand how the knowledge that they are happening can help us pray without ceasing.

Items Needed: workbooks, pencils, bibles, lined paper, prize for the Time Schedule Game winner (suggestion for this prize listed at the end of the session.)

Items in [\(blue\)](#) are notes for the Session Leader.
The symbol "→" indicates a question for the students.

Pre-Session Preparation: Undertake to do one of these two things:

1. If you have any clocks in your rooms take them down and do not replace them with anything.
2. Replace any clocks in the room with an inexpensive clock, from which you have removed the hands.

As participants enter the room, ask them to remove any watches or cell phones they have with them. Put them in a container and assure them that they will be returned after the event.

Explain that you will be intermittently asking them what time they think it is. You will have to keep track of the time on your master sheet. At the end of the lesson you will discuss who won and the concept of time.

Begin the session with the prayer of the Hours (below):

You who at every season and every hour, in Heaven and on earth are worshipped and glorified, O Christ God; long-suffering, merciful and compassionate; Who love the just and shows mercy upon the sinner; Who calls all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come. O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications, and direct our lives according to Your commandments.

Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Correct our minds; cleanse our thoughts; and deliver us from all tribulations, evil, and distress. Surround us with Your holy angels; that, guided and guarded by them, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and unto the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory. For You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

God lives in eternal time...the past, the present, the future, all are His, without passing away or being used up as our earthly time is. This is a very confusing idea for us, but all we need to understand is that, in God's hands, it makes sense and that we were created to be a part of this eternal life.

We know that we all are given time to live on earth. (It's much easier for us to understand this time: yesterday is gone, today is happening, and tomorrow will be here!) This time is one of God's most precious gifts to us, but we must remember that even though it is given to us to use, it still belongs to Him. Using our time in a way that is pleasing to God is one way that we pray without ceasing.

The Church helps us to understand that the gift of time is holy by dedicating special prayers and services to our hours and days. Our whole year follows a *cycle* of Feasts and fasts that help us live the important events in the life of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Most of us, and even most of our parishes, can't fully follow the daily cycle of prayer; we rely on monasteries to pray these services for us. We usually can, and should, try to follow the yearly cycle. When these Feasts come on days when we have work and school, we can ask our parish priest to help us find ways to celebrate them at home.

As we grow, we learn that certain times and certain places call for certain kinds of behavior. You don't act the same way in your classrooms as you do at a ball game. You don't act the same in church as you do hanging out at your best friend's house. You've learned this over the years, and now it comes naturally to you (well, maybe you still have to work at it a little bit!)

Learning about the yearly, weekly and daily cycles of the Church should help us to remember that all of our time is holy...whether we are using it to work, eat, study, play, sleep, or pray. As we think about this, it becomes much easier for us to try to behave as God wants us to: showing our love for Him by caring about others, sharing our talents, always doing the best we can, respecting His creation. As this behavior starts to come naturally to us, we'll find ourselves getting closer to praying without ceasing!



The Daily Cycle (the Daily Office)

During the time of the New Testament, a day was divided into eight equal parts which matched the guard duties, or "watches," of Roman soldiers; each watch was three hours long. Starting at 6:00 a.m., the start of the day, these watches were called:

Watch of the 1st Hour - 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.
Watch of the 3rd Hour - 9 a.m. to noon
Watch of the 6th Hour - noon to 3 p.m.
Watch of the 9th Hour - 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Evening Watch - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Midnight Watch - 9 p.m. to midnight
Cockcrow Watch - midnight to 3 a.m.
Morning Watch - 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.

These watches and hours are mentioned many times in the Bible. Read Mark 13:35

→ What times are mentioned? ([Evening, Midnight, Cockcrow, and Morning](#))

→ Can you figure out at about what time Jesus died? (Matt 27:45-50) ([9th Hour](#))

→ At about what time did the Holy Spirit descend on the Apostles? (Acts 2:15) ([3rd Hour](#))

This table shows how the Roman watches and hours came to match the daily cycle of prayer. (Over the years, times have been shifted a bit and some services may be combined)

→ How many of these have you heard of? Have you participated in any?

| <i>Ancient Roman "Watch"</i> | <i>Our Modern Time</i> | <i>Liturgical Service</i> | <i>Theme</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Evening Watch | 6 - 9 p.m. | Vespers Complines | Creation/the Fall Start of new day |
| Midnight Watch | 9 p.m. - midnight | Nocturnes | |
| Cockcrow Watch | midnight - 3 a.m. | Midnight | The Resurrection |
| Morning Watch | 3 - 6 a.m. | Matins | Preparing ourselves for Christ |
| 1 st Hour | 6 - 9 a.m. | First Hour | the prayer of sunrise |
| 3 rd Hour | 9 - 12 a.m. | Third Hour | Descent of the Holy Spirit |
| 6 th Hour | noon - 3 p.m. | Sixth Hour | Christ's Passion/ Crucifixion |
| 9 th Hour | 3 - 6 p.m. | Ninth Hour | The Death of Christ |

(The Divine Liturgy is *not* considered part of the daily cycle because it goes beyond time and connects us to the eternal. It can be, and in monasteries and large cathedrals, usually is celebrated every day and is usually served before the 6th Hour)

The Weekly Cycle

Just as every hour of the day is blessed with special prayers, every day of the week is dedicated to someone or something that helps us remember God's great love for us.

Sunday - *the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*

Every Sunday is a "little Pascha," a remembrance of the Resurrection. Each of the Tropars and Kondaks (special hymns) of the Divine Liturgy, teach about Christ's victory over death and His destruction of Hades. Pascha is the greatest Feast of the Church year; Sunday is the greatest day of the week. We must always try to keep this as the Lord's Day, attending Divine Liturgy and receiving Communion.

Monday - *the Angels*

On Monday, the Church asks us to remember the Bodiless Powers who serve God. We know many stories from Holy Scripture that tell us how angels give us important messages and protect us.

Tuesday - *the Prophets, especially John the Baptist*

When we say the Creed, we say that we believe that before Christ came to live on earth, the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets. The prophets tried to keep the Israelites true to God. They often *prophesied* the coming of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. Even though we read about his life in the New Testament, he is an Old Testament prophet because he died before the Resurrection.

Wednesday - *Judas' betrayal of Christ; a day of repentance and fasting*

Wednesday is the day that Judas betrayed Jesus to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver. Because this makes us remember the times we choose something above Christ, we fast as a sign of *repentance*.

Thursday - the Apostles, Church Fathers, and great Bishops, especially St. Nicholas

When the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles at Pentecost, the Holy Orthodox Church began. As the Church grew, the Apostles chose men to be bishops. Those men eventually chose others, and so on. All bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church today follow a line right back to the Apostles who lived with Jesus Christ. That's why we are "one holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church." We especially remember St. Nicholas, because he was a great Bishop who fought to keep the true teachings of the Church. We should always pray for our Bishops to have the strength of their spiritual forefathers to lead the Church wisely. Do you know the names of your Bishops? ([Review your Eparchial Bishop, Prime Hierarch, and Patriarch](#)).

Friday - Christ's suffering and crucifixion; a day of repentance and fasting

Friday is the day that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was crucified. Even as He suffered on the Cross, He showed His great love for man. For this reason we fast on Friday.

Saturday - the Theotokos, and all the Saints; Memorial Saturdays when we remember the those 'fallen asleep in the Lord' – the departed.

→ Do you remember why we pray to the Theotokos and the saints? ([Quickly review the last class if needed](#)). Saturday is when we also remember those who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

→ What do you think that means – 'fall asleep in the Lord'? ([This is a reference that our time on earth is over but we are not gone but asleep awaiting the second coming of Christ - when our bodies will be reunited with our souls at the great and fearsome judgment day](#)).



At this point review the day's work. Once you have reviewed the materials begin the craft. Explain that you are creating a Church Clock. Instead of numbers to tell the time you are using icons to depict different events with the Church year or week or day to remind them of what they could or should be praying for. You may provide different sets of the icons for the participants such as:

Take the time now to go over the Time Schedule Game. Complete your session with Silent Contemplation.

Silent Contemplation Time: Scripture Reading on Kindness - Titus 3:4-8.

Supplemental Materials (next page)

Time Schedule Game

You will be asked to estimate times throughout your session. When asked, write down the time that you think it is at that moment. The real times will be revealed at the end of the session.

Time One _____

Time Two _____

Time Three _____

Time Four _____

Time Five _____

Time Six _____

Time Seven _____

Time Eight _____

Time Nine _____

Time Ten _____