

Divine Liturgy – the one thing needful.
Any other time is like dying
Very Personal reflections.



[July 21, 2014](#)

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The best two days of the week are Thursday (when this essay was written, weekday liturgy was on Thursday. It is now on Monday, since at least 2018) and Sunday. I believe I am most alive, and doing my most important work on this earth on those two days – when I celebrate the liturgy.

I am finding that I have much more anticipation of the liturgy than I had earlier in my ministry. I am not sure why that is, but I think several things have contributed.

I have seen God's grace move through our parish after we started celebrating at least one weekday liturgy – we have been doing this for over two years. We have built a temple that we could not afford (and a rational, worldly man would say we cannot afford it even now), and I have noticed subtle, invisible things in my soul. I am not a better person, but I pray more, and the liturgy is an incredible consolation.

Building was tense, and keeping the building has its moments too. I should not be anxious! I am a Christian! But, the fact remains, that due to weak faith, I do get anxious. This anxiety is obliterated by the liturgy. Of course, it comes back, but the feeling (that is not the right word – I do not think there is a word) I had during the Liturgy remains.

I am a priest, and must pray for my flock, and anyone who "crosses my path". This I do, but prayer alone is very difficult. There are the inevitable "mind games". I know that the "effective prayer of a righteous man availeth much", but I am not righteous, and I "hear" the whispers of "Do not trouble the Master" (because I am sinful). Of course, through all of this I still pray, but I do not pray well.

I have the great privilege to be a priest of the Most-High God and when I serve the liturgy, I have great confidence in my prayers before the altar, God receives the prayers of his priests. I know that the wine and bread become the body and blood of Christ through my ministrations, and not in any way because of my virtue, and not any bit less than if St John Chrysostom was serving, because I know my pastoral supplications before the altar are received by God in the same way because He receives the prayers of his priests.

I have been reading books about and by Fr Silouan, Archimandrite Sophrony and Archimandrite Zacharias (three generations!) and have been deeply affected by many things in these books. Sometime I will find the quote, but I believe Fr Sophrony said that he only felt truly alive when he was celebrating the liturgy, and outside of the liturgy, he felt like he was dying. Fr Zacharias has described Fr Sophrony's zeal for the liturgy – a zeal much greater than my own - and this has also made a deep impression on me. I in my own sinful way, I have started thinking this way. So much of what I do daily is “dead” – mind wandering, wasting time, useless and stupid emotions of irritation, anxiety, anger, etc. – and even my prayer “in my closet” can often have little warmth, but during the liturgy I am in the presence of life and truly alive, and my prayer has life in it.

A pastor's life is filled with problems. Any psychological approach to them inevitably causes fatigue, fear, anxiety, confusion. Celebrating the liturgy is not a psychological solution, but a spiritual one (the idea of turning a psychological feeling into a spiritual one I have gleaned from Archimandrite Zacharias – and it deserves much attention). I am not confused when I celebrate the liturgy. I do not forget the problems, and for many of them, I still have no idea what to do, or remembering them causes a great emotional “sting” in my heart, but at no other time am I so sure that God will help me in all things, and help those I love and care for. I am never so happy as when I am praying for my loved ones during the liturgy!

So much of my time is wasted! I do not always pray well in the liturgy, but it is never a waste of time.

These are just a few of the reasons I can think of off the top of my head about what the liturgy means to me. At the beginning of the liturgy the priest announces the Kingdom ("Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages!") , and we enter it. What better place can we be or more important activity can we do?

I am convinced that I was born to serve the liturgy. I do not know why, and I do not do it well, but I am intensely grateful for the great blessing to do so.

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