

Making Coffee Hour “Holy Ground”

Strategies to Percolate a Life-giving Experience

by Fr Allan Boyd

The Orthodox faith loves having the holy occupy the ordinary. Why? Because when God, as spirit, sticks His finger into perishable matter...it makes it matter for eternity. Also because when we set ordinary things apart to God, for His purposes, we end up experiencing life in ways that make our life so much richer. It's there permeating all of our Church's feasts and celebrations: Christmas, Easter, the Baptism of Christ, and the Wedding Feast at Cana...all of them. But, most intimately for us, it happens every Sunday when we come to the chalice to partake of Christ's body and blood...making us mystically one flesh with Him. Everything in the Orthodox Christian Faith is about God's invitation to us to join with Him in helping to make holiness occupy the ordinary.



For us, that very reality is given its first opportunity to stand upon wobbly legs in our Coffee Hour. If we choose, we can make Coffee Hour more than just the afterthought of the worship service. Coffee Hour can become for us **the liturgy's reality test**...joining with God to make holiness occupy the ordinary. So how do we do that? It is done by first establishing in our minds, purposefully, that Coffee Hour must be set apart to accomplish God's will in our lives, building each other up in Him. What does that look like?

1. **Make Others Feel Welcome** – Put your first thoughts on meeting someone you've never met before, because often times you might even be helping to welcome a visitor to our parish. If it's a newcomer, ask questions like: What brought you here to us today? Where do you usually worship? And then listen. Ask follow-up questions and be interested in their replies. This is your way of saying "I heard you." Then introduce them to someone else. Circulate. Move. Make it a point to speak to at least five people each time. Really speak to them. The goal here is to embody the welcome and the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ into His realm...the heavenly kingdom. Become a movement of such love and watch how it transforms our Church into an ever increasing place of light.
2. **Season Your Conversation with Christ** – Weave the topic of that day's Sermon, Gospel Reading, Epistle Reading, or Daily Vitamin into your conversation. Ask each other what it made you think of...or if you would change any part of your life because of what you'd

read or heard that day. Ask each other how it speaks to the things they struggle with daily. The conversation and its depth **are up to us**, not “them,” whoever “they” are. It’s we who can make the conversation crackle with life. It’s we who can widen the circle and magnetize the crowd. What makes a coffee hour shine is YOU...having a great time sharing your experience of the liturgy, extending your joy to others, helping them to see how our faith speaks to each other’s struggles in meaningful ways, building upon the art of Christ Centered Fellowship....which is where we find communion.

3. **Eliminate Gossip from Your Coffee Hour Experience** – What is gossip? Gossip is unconstrained reports about other people, often times offering up details that are meant to create scandal. Gossipers often have the goal of exalting themselves as repositories of knowledge by making others look bad. Gossipers speak of the faults and failings of others, or sometimes reveal potentially embarrassing or shameful details regarding the lives of others without their knowledge or approval. Even if they mean no harm, it’s still gossip. Throughout the scriptures we learn that gossip is a practice condemned by God. Why would God condemn it? Because ultimately it is used to tear down others...whereas God is concerned with loving and building others up. If you come upon a conversation that includes gossip, do your best to change the subject to something more wholesome (as found above in #1 & #2). If the speaker can’t be drawn into a more beautiful dialogue, grab up whoever else might be there at that table and escort them over to a table with a healthier conversation, leaving the speaker to the natural consequence of such behavior...separation. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us LOVE one another...for love is of God. Coffee Hour is a Gossip Free Zone!

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Little by little, Sunday by Sunday, if we make conscious, purposeful efforts to guide our Coffee Hour towards God’s will, we will find that from that Holy Ground, a wonderful fruit will be born forth. We will leave this place each Sunday, understanding that we’ve done something meaningful for our lives and for the lives of others, and we will build the skills we need to join with God in occupying the other ordinary things in our lives with the holy.