

The one piece of advice that college students hear the most often is the need to develop efficient time management skills. Moreover, as Orthodox Christian students, the challenge to properly establish these skills is compounded by the priorities of our spiritual tasks and our services at the churches we attend on a weekly basis. With these multitude of responsibilities the question arises, “How can I effectively implement Christ into my life to the fullest extent while also allocating enough time for everything else?” This question can only be answered when breaking it down into further components.

The first component is understanding what ‘everything else’ means to me. The best examples to look to are ones presented to us by Christ himself and what better scenario than that of Mary and Martha. We see through this story that Christ gives the greatest piece of advice we all continually overlook. We have been accustomed to focusing on why Martha was reprimanded by Christ for trying to serve him but fail to focus on “Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). The key to initially setting our priorities in Christ is not what service or task is more meaningful or what service will help more people; it is what service is the most beneficial for my spiritual life. Saint Augustine explains that the first thing we ought to notice is that Christ never told Martha to leave her service nor did he tell her that her service was a waste of time. Christ only spoke to Martha when she began to complain that her sister Mary was not serving along with her. Additionally, Christ only speaks of Mary when he explains that she has chosen what is specifically beneficial for her.

When arranging priorities especially with activities pertaining to our spiritual lives, we need to evaluate the part “which will not be taken away” from me. Christ again never tells Martha that she is doing anything wrong but that Mary’s choice should not be ridiculed because it is what is best for her. Likewise we need to understand that simply because everyone else does this service or attends this meeting and I can not because of a hindrance in time does not mean that I am failing at incorporating Christ into my day. Of course these decisions of what is more beneficial relies on listening to the voice of God (last article hehe). “A man’s heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps” Proverbs 16:9. Once I understand what things are beneficial and should be on my list of priorities, I can move on to how to properly order them in my life.

The second component of the aforementioned question and a struggle that most of us face is the issue of ‘time.’ The error that we commit is that we attempt to fit Christ into very specific parts of our day. The gravest transgression is that we measure our own virtue by time when we are trying to get closer to a God who is beyond time itself. We concern ourselves with numbers such as how many days in a row I was able to pray or how many weeks I successfully fasted Wednesdays and Fridays. In “The Life of Saint Anthony”, Saint Athanasius says of Saint Anthony the Great, “He at least gave no

thought to the past, but day by day, as if he were at the beginning of his discipline, applied greater pains for advancement.” We see here that Saint Anthony is not concerned about how he will fit Christ into a daily routine but rather focused on how he can apply the teachings of Christ at all times throughout the day. Similarly we need to concern ourselves more with Proverbs 27:1 (“Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth”) and not our past accomplishments or achievements when seeking to build Christ into our daily lives. It is important to note that a routine is not a bad thing and can be exceedingly helpful. However, that routine is the minimum. It is how I make sure I do not neglect God all together. What we should strive for, however, is to make Christ a part of every moment of my day.

There are many methods that have been taught when attempting to order our priorities. Setting our assignments into categories such as urgent or important or both is an extremely beneficial exercise. The problem is that as college students we already understand that our spiritual life is important but our failure to realize that it is urgent paralyzes us and makes us unable to make serious decisions that can boost our relationship with God. We often neglect that Christ is far above all our priorities that He encompasses them all and that without Him we cannot arrange our other obligations. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34).