

KEEP YOUR TEENS

ENGAGED *in the* DIVINE LITURGY



BROUGHT TO YOU BY

— *the* —
**RELATIONSHIP
PROJECT**



YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE

You know all those things that everyone does, but no one talks about, and we think we're the only ones who do them? For example, when you spell the word Wednesday, do you find yourself spelling in your head *Wed-ness-day*? Yeah, we do too. Or how about this? Do you ever listen to a song on repeat just so that you could memorize a tricky section, in case it comes on around friends? We totally do that. Ok, last one. Do you ever stand in church, and all of a sudden have no idea how it's already at a certain part in the service? You find yourself zoned out, and thinking about other things, like, oh say, lunch.

You're not the only one.

You're a teenager. It's totally normal to think about many things, and often at the same time! This can be especially true during Church, when maybe we don't fully understand what's happening in the service.

Here are five ways to help you find focus during what is undeniably the most important hour in your week.

“If you do not feel like praying then force yourself. The Holy Fathers say that prayer with force is higher than prayer unforced. You do not want to, but force yourself. The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force (Matthew 11:12).”

-ST. AMBROSE OF OPTINA



5 WAYS TO BRING YOUR FAITH TO LIFE IN CHURCH

From least to most important, here we go!

#5. Choose your seat wisely.

For lots of us, in the Church, we like to sit in the same place, every week during Liturgy or other Holy services. There's just something to be said for familiarity.

For many of you, you probably sit wherever your families have always sat. It's just what happens.

But maybe, that spot may come with a ton of distractions. There's the one uncle who never stops talking. There are the people in front of you that have triplets who run around throwing goldfish. Maybe you're so far back that you can't see anything happening in the service.

Whatever the case, finding a seat to help you stay engaged is a great way to bring your faith to life.

Action Item: Consider asking your parents or guardians to let you choose where your family will sit one week. They will be thrilled you're taking initiative in your participation in Church life.

#4. Take a breath before you walk into the church.

If your family is like a lot of families, getting out the door and to church on time each Sunday can feel like climbing Mount Everest. In all the hustle and bustle, it's common for many of us to be racing in to church, still feeling that frenzy.

Action Item: Consider grounding yourself by stopping to take a deep breath, and even to look up and around before you walk through the front doors of the church. This is a special place. And you've been invited here by God, Himself.

Stop again and take a breath as you bow down before the icon at the entrance.

Take one more when you enter your pew and grab your seat.

The simple act of a deep breath helps us center ourselves before the iconostas. This allows us to more easily clear our minds as we begin the Liturgy, or the work of the people.

#3. Read *The Prayer Before Entering the Church.*

This beautiful and simple prayer is in almost every service book in the Orthodox Church. It is a powerful tool to focus our minds on the work that lies before us.

Action Item: Read the prayer below before entering the worship space (in the Orthodox Church we call this the nave.)

“I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy, and in fear I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before me, that with a clear mind I may glorify You forever, One Divine Power worshiped in three person; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.”

#2. Recognize that what we feed, we crave.

If you aren't spending time reading Scripture, or engaging in private prayer during the week, it will be hard to jump into a deep conversation with God on a Sunday. Think of it like this, if you want to run a 10k, or play a Beethoven sonata, or create an artistic masterpiece, your journey will be greater through practice and investment.

The same is true for the Divine services.

If you spend your week focused on God, spending an hour on Sundays focusing on Him will be a natural extension of that. It makes staying less distracted way easier.

Action Item: Consider setting aside ten minutes each morning or evening (or both!) to read the daily verses from an app like Ancient Faith Radio, or try one of the Daily Reading apps from the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America or the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America.

#1. Lay aside all earthly cares.

Just for that one-hour and few minutes, engage in a battle of will. In other words, force yourself. Fight inclinations to give in to distraction. If you find your mind has wandered, don't give in to it! Make every effort to constantly come back to the silent, inner peace that is found in the services of the Church.

Action Item: Utilize one of the many service books available to follow along with the services and keep your mind attentive and engaged.

It takes effort to keep the mind from wandering. But take comfort. Just like spelling Wed-ness-day, you're not alone in the struggle.