

An Hour of Ordinary Time

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

It is not a holiday – civil or liturgical. Yet, it is one of my favorite days of the year. It is the day that we “spring forward” and set our clocks ahead an hour so that the evening darkness falls later and the close of the day starts to feel like summer once again.

This year was no exception. I was eager to spring forward – perhaps more so than usual. Yet, the “springing forward,” by definition, meant losing an hour of time. It brought one less hour of sleep and a day in which I – temporarily – felt deprived of an hour of life.

I notice an hour when the vagaries of the calendar snatch it from me when I change my clocks. Yet, most of the time, I can easily let hours slip by, spent or wasted, without really noticing the importance of each irreplaceable hour.

Yet, in a single hour, so much can happen.

In an hour of conversation, two old friends can have a fight that tears them apart and two old enemies can have a reconciliation that brings them, at long last, together again.

In an hour at bedtime, a grandparent can read a story that becomes a child’s deeply cherished memory, and a child can say “I love you” to a grandparent in a way that also becomes a deeply cherished memory.

In an hour of prayer on a Sunday morning – or any random weekday – the celebration of Mass brings souls both weary and joyful to the presence of God in an irreplaceable way.

In an hour of special joy, two people may join their separate lives in the celebration of their marriage, starting the hour as two and ending it as one.

In an hour at a wake or funeral, one friend can console another with words of comfort or with the silence of loving concern.

In an hour of a school day, a bully’s harsh words can inflict a hard-to-heal scar, a teacher’s encouragement can set the trajectory of a student’s life, and a powerful book read can open up a whole new world.

In an hour of walking, chance encounters with neighbors and friends can blossom unto meaningful conversations about life itself – and chance encounters with stray cats, spring tulips and vibrant birds are a glimpse of the wonders of creation.

In an hour in the still of a sleepless night, when a parent cradles a sleeping child, there is an irreplaceable glimpse into the all-consuming love of God. And, years later, in the still

of another sleepless night, when that child holds the hand of that parent in the hour before death, there is once again an irreplaceable glimpse into the divine.

In an hour spent writing a heartfelt note of thanks, love, apology or friendship, far flung hearts can be joined.

In an hour spent in utter silence alone with God, life's deepest questions may find answers – or life's most stubbornly held answers may find themselves questioned.

In an hour spent in selfishness, the chance to provide for another slips away or a bad decision hurts someone deeply vulnerable.

In an hour spent in holy sleep, the strength may come to face a new and difficult day.

In an hour filled with the most mundane of tasks – commuting to work, washing dinner dishes, paying bills, or studying for an exam – the dignity of work is lived out in all its many facets.

In an hour spent reconciling with God after a lifetime of sin and error, a soul can be reborn and made new and whole again.

In an hour spent around a dinner table, the nourishment on the plate is more than matched by the nourishment of soul and spirit that comes from a gathering of loved ones.

In an hour spent reading a beautiful poem, engrossed in a gripping novel, listening to great music, or admiring beautiful art, the great gift of human creativity and its link to the Creator of all is appreciated and savored.

All too often I can let hours slip by, unnoticed and unappreciated, until I lose one as I do when we spring forward. In a few weeks' time, when Holy Week comes, I will read the scripture in which Christ asks his nearest and dearest to spend "one hour" with Him in His time of greatest need. The gift of a lowly hour was Christ's last request to his loved ones on the eve of His death. If that does not remind me of the importance of an hour, very little will.

Now that I am settling into the longer evenings that I love, I know I will stop missing the hour lost in the springing forward. But, I hope I will not stop appreciating how important an hour is – and all that can happen in an hour lived well in ordinary time.

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