

**The Fruits of Prayer:
A Personal Prayer Story**

by Elisabeth

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(translated from French)

Hello. My name is Elisabeth. I'm married. I have four children and I'm a grandmother too. I live in the neighborhood very near the Carmelite Monastery.

I'm going to tell you my story to help you understand how I came to Carmelite silent prayer.

I grew up in a practicing Catholic family. I deepened my faith by attending retreats offered by the **Foyers of Charity** founded by **Marthe Robbins**.

When I married, my husband and I continued our spiritual walk with the **Word of Life** community, a **charismatic** community that allowed me to deepen my knowledge of the Word of God. We discovered the prayer of praise, the invocation of Holy Spirit and the prayer of the brothers.

I formed the **habit of daily prayer** using the daily readings. However, I didn't pray very long and stuck, basically, to the formula of "thank you," "forgive me," and very often, "would you please."

In that prayer time between the Lord and myself, I held a big place which I only now see in hindsight. I, basically, wanted God to follow my lead. I had my idea and the feeling of being in control.

At some point, I started coming to the monastery more and more frequently during the week. It led me to want to attend the beginner's class in the Carmelite **school of prayer** here at the monastery.

I started to use the Carmelite prayer, but in fact, not really. It was a last resort when I had the time. It wasn't my daily bread so to speak.

But, in 2015 **I fell ill**. At first, in the storm, I clung to the rosary. It was then that I realized how small and vulnerable I really was.

During the illness, it came to a point when I had no other choice but to let go. I wasn't able to do anything at all. It was then that I **called upon the Lord** to come and be with me. I can't explain it. Something happened. I had let go. I was completely alone before him in an isolation room. I didn't have my husband or children to pray with me, no group either. **I was naked before the Lord**. It was at this point that I realized that I was nothing. I asked the Lord to come and help me live out this trial. He came.

It seems to me that **silent prayer just happened naturally to enable me to maintain that state of surrender**. The weaker we are, the more necessary it is to let go. For me, to **let go and let God, is synonymous with silent prayer**.

Something snapped. I invited the Lord to come. I begged Him to give me strength and to transform me.

I realized that I didn't know how to love. Lord, teach me to love. I completely allowed myself to be taken over by the Lord; to be strengthened by Him.

Once I had regained my strength, I naturally wanted to take the **advanced prayer class**. I was greatly helped and able to overcome certain obstacles in silent prayer thanks sharing with other participants in the class.

At this point, I began to **practice silent prayer daily** because I came to the realization that I was **getting through my daily life thanks to silent prayer**.

I make myself practice at least twenty minutes daily at a minimum. But at this point, I often remain an hour or more in prayer as I find that the time passes quickly. I have so much in my head and for it all to settle down takes time.

I have a set time of prayer. In other words, since I live near the Carmelite friars, I pray the same time they do or at 5:45 in the morning.

I practice prayer either at home before the Merciful Christ of Saint Faustine or before the Lord at the monastery.

To begin my time of prayer, I **invite the Holy Spirit** to come. Sometimes I recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet before Christ. I like to start with a time of praise too, since I am small and the Lord is so immense. I just allow words of **praise** for the Lord to come. I don't have any pre-established formula.

I begin with praise and then I **talk to the Lord** about the state of my soul. For example, I simply tell Him how I feel. If I am sad, I tell Him so and ask Him to console me. If I am worried, I ask Him to reassure me. If I have a question, I ask Him to help me decide what to do.

Finally, as a woman, of course there are a lot of others that struggle with this too, but it was hard for me to tell myself to **stop talking** and to just sit there and **listen for the Lord**. I listen but I have to say that I don't hear much. It doesn't really matter though, because I am there to please the Lord.

In fact, I like to pray using **pictures or images** such as the elevator of Saint Therese of the Little Flower. That image really speaks to me and leads me to ask Jesus to **take me to the Father, lead me to His heart**.

But in reality though, I just try and be there in silence. If I think of someone, I offer him or her to the Lord. If I become **distracted**, I simply **come back to the Lord** saying something like, 'My Lord and my God;' or 'Jesus, Son of God have pity on me.'

If it is too difficult, I resort to a **text**. In the advanced class we studied the prayer of Saint Elisabeth of the Trinity. I'll use a line from her writings to **bring me back to the Christ**. Right now, I am discovering the Psalms. So, it could also be the Psalm of the day. I simply allow snippets of the Psalm to bubble up in me. I've noticed that my prayer has **evolved**. I would never have done that a year ago.

To **conclude** then, I finish with the prayer the Friars pray, the oldest prayer to Mary, the **Sub tuum praesidium**.

I was also asked to consider what the **fruits** of my prayer practice were. It is hard for me to talk about them. It seems it would be better for you to ask those closest to me if something has changed in me. I don't know.

Personally, the fact that I practice prayer has caused me to acquire the **reflex of asking Jesus** to be a part of my life even in the least important things. Here is a little example. I received a phone call from a friend asking me to go for a walk with her. Before answering, I quickly turned to the Lord and asked if it was to comfort her since she was ill, or was it a distraction?

I simply ask the Lord to **enlighten me**. These are things it seems, that **happen over time**. We end up giving everything to the Lord, asking Him to **enlighten us**. It seems I get right down to what is essential.

Today I feel that this helps me to establish my **priorities**. It is almost as if I am less self-centered, less self-consumed. I allow Him to take the **reins of my life**.

I ask His advice. I ask Him what to do. In fact, I am much freer. My 'yes' is 'yes' and my 'no,' 'no.' Since I have decided it with Him, I guess now it's up to Him to figure it out. It really sets me free.

It seems that it really helps me to live in the present moment. I stay out of the past and am not anticipating the future. My **preoccupation is how to live this present moment to the best of my ability**.

I ask the Lord to give me the **right attitude** with this or that person just for today. I can truly say that I feel more present in this present moment. I'm not so much lost in my imagination. I am better able to **live the difference between the ideal world that we would all like to have and reality**. I am better able to accept that **life is made up of simple, ordinary things** which enables me to do them better.

When I am in prayer, I listen for the Lord to speak. In reality, we say we don't hear anything, but that would be too easy if we did. What I do get though, is an intuitive thought. The answers I am seeking seem to come in the form of an intuitive thought such as 'do what you have to do' or 'take care of the little things. Don't complicate matters.'

I noticed that this allows me, especially when I receive communion afterwards to be present at Mass. It seems that silent prayer prepares me to receive the Eucharist. If I spend 15 or 20 minutes in prayer before communion, I don't experience communion in the same way.

On the other hand, if I just finished work or if I'm annoyed or irritated and realize it's time for Mass. I go, I'm there, but I'm there with all I have lived beforehand. There hasn't been a break to separate the world from Mass.

Silent prayer allows me to detach from all that and to prepare my heart to participate in the Eucharist and to receive Christ into my heart.

AMEN

