

Testimony

My name is Isabelle. I am married and I have 5 children. This is the third school of prayer that I am participating in. The first time it was for myself. The second and third times were to be of service by giving back a bit of what was given to me.

For the past thirty years, I have reflected on the following statement by Mart Robbins: 'A daily Mass goer is more likely to be in mortal sin than someone who practices silent prayer.'

This remark inspired me to start practicing silent prayer.

Like a lot of Christians, I have a heart to be sanctified to resemble Christ. When I started practicing silent prayer I realized that there was a lot of me whether it was while praying the Rosary or in adoration. I was taking up a lot of room, too much room. I wanted to act, to ask God for this or that. In fact, it was all about me. I came to understand that in silent prayer it is Jesus who comes and lives in me.

When I was journeying towards this heart to heart with the Lord, I was consecrated to the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

I then realized that a school of prayer gave me a format, a spark to bring about this good intention and to allow myself to be supported by others doing the same thing. It was a plus.

As for my daily practice, I usually pray in the morning. It's easier. I begin by invoking the Holy Spirit and the Saints mentioned in my readings for the day.

I count on my breathing to settle my body, to focus my imagination and to really be present.

If I am interrupted by a distraction I come back to my breathing and pray the Jesus prayer:

Lord, Son of the living God, have pity on me, a sinner.

Or this prayer by Cardinal Newman with each inhale and exhale of my breath:

Guide me Sweet Light through the darkness that surrounds me; Guide me Lord ever forward.

A Friends of Carmel group is a good way to meet monthly after this class to enhance your prayer life through texts taken from the writings of a Carmelite Saint. It was through this group that I discovered the prayer of Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity that I now use to begin almost every prayer time:

O! Trinity whom I adore help me to become utterly forgetful of myself so that I may establish myself in you, as changeless and calm as though my soul were already in eternity. Let nothing disturb my peace nor draw me forth from you, O my unchanging God but that at every moment I may penetrate more deeply into your mystery. Give peace to my soul and make it your heaven...Let me never leave you alone there...

This prayer helps me empty myself and open my heart. If a distraction emerges I look at the Crucifix or a picture I have of the heart of Jesus.

In short, silent prayer allows my conscience to breathe. It gives me an ever-deeper knowledge of myself and a peace that I miss when I can't find time to pray. Isabelle