

Testimony of my Prayer Life (10 minutes)

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St Nicholas of Flue (lay person, married and finally a hermit) said:

"God knows how to make prayer so sweet sometimes that one goes to prayer as if going to a dance, and at other times one goes to prayer as if going into combat."

So prayer can be either a dance or a combat. Let's take a closer look.

1/ Prayer as a dance...

Dancing is about moving in different ways (jumping, swinging, going round and round, etc.), and it requires rhythm; it's about trying to adapt to the Holy Spirit as well as to the reality of our lives.

My prayer life was not always focused on interior prayer. Prayer is much broader than just interior prayer. My prayer took **on many different forms and rhythms** depending on the periods of my life.

As my life progressed, my life of prayer adapted to my growth, my professional life and family commitments. Here are a few examples.

- **At 16, I had a unique spiritual experience.**

Shortly before my 16th birthday, when I was lost between faith and atheism, I had a unique spiritual experience while practicing charismatic prayer: My inner self was taken over; I realized that God **existed**, and that **He loved me**.

There was a before and an after; I had been in touch with someone, it was no longer an idea; it was now a Person. I didn't feel alone anymore. I had met Him. I bought a Bible and prayed before I went to bed at night. I would read one of the psalms, or ancestral prayers, prayed by Christ. They gave me the vocabulary necessary to engage in personal prayer.

- **At 21 years old**, I went on a retreat to discern my life's path, I discovered the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. This led me to discover prayer using the Word of God.

- **At 24, I got married**. Motherhood was for me an ordeal that led me into another form of prayer... I had a miscarriage and then a baby with problems, followed by an

even worse second birth: the prognosis was not good. My prayer life followed my exterior life. As my life became difficult, my prayer life did too. I could only pray the so-called Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner..." I was pumping milk 6 times a day to take to my baby in intensive care. Sometimes, I would put on Gregorio Allegri's "Miserere" (Ps 51) and pray with and through this music.

- Then, my life of prayer became daily, but my life of interior prayer did not. I worked it around my family, professional and personal life. I practiced interior prayer only several times a week between 1/2 hour and an hour.

- Finally, at age 55, last year, I took early retirement for health reasons. I had to reorganize myself before the Lord and figure out how I was going to live this new period of my life.... I went on a long retreat and a **rule of life emerged from it**: my life was now to be lived around prayer.

So prayer takes on multiple shapes and rhythms depending on the time of your life.

2/ **Prayer as a Combat** (or when difficulties are encountered)

So, let's take a look at prayer as a combat. Today, I will only address distractions.

As a mother, with a professional life, the pace can be hectic. Society pulls us outwards... These exterior obligations must not be an excuse for me to neglect my inner world or I will end up running out of spiritual breath. It is up to me to respect my desire for God, to trust Him, and to allow myself to respond to this call. It's important for me not to kill this desire, but to be vigilant in order to have inner peace... I have to listen for this call and take it into account. For it is the motor of my spiritual life. I didn't talk about lack of time, but only about distractions... because time is a choice. It's based on priorities. These priorities are established in response to my reality.

Conclusion: Tomas HALIK

Czech theologian and priest who was secretly ordained while living under communist rule.

"With communism, we really need courage; today in this time of liberal democracy, we need **wisdom, to discern** carefully.... And what makes this wisdom **and ability to discern** grow is **contemplation** (or a face to face with the Lord, interior prayer). » AMEN