

Thirty Minutes of Prayer?

How a priest learned to pray

“You need to give God thirty minutes each day.”

I sat there with the other new arrivals to the seminary, ready to begin studies for the priesthood. I was surprised. Our professors were telling us that, in addition to the hour of community prayer we had together throughout the day, we each needed to set aside a half hour of quiet time with the Lord. Wasn't an hour in the chapel enough, I thought?

Until that point, my prayer life wasn't very strong.

I would offer a small prayer as I rolled out of bed, thanking God for the new day, and a similar short prayer as I was about to go to sleep. I would offer little prayers from time to time during the day, thanking God or asking for help. But I had never developed the habit of giving a significant part of each day to God.

I decided to give it a try.

Even though I'm not a morning person, I went into the chapel half an hour before the morning prayer service began. I sat there quietly, saying hello to Jesus and talking to him about my experiences so far in the seminary. After a while, though, I started getting antsy. Surely the thirty minutes were almost up? It felt like I had been praying forever! But glancing at a clock, I saw that only five minutes had passed!

I kept showing up.

Our professors had told us that prayer would probably be tough at first, but it would get easier as we practiced. After a few weeks, ten or fifteen minutes would pass by before I started feeling antsy. Eventually, the entire half hour would start to pass by without me even realizing it. I discovered I was really starting to look forward to this daily prayer time, and when I missed it for some reason, I felt off all day long.

Now I can't imagine a life without daily prayer.

I have been trying to grow and deepen my daily prayer life ever since. I receive great peace from spending time with the Lord. If I wasn't being faithful to my daily prayer time, there's no way I could have strength for my ministry as a priest. I still need a lot of growth, and I still struggle with distractions, but I am so grateful for this daily time with Jesus.

“I wish I had started praying years ago!”

I hear things like this all the time as pastor of St. Peter's. As people begin a daily habit of prayer, they start to see the fruit in their lives and they wish they hadn't waited so long! Even if you start with 10-15 minutes of quiet time, I hope that you are giving God an opportunity to fill your heart in daily prayer!

