

The Prayer Philosophy of St Teresa of Avila
by Katie Warner

I love the prayer philosophy of Saint Teresa of Avila. It's pretty simple and yet so profound, "If you don't pray sometimes, you can't pray always."

The end goal in prayer is essentially to live our whole lives as a prayer to God. But as of right now, when it comes to our prayer lives, most of us probably fall somewhere in the middle. Somewhere between praying sometimes and praying always.

It kinda makes me laugh as myself sometimes when I get so caught up in living my whole life as a prayer, which is what saints do, and then look at my actual concrete day-to-day prayer life and discover that my little "sometimes" efforts to pray are pretty lousy at certain times. Then I remember Saint Teresa's philosophy and I try to refocus on the little but important efforts to pray in small ways. Which all eventually add up to constant life altering prayer.

Most of the prayer warriors I admire most are not prayer experts but they are remarkable in their conscious effort not to settle for a stagnant prayer life.

I recently heard a priest describe how most 50 year olds have the same prayer life they had as 8 year olds!

I want something more than that for God, for myself and for my family. So, I try to take greater notice of the importance of seizing many "sometimes" moments to pray in an effort to work toward the grand task of trying to live my whole life as a prayer to God.

Growing up I was fortunate to have parents who were powerful prayer models leading my sisters and me in prayer before my dad left for work and we rushed out to the bus stop every morning. It was not unusual to hear my dad say to an acquaintance over the phone, "Let's end in prayer." and to hear him ask the gentleman sitting next to him on an airplane, "Can I pray for you right now?"

My mom was a regular visitor to the adoration chapel and probably our family's most powerful earthly intercessor. Her prayer life characterized by beautiful humility and quiet strength stirred a great deal of admiration in me from a young age as it really occupied the central place in her life. She taught me to look at the crucifix in our home throughout the day, pray for a stranger in need when a siren

passed by, offering sufferings for a friend or family member battling illness and to give thanks for my many many blessings.

Most importantly, perhaps, my parents taught me how to talk to Jesus spontaneously and genuinely as my Father, God and greatest advocate. Along with modeling for me how to pray using the Bible and that arsenal of prayers given to us through the Church.

Even if you had a totally different upbringing in your prayer or no exposure to prayer at all in your home growing up, you can be the one that infuses prayer life into your family now. But it all begins by seizing as many of those “sometimes” moments to pray as you can and then gradually working your way toward praying always.