

Saint Oswald
Lived During 604–642 A.D.

A major shift in the spiritual life occurs when we stop doing prayer and start giving ourselves to prayer.

Giving yourself to prayer means showing up and letting God do what he wants to do with you during that time of prayer. It means letting go of expectations and agendas for our time with God. It means detachment from the feelings that prayer provokes within us.

This shift requires us to surrender to the experience and to believe that God is working in us even when it feels like we are not accomplishing anything. It is about enjoying some carefree timelessness with God.

Saint Oswald spent his youth in exile among Irish and Scottish monks, where he learned to give himself to prayer. It ended up being the most important period in his life, even before he became the most powerful king of Britain.

Born around 604 AD into the royal line of Northumbria (one of the kingdoms of medieval England), Oswald's early life was marked by tumult after the death of his father, King Æthelfrith. Threatened by rival kings, Oswald sought refuge among the Scottish and Irish monks on the island of Iona.

During his time in Iona, Oswald not only converted to Christianity, but fell in love with Catholic spirituality. The monks, living under the rule of Saint Columba, practiced a form of Catholicism deeply rooted in prayer, meditation, and community life. Every day, Oswald watched monks give themselves totally to prayer whether or not it was convenient, simply because they loved God. And Oswald did the same. He gave himself to prayer.

When Oswald reached the age of 30, it was time to fulfill his duty to family and reclaim the English throne. He led an army into battle in 634 AD, and was victorious. One of his first acts as king was to invite Aidan, a monk from Iona, to establish a monastery there. This monastery played a major role in the conversion of England.

Oswald never stopped giving himself to prayer, not even as he died. While defending his people in the Battle of Maserfield against pagan invaders, he was struck down. As enemy soldiers closed in on him, he started praying for their souls. His final breath was a prayer.

Saint Oswald knew what it meant to give yourself to prayer.

The shift from doing prayer to giving ourselves to prayer may seem subtle, but the reality is, this is one of the most significant inner changes that can take place in our souls.

Give yourself to prayer. Start today.