

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His peace!

There is an adage that states: *Familiarity breeds contempt*. In most cases I truly believe that it is not so much contempt, as indifference. The more familiar we are with people, the more often we take them for granted. We take their constant presence, their ready availability, their goodness to us, their concern for us, their prudent advice, and so forth, for granted. Even those we love dearly and intensely can often be the *victims* of our indifference, an indifference that fails to concretize our responsibility in love and justice to reciprocate our gratitude for all they are and mean to us. There comes a moment in these relationships, that someone finally speaks up. When that happens, feelings are affected, explanations are inadequate, the relationship becomes strained. Love and trust must be rekindled for the bond to be mended and each other to be more acutely aware of the other.

How do we relate and respond to the Eucharistic Lord? Isn't the Eucharist a relationship we are offered that must intensify through faith, trust and love? Isn't the silent Presence of the Divine Prisoner a voice that calls for us to come and stay a while with Him? Isn't the sacrifice of the Eternal Victim offered to the Father and re-presented for us in the Eucharist an invitation to consume and be consumed? Isn't the Eucharist supposed to be the focal point of each day, even when we cannot assist at daily Mass? Doesn't the Eucharist remind us of *the cloud by day and the fire by night* that protected the Israelites on their forty-year trek through the desert of Sinai? The manna that nourished the Israelites in the desert, the bread that fed Elijah so that he could walk for forty days to the Mount of the Lord, the Holy Bread that was always in the presence of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem, and so many other examples from the Old Testament - can we not see in them signs of what Jesus would eventually allow Himself to be for all of us? The Incarnation itself, the multiplications of the loaves and fishes, the awareness of the disciples at Emmaus at the breaking of the Bread - are these not reminders and signs of the Eucharistic Presence and Its effect and perpetuity down through the centuries?

If the Blessed Trinity is the Mystery of God in His Divine essence, and the Incarnation of the Word is the Mystery of God-made-flesh in time, then, meditatively speaking, the Eucharist is the Mystery of the *divinizing* presence of the God-made-flesh, Jesus, in the form of bread and wine. Through these signs of human sacrifice and nourishment we continue our journey through time nourished and nurtured, strengthened and sustained, salvaged and saved, redeemed and renewed in the One we receive. As we consume Him, He consumes us, a spiritual consumption that fulfills rather than destroys. The divine fire of God's love and grace purifies the heart of those who receive Him. Each is purified according to the dispositions of the heart of the one who receives Him. As Saint Thoms Aquinas says in his beautiful *Lauda Sion: The good and the wicked alike receive Him, but with unlike destiny of life or death. To the wicked it is death, but life to the good...Behold the bread of angels becomes the pilgrim's food.*

Vatican II reminds us that the *Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church*. This life-giving Sacrament of the Passion-Death-Resurrection of the Savior is for us a source of divine energy, that brings us a spiritual enrichment and enkindles within us an enthusiasm that can transform our mind and heart. This whole process is offered all of us. We are offered heaven on earth! **The Tabernacle, wherever it is in the Church or Chapel, is that place where heaven and earth meet.** The God of mystery, present through the mysteries of God we celebrate, enters into an intimate relationship with any who are willing to accept the offer. We are challenged to believe. We are challenged to see beyond the barrier of bread and wine. We are challenged to live what we see in faith. We are challenged to become Whom we receive in faith. **We are challenged to be Eucharist to one another.**

Writing to the Church in Laodicea, in the Book of Revelation, John repeats these words of a vision he has regarding the Seven Apostolic Churches of Asia Minor: *I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.* A rather strong expression, I would say! Expressions such as these are often found in Scripture relating to episodes where people refuse to

accept a gifted moment from God. What greater gift could we have than the presence of God Himself among us! What greater affront could we give the Lord than to treat His Divine Presence in the Eucharist no differently than we would treat a casual encounter on the street of an old acquaintance whom we haven't seen for years and whom we will probably not see again?

This imagery sounds exaggerated, but reflect on how you present yourself before the Lord. Even if you visit the Lord every day, do you enter His Presence with a sense of joyful expectation, even in the difficult moments of your life? Do you allow the thought of the magnificence of His hidden glory to fill the inner recesses of your heart and soul? Can you look at the Tabernacle or assist at Mass and know that He is there? Is your awareness of the Divine Presence in the Eucharist merely an intellectual act of the will that accepts the theological proof of a sacramental presence, or **can you look at the Eucharist and speak to Jesus as you would to your intimate friend, and see Him with your heart in the flesh?! When you look at the Tabernacle or the Eucharist offered in Communion or Adoration, look into His eyes and try to see yourself as He sees you, and be grateful for so much compassion and love!**

We are told by John that when Jesus spoke of the Eucharist to His followers, *as a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied Him.* When they began to leave His company, Jesus did not modify His statement, but only looked at the Twelve and said: *Do you also want to leave?* It was Peter, the one set aside by Jesus as leader of the Apostolic Church, who responds: *Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that You are the Holy One of God.* Of all the issues we hear regarding the Church, the Eucharist, a fact and not an issue, is the cornerstone or stumbling block for many. This Mystery of Eternal Love that encourages apostles, fortifies martyrs, enlightens confessors, ennoble virgins, nourishes all the saints, is the **Core of the Church because it comes from and is the Sacred Heart of Christ that gives birth to the Christian who is in communion with Christ.**

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, we are all aware of the immense and intense love that our Father had for this Divine Mystery. His life was centered on the Eucharist. His hours of prayer were either in preparation or in thanksgiving for the Eucharist. The celebration of Mass allowed all who participated with Padre Pio to enter the Mystery of Calvary through the sacred drama he celebrated and the living image of the Suffering Servant he had become. Through the wounds of the Savior he bore, the faithful and even the skeptics saw re-presented both in the Sacrament and in his body the mystery of the effects of humanity's ingratitude to God, and the depth of God's eternal and infinite love for all. Obedience kept the celebration of his Mass relatively brief for the sake of the faithful, because he would so often lose track of time as he entered the timeless Mystery of the Altar. How many of us have the time for so much else, yet ration our time with the Lord in the Eucharist? How many of us try to fit in all our devotions during Mass, rather than enter the mystery of Divine Love being celebrated and the journey of grace that takes place at each celebration? In a letter to Padre Agostino, Padre Pio writes: *Only God knows what sweetness I experienced yesterday...especially after Mass, so much that I still feel it...If I could only bury within my heart these consolations, I should certainly be in paradise! How happy Jesus makes me!... He continues to love me and to draw me closer to Himself.*

Padre Pio expected and encouraged all who sought to be his Spiritual Children to have an undying love for the Eucharist and a childlike love for Our Lady, especially through the recitation of the Rosary. As different as they may both be - one a Sacrament and the other a sacramental (devotion) - there is still a very intimate connection between them. The sacred action of the Eucharist inserts me into the life-giving experience of that one redeeming act of Jesus on Calvary as I relive it in mystery. The Rosary allows me to reflect on the life of the Savior throughout the day as I relive it in my heart and mind. It is in the Rosary that I look at Jesus with the eyes of His Mother; I journey with Jesus accompanied by His Mother; I am raised up to Jesus in the Immaculate humanity of His Mother. Every day has its dawn, daylight, dusk and dark of night. As I journey with Mary to Jesus in the Rosary, the joyful mysteries are like the dawn, the luminous mysteries are like the daylight, the sorrowful mysteries are like the dusk, and the glorious mysteries are not the dark of night but the glorious beginning of the Eternal Day.

While nothing can equal the awesome excellence of the Eucharist, the Rosary assists us, in Mary, to keep the image of the Savior alive in our hearts. She it is who allows God to become one with humanity in history; She it is who rejoices at the success of her Son's ministry and is concerned at the criticisms and threats He receives; She it is who offers, in the name of humanity, the Son back to the Father as Victim on the Cross; and, She it is who encourages the early Church and rejoices in the eternal glory of the Father, Son and Spirit of Whom She is the Daughter, Mother and Spouse.

The life of the Catholic Christian is centered on the Divine Presence in the Eucharist (Word and Sacrament) and the church's love for our Heavenly Mother Mary, 'almighty intercessor' for Her children before the Most Blessed Trinity. These columns that sustain the Church are the treasures we Spiritual Children of Padre Pio are expected to celebrate with great love and devotion. May Mary, Our Mother, help us to live the Mystery as She did. Like Mary, may we be Tabernacles that enflesh Christ within our lives and keep Him in the recesses of our hearts; and, may we be Monstrances that willingly present Christ to all whom we meet on our journey, that He may be the Light of their lives as well.

May God bless you; may Our Lady guide, guard and protect you; and may Padre Pio look over you, his Spiritual Children, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings

Fr. Francis A. Sariego, O.F.M. Cap.

National Coordinator