

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office
St. Francis Renewal Center
1901 Prior Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19809

tel: (302) 798-1454 fax: (302) 798-3360 website: pppg.org email: pppgusa@gmail.com

July 2011

Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His peace!

How much time, energy, and money is spent by the government and independent agencies on useless studies! It is rather disconcerting to hear and read the conclusions of studies that at an earlier time would have been considered obvious, natural, logical. Some of these studies deal with children, families, and couples in general, in today's modern society. The word 'modern' or the expression '21st century' seem to demand that basic values and principles concerning human relationships and the fundamental root of society, the family, be totally re-evaluated, and in most cases re-defined. A prime example of this are the legislative discussions re-defining what marriage is and who has the right to enter the millennial and fundamental expression of the basic human and natural relationship we call 'Marriage'.

Commercials on TV employ and seem to promote some of these 'new findings'. A commercial may present a certain social issue or foster a political agenda, for example, by showing only one parent with one child or maybe two children, a boy and girl, but no obvious other spouse (single parent families? limited number of children?). To encourage consumers to buy certain products, often a commercial may appeal to a sense of narcissism (Only 'beautiful people' make it in life; only they are successful?), jealousy (We have the right to what we want; if you have it I want it too!), greed (The more you have the more secure you will be for the future! What about death? There are no moving vans following hearses!), and so on, rather than positive values. Newspapers appeal to the desire people have to read exciting material, most of which overshadows the good that is often placed inside the newspaper; violence, sex, trash sell. We may buy the newspaper or magazine for the excitement we read about, but the same things that make us buy are the same things we protect ourselves against with fear! What is even more fascinating is how people allow themselves to believe what is being 'thrown at them' by most anyone with a title or position. Certain values and principles should be a normal part of any life, regardless of religious affiliation. We must be willing to be challenged to grow beyond complacency, comfort, and convenience, and live according to the laws God has placed in all hearts; even non-believers know when a certain code of morality and ethics is abused or misused. Like the 'sense of the faithful', this 'moral sense' is really basic. It is troubling that the many 'studies' and 'findings' avoid or seek to eliminate the presence of God and His basic law.

A few of the 'findings' are rather amusing only because these investigations and studies 'discovered' what was accepted as obvious facts of life, until only the recent past few decades. This point cannot be stressed enough: certain ways of living, according to a certain moral code, are misplaced, misused, abused, or just eliminated, but can never really be considered obsolete or invalid. Love, respect, integrity, truth, honor ... need the list go on?! ... never lose their importance and their incisiveness in the lives of people. They appear and re-appear each time living as though they did not exist begins to take its toll on the foundation of human society - the Family - or society as a whole. Then begins the 'search', the 'study', the 'discussions' to find the answer that has always been there but put aside because other ways made less demands.

What are some of these 'findings' that come up every now and then? What are some of these 'secrets' that have finally been 'discovered' that will change people's lives? At a time when jobs are dwindling, homes are on the block, children seem to have lost basic respect and obedience for their parents, parents give in to their children rather than have them live according to certain standards, married couples break up for any reason at all, violence in the streets grows out of control in many cities, liberty has become license, and so on, what do we 'discover'? Here are just a few 'findings':

- Children should be affirmed. Punishing a child for doing something bad or wrong or reprimanding a child can have serious effects on his/her development. Well, spoiled children and brats make terrible adults, or better to say, they never pass the adolescent stage.
- Classes in school should encourage a child and not make them feel that they have 'failed'. Well, don't offend them or humiliate them for not doing as good as others, but challenge them to use their talents, encourage them. The job world gives no second chances unless you are the owner and boss, and even then maybe not.
- Though not explicitly stated, classes could be 'dumbed down'. Why not have the child strive for excellence, as far and as much as possible? How would you like to be operated on by a surgeon who was a student just passed ahead

throughout his school years and then through medical school?!

- Common classes should be offered all students. Why not offer accelerated classes for the capable ones and classes that will assist the slower student to comprehend and go beyond his/her difficulty? Unless the situation has changed, several years ago it was stated that high school graduates leave school with a fourth grade reading level.

- Friendships and relationships are 'technologically' promoted. Couples are given the internet programs to help them 'find their true love'; they are searching for their compatible partner. The total stranger now becomes the life partner because of the 'infallibility' of the computer. A company screens everyone 'professionally' so that two strangers are brought together by a third stranger, the 'matchmaker', who will never see or personally know them, except for the 'truth' they were willing or not to tell about themselves online. Great relationships! We warn parents about children who get themselves in trouble through deceptive encounters online, then the adults - in this case we have to say 'in body only' - seek 'lasting relationships' in the same way they forbid passing ones to others!

- Families are encouraged to eat together at least once or twice a week. Now there's a good one; we needed a study to tell us what we have known for centuries! Unless the family is together for more than just sleeping in the same house, where is the home?, where is the family? Some 'families' are just groups of people from the same ancestry living together, depending on how mobile they are, in a building that is no more than a hotel or a motel, certainly not a home. There was need for a study to tell us that a family that eats together is creating a bond! But if the bond is only the stomach and not the spirit, there is little to bank on but the eventual need for a restroom! What ever happened to: *The Family that prays together stays together!?*

Believe me, I am not on any campaign. These are thoughts I believe are worthy considering to see where we, as spiritual children of Padre Pio, may make a positive mark in our society. The few 'findings' listed above are only a few out of a long list of others that you, no doubt at one time or another, have heard on TV or radio, or seen and read through the Internet, newspapers, or periodicals. When we live and act as though the beginning and end of everything is solely in our hands, when we forget that we are creatures of a Creator far greater than any human being could ever imagine him/herself to be, when we believe we can discover all the answers we need for life, forgetting the greater Life for which we have been created, then we are in a dangerous and bad state! The situation can seem and, at times is, frightening and very challenging, but not impossible! These are times that provoke our society, that seems to be losing its sense of spiritual and moral integrity, to rediscover the essential elements and rebuild and strengthen the very foundation of every human being and society as a whole.

We cannot reduce our human experience to a 'test tube experiment' or a legislative decision. Life must be lived to be understood day by day, and certain basics must be present as guidelines and safeguards. Unfortunately, it takes a lifetime to understand something before we realize we cannot know everything. We are a people of faith, whose relationship with the Creator should condition our life. Our prayer life indicates the God in Whom we believe, thus what we believe; and our faith life is then seen in the way we live. The Latin phrase is: *Lex orandi-lex credendi* (and I believe we must add) *lex vivendi*. Without faith and our relationship with God, life makes no sense; everything seems to end with death, thus making life a frightening and hopeless experience. Faith tells us that life makes all the sense in the world. It prepares us for a fulness we could otherwise never even imagine. We know this through Jesus, God's Incarnate Word, and through Sacred Scripture, God's inspired word. As we journey from life to Life, we can envision a Life we look forward to with joyful anticipation from its very source - GOD!

Human beings are unique individuals; they are blessed by their Creator *with certain inalienable rights* and entrusted with gifts that go beyond the mere natural. The supernatural gifts of faith, hope and charity, granted us by God, when accepted as the basis for life, can change the often 'logical' consequences expected by the 'wise of this world'. Studies are helpful; we must never discard the positive possibilities they might and often do offer us. Let us never downplay the giftedness of those whom God has endowed with talents that help human beings understand themselves better psychologically, socially, spiritually, and so forth. Nevertheless, we must never forget that God ultimately is the source and goal of all life, and thus has the central place in all we are and do. God makes Himself known in our lives. When we listen to His voice and accept His call to whatever vocation He indicates for us, often what we had thought obvious is not so obvious, and the inevitable can change in an instant. The 'inevitable', the 'majority rule', the 'if-it-feels-good-do-it' are attitudes of a society whose values and principles often are in contrast with the common sense of the faithful, the sense of those who 'take God at His Word'. Chance, luck, majority rule, complacency, and others, may seem to make life seem easier to live. Ultimately it becomes disappointing. Greater gifts are achieved when we accept the challenges to change. They urge us to move forward with a faith that strengthens us to confront the challenges, and to prosper, triumph, and grow in spirit, *wisdom and grace before God and human beings*.

Each one of us is the effect of a total surrender of two individuals, who were in turn the living sign of the same surrender of those before them and so on down the line of time back to our Creator. The human family is essentially the place where this surrender is blessed by God and the new life (or lives) that come about are signs of God's continued providence and love for creation. The natural family is the nucleus of society, and 'spiritual families' who express and profess a common source and goal share in importance as they call people to deeper faith values that strengthen the members of the human family. The spiritual well-being or not of every person can be traced back more to his/her family, than any other circumstance; the spiritual well-being of our Prayer Groups can be traced back to the unity in prayer and fidelity to all we accept to be as spiritual children of Padre Pio. External factors can influence greatly, but the inner

balance and serenity stem from a faith that is transmitted by example and teaching, or acquired by grace.

Just as the family is the 'domestic church', our Prayer Groups are small ecclesial communities within the greater Catholic Family. The family is the first place a new life learns the basics of living in a world of belief and doubt, success and failure, peace and war, love and hate, enthusiasm and lethargy, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, God and man. Except for the last two, 'God and man', *what* and *how* we choose depends on the values and principles we learn and see lived. There is an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature yet, through faith, we are reminded of the intimate relationship between both in Jesus. The Incarnate God gives life meaning. Every challenge makes life worth living and striving to live more fully. Through the family a generation is prepared to take its place in God's creation as the *stewards of creation* and God's many gifts. When the family suffers, society suffers. When the family suffers, the Church suffers. When the family suffers, growth is slow and often hindered, sometimes to a halt in some lives. Spiritual Children of Padre Pio make a difference when they recognize the mission their 'Militia of Prayer' is called to accomplish through their openness to the needs of the Body of Christ through the empowering experience of a Eucharistic and Marian life, faithful to the Magisterium and open to be servants in whatever way possible for those in need.

Self-centeredness, culture of license, unrestrained pleasure, among a few reasons, cloud the beauty of any family founded on love, fidelity, and an awareness and respect for one another. God calls each one of us to collaborate in the work of creation. The Padre Pio Prayer Groups are not a 'private' matter; they are an ecclesial gift. The spirit of Padre Pio has attracted us to live the Gospel values in the world and help society to make things work for the good of all as they seek to transform this world into what it was created to be - a place where all people 'walk with God' in peace and love. Utopia! But a truth nonetheless. The charism of Padre Pio is a gift from God; it is a gift the Holy Spirit strengthens and encourages calling those who respond affirmatively to build up the kingdom of God.

Give thanks without ever growing weary for the liberality of such a good Father and ask Him to increase holy charity more and more in your heart ... All of us are not called by God to save souls and propagate His glory by the noble apostolate of preaching ... One can promote God's glory and work for the salvation of souls by means of a truly Christian life, by praying without ceasing that 'His kingdom come', that His name 'be hallowed', that 'we may not be led into temptation' and that 'He deliver us from evil'. This is what you ought to do, offering yourself continually to the Lord for this purpose. Pray for the wicked...the lukewarm...even for fervent souls...especially for the supreme Pontiff, for all the spiritual and temporal needs of holy Church, our most tender mother...for all who are working for the salvation of souls and for God's glory... I exhort you once more to devote yourself entirely and induce others as you can to devote themselves to the ends I have already explained to you (Letter to Raffaolina Cerese, 11 April 1914).

We are a family made up of very unique individuals who have formed a relationship through our common love for Padre Pio and therefore are a 'spiritual family' called to 'make a difference'. As we encounter one another, we recognize the same desires and hopes that bring us together. We form a family founded on love, respect, and all the other qualities that enhance any group who exists and acts in the name of God and His holy people. Padre Pio, in his letter to Raffaolina Cerese, reminds us to be concerned about others. Through our example, as Spiritual Children of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, founder and father of a great family of pray-ers, may we attract and encourage others to take up the challenge to 'Live Jesus' more deeply in their lives, and help *change the face of the earth*. Padre Pio calls his children to unity, faithfulness to God and one another, holiness of life, fruitfulness. Our biological origins are many and diverse, but our love for Padre Pio makes us truly 'Padre Pio's Family', who can help society regain its basic values. Unity of direction and purpose to be better Catholics; a determination to fulfill our commitment as the 'Militia of Prayer' called to 'conquer *he who is in the world*'; faithfulness to our covenant with God through Baptism; a firm purpose to live up to the basic standards Padre Pio asked of his 'Spiritual Children'; following the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church as our guidelines, ... all contribute to a fruitfulness that is shown in lives fulfilled, rendering those who live them serene and peaceful, even in the midst of the difficulties of life.

May God bless you; my Our Lady guide, guard, and protect you; and may Padre Pio look upon each one of you, his Spiritual Children, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings
Fr. Francis A. Sario, O.F.M. Cap.
National Coordinator