

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His peace!

Throughout Salvation History there is one person, after that of the Messiah, whose presence was prophesied and awaited as a sign of fulfillment of God's Promise to all creation - the *Woman*. Second only to Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, this *Woman* is the greatest human being who ever walked the earth. Mary is that *Woman* veiled in mystery for so many, but clothed in glory for all who call Jesus *Lord and Savior*. The Word of God, Sacred Scripture, from the first Book of Genesis to the Last Book of Revelation, speaks of her eminence: She is *the highest honor of our race*, and the *Woman*, Whose Child with Her are protected from the Dragon that seeks to destroy Her children.

- Mary is the **Hoped-for-Woman** offered by the Father to all creation (Genesis 3: 15).
- Mary is the **Humble Cloud of Refreshing Rain** that satisfied the thirst of a wayward nation parched by its unfaithfulness (1 Kings 18: 42-45).
- Mary is the **Virgin Mother**, who overturned humanity's defiance in Eden by her availability to God's will (Luke 1: 26-38).
- Mary is the **Ever-Vigilant** and **Self-Sacrificing Mother** whose last words recorded in the Gospels at the marriage Feast of Cana, are typical of a loving mother's concern for the happiness of her children (John 2: 4).
- Mary is the **First Disciple** whose words, again at Cana, offer us the secret to achieving eternal life: *Do whatever He tells you* (John 2: 5).
- Mary is the **Co-Redemptrix** whose courage and strength were manifest at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. (John 19: 26-27).
- Mary is the **Virgin-Made-Church**, whose silent-strong-prayerful-loving-motherly presence among the followers of her Son who had locked themselves in the Cenacle for fear of retaliation from those who had executed Jesus, prepares her children, the Infant Church, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit's power promised them by Jesus (cfr. Acts 1: 13-14; 2: 1-4).
- Mary is the **Sign of Hope Fulfilled** as She brings the Prophecies to full circle, as Mother of the Christ, Mother of the Christian, Mother of the Church, Whose life so clearly shares in the Passion and Glory of Her Son and Her children redeemed in His Blood (Revelation 12: 1-6).
- Mary is the one **Redeemed "Ahead of Time"** ... She is **Conceived Confirmed in Grace**.

The birth of Mary and her appearance on the scene of creation is similar to the light and warmth of lengthening days of Spring and forthcoming natural beauty that season brings. Mary is the Dawn of our salvation that promises the rising of the Son of God. She is the *Woman* Whose Seed would crush the head of the deceiving serpent who led creation away from a loving God. Mary is the New Eve of a life without end. Mary, like the revered Miriam the sister of Moses, walks with her people through the desert of history's oftentimes confusing and chaotic events. Mary, like Judith, journeys with God's people as they confront the enemy of the People of God; her presence strengthens and encourages them to trust in the God Who battles on their behalf. Mary, like Queen Esther in Babylon, places herself before the Great King and Her People to intercede for them. Mary, like the Prophetess Deborah who counseled and protected the People of God, counsels, enlightens and directs God's children through the many ways God has permitted that she be present to the world. Mary, like the little cloud seen by Elijah promising a refreshing and invigorating rain to the land of Israel parched and lifeless because of The People's idolatrous ways, brings a downpour of God's graces, refreshing peace, and new life in Jesus Her Son to a People parched by the uncontrolled passions of a seductive and secularized world that depletes the wonderful reserve of God's blessings and graces. Mary is the young woman from Nazareth, betrothed to Joseph the carpenter, to whom the Angel Gabriel was sent asking that she accept the Father's challenging offer to be the Mother of His Son; accepting, she thus allowed the process of humanity's reconciliation to begin.

We Catholics have always had a special place in our hearts for Mary. Misunderstood by so many not of our expression

of faith, and unfortunately today misunderstood by so many of our own Catholics, Mary continues to stand with us before the Father at the right hand of her Son, interceding for a sinful humanity obstinate in its self-centered determination to be self-sufficiently indifferent to the Father's vital place in the course of all human endeavors. Mary is the silent partner with Jesus throughout all Scripture. Her silence demands that we focus on Jesus, the Word Incarnate, Whom she gave to humanity. But, at the same time, tradition and history speak of a Mother Who refuses to "stay home" when her children are in danger, and whose presence and revelations throughout history shake the very foundations of life itself calling us to Prayer, Penance, and Peace with God and one another. It is at this point that many good people shake their heads at the thought of visions, apparitions, revelations and the like. Is it because they do not believe in them; then what of all those we read about in Sacred Scripture? Are they all bogus, or myths, or hallucinations? Have we become so "intelligent" that the simplicity of God's approach through Mary cannot be understood or accepted? Has science so taken over our lives that faith seems no longer just childlike but childish and even foolish? *Only the fool says that there is no God!* And, only the fool sets limits on God's ability to speak in a language and manner we can understand! For the sake of reason, we become unreasonable! For the sake of scientific proof, we close ourselves to eternal truth!

Since Our Lady's first recorded appearance to the modern world at Guadalupe, Mexico, Our Mother Mary seems to be the most traveled member of heaven. It appears as though She has been sent to every corner of the world to speak with the children of God ... her children! Why Mary? Because it is easier to speak with "Mom". She who birthed us in Jesus, knows us well. She it is whose words caress, inform, warn, plead, promise,...and at times must even threaten in the name of God the Father. Mary is the Mother Whose love for all her children, entrusted to her by Jesus on Calvary at the foot of the Cross, never leaves us alone. The hundreds of apparitions of Mary tell us of heaven's urgency for us to listen to the message: Guadalupe, La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, Paris, just to name a few known apparitions that are followed by many, many others. Except for Guadalupe, all of Mary's appearances to the world came to warn, plead, and promise ... and still we continue to close our ears and hearts to our Mother's plea!

Our own Spiritual Father and Founder, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, had a profound childlike devotion and love for Our Lady.

His devotion always led his spiritual children to Jesus through Mary. Padre Pio carried Mary with Him: in his heart, on his wrist or in his hands (the rosary), in his words that especially indicated that an easy way to Jesus is always through Mary, in many of His letters, in his devotional practices (Madonna della Libera, Madonna Incoronata, Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompei, Our Lady of Fatima [through whose intercession Padre Pio regained his health]. Padre Pio's love for and trust in Our Lady can be noted from his letters to his spiritual directors. To Padre Benedetto Padre Pio writes: *I have no adequate means to thank the Blessed Virgin Mary through whose strength I have undoubtedly received so much strength from the Lord* (May 26, 1910); *I am greatly indebted to our Mother Mary for driving away these temptations of the enemy. Will you too, please, thank this good Mother for these exceptional graces which she obtains for me at every moment* (June 2, 1911). To Padre Agostino he writes: *How often I have confided to this Mother the painful anxieties that trouble my heart...In my greatest sufferings (I have) a very compassionate (mother) in heaven* (May 1, 1912); *I told you a while ago that the strength of Satan...is something terrible, but may God be praised, for he has placed the...ultimate victory in the hands of our heavenly Mother...beneath the protection of this most holy Mother!* (May 9, 1915). *We must make every effort, like many elect souls, to follow invariably this Blessed Mother, to walk close to her, since there is no other path to life except the path followed by our Mother... Let us invariably unite with this dear Mother. With her, close to Jesus ...we must keep our eyes fixed on the noble, majestic, and holy company of those who follow Jesus...*(July 1, 1915).

Mary is the necessary channel of the Mystical Body that leads us to Jesus and channels God's graces to us. Mary's place in the work of salvation and sanctification of God's People, though important and decisive, is always subordinate to that of the salvation given us in Jesus. Often Padre Pio wrote of Mary as the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, and always associated Mary with Jesus' salvific work; the following excerpts taken from some letters are just a few examples: *Jesus and Mary, together with his foster father, assist and console you. Jesus and Mary always be in your heart... Jesus and Mary be always with you, free you from the bad tactics of the evil spirit and console you in all your afflictions. Jesus and Mary reign in your heart and make you taste the sweetness that waits for you in the eternal and blessed dwelling. Jesus and Mary make you holy... Jesus and the most holy Virgin make you worthy of eternal glory.*

Mary is Jesus' companion in our salvation story and as Mother of the Christ, she is also Mother of the Christian. With Christ as our Brother as well as our Savior, Padre Pio firmly believed that Jesus could refuse nothing His Mother requested on behalf of her children. It was always that childlike confidence that made Mary be alive in his heart and in his life so that she was a constant presence encouraging him, smiling upon him, protecting him, leading him always closer to Jesus Her Son, the One Whose image he had become in bearing the wounds of our salvation in Christ.

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, how do we express our love and devotion for our heavenly Mother? Do we keep her alive in our heart and prayers? Is she a constant companion with us on our daily journeys and responsibilities? Or,

have we relegated her to the archives of some archaic form of superstitious devotion that no longer has meaning? Have we become like those who think that in honoring the Mother we do a disservice to the Son, and maybe even degrade His importance in the life of faith? How can a Son not honor and love those who love His Mother?!

In a world filled with violence, terrorism, disrespect for human life to the point of eliminating life on request, disregard for the sanctity of marriage and the bond between man and woman as co-creators with God; in a world where we hear of children who have lost respect for the wisdom of the elders and where the adults abuse the innocence of youth; in a Church suffering from the infidelity of some of its members and criticized by factions who seek to reduce the Church more to a political entity rather than a family of faith ... the image of a loving and understanding Mother Whose Heart can rock the throne of God Himself because of His love for Her, His Daughter, Mother, and Spouse, should fill us with hope and joy. The world, with all its problems, is still the Stage of Redemption; the Church, with all her problems, is still the family of the redeemed in the Blood of Jesus who is growing in leaps and bounds because of the Truth, that is so evident as Her Treasure of Faith. And Mary is Mother of both: Mother of the New Creation and Mother of the Church. Let us love Her with all our heart and never forget to invoke her motherly intercession. Through Her Immaculate Heart may we be led into the Sacred Heart of Her Son and become the saints we were created to become.

May the Holy Spirit Whose descent upon the infant Church gathered with Mary in the Upper Room fill our hearts and souls with the abundance of His gifts. Let our prayer be: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful. Enkindle in them the fire of Your Love. Send forth Your Spirit, and they will be created. And You will renew the face of the earth.*

Open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and following the example of our Mother Mary, let us say 'yes' to whatever is asked of us.

May God bless you; our Lady guide, guard, and protect you; and may Padre Pio watch over us, his spiritual children, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings

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

National Coordinator