

# Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His peace!

Life is a marvelous gift! We enter without any responsibility on our part. We are endowed with myriads of gifts from God. We find support in people that God allows to journey with us each day. We have the awesome privilege of free will and the God-given right to make choices that will affect our timeless existence. *You have made us a little less than the angels* (Psalm 8). *You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts cannot rest until they rest in You* (Confessions, St. Augustine).

We are called from life in nature to Life in eternity, on a journey that often can be like a rollercoaster ride: fast, with twists and turns, breath-taking, frightening, with ups and downs, sharing the ride with others or maybe seeming to be and feeling alone, and finally coming to the conclusion of the ride sooner than we expected. We are slowly pulled to the top of the coaster, a ride that seems to take forever, when the coaster breaks loose of the cable dragging it up and we become part of the momentum that takes over. The ride is so varied and fast then, that we cannot imagine where the time is going and has gone when the 'ride' ends. People and things below, above, and around us have all 'whizzed by' like a blur. How slow! How fast! What the Souls in Purgatory as well as the Saints in Heaven must know now of all they oftentimes anxiously experienced on this earthly journey! They must realize now how more joyful and peaceful life would have been had they trusted more in the God of love, mercy and providence.

There is a little saying attributed, like so many great expressions, to 'Anonymous': *There are three classes of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, those who have no idea what is happening.* Life can be so fast, complicated, dangerous, or calm, comfortable, seemingly non-challenging. When we should be enthused about this marvelous journey called 'life', many opt to either 'watch' or become 'oblivious' to everyone and everything. Spiritual Children of Padre Pio are committed to grow in the spirit of prayer and service. They cannot let the world pass by without their being an essential protagonist of all that happens, and a part of making things happen.

At times we become like the Christian communities that St. Paul had to deal with. Often he had to awaken them to the fact of faith, that demands, of its very nature, that we live what we say we believe. He stirred them to action. Faith means little when we are not willing to live what we profess with our lips. It may not always be easy but it is necessary to be credible. We listen to the message and invitation to be a member of the Prayer Groups of Padre Pio. The prospect of being his "spiritual child" appeals to us. We like being "spiritual children of Padre Pio" because of the holiness of the friar and the fact that he promises to "wait for his spiritual children at the door of heaven". But, one thing we fail to keep in mind is that we are called to commitment, not just a one-time "spiritual-shot-in-the-dark". If we are convinced of the holiness of Padre Pio, we must be committed to the challenge we accept, and follow through with our commitment every day. We must remember - whether a member of the Prayer Groups or a friar or nun/sister or priest or anyone else - that conviction cannot lead to convenience but to commitment! Only then will our word hold true, and we will experience that slow but steady transformation that living in the Spirit effects. When asked if he would accept someone as his spiritual child, Padre Pio said quite directly: *Don't embarrass me.* He even mentioned to another that he would discipline him if he were not faithful.

The life of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina was not easy. It was not all ecstasies, levitations, miracles, dialogues with Jesus and Mary, and the like; these helped and encouraged him during the better part of his life that was filled with ups and downs of all kinds ... his own 'roller coaster ride'. He was even silenced from directing, counseling, or otherwise spiritually assisting others by the very Church that he loved, served, and promoted as the sole body of God's infallible truth. Padre Pio bore everything with patience and total trust in God's never failing Providence, while experiencing all the sadness and inner suffering that such a situation could cause anyone unjustly accused and punished. Patience is not condescension or condoning evil. Patience is deep faith blossoming into a confident trust in God that abandons one's self to God, His time, and His Will to be accomplished. This is "commitment" that testifies to the credibility of the person because of the

integrity of his/her life.

Padre Pio continued his personal life of contemplative prayer and sacrifice, sustained by his love for Our Lady and his total immersion into the Mystery of the Eucharist he celebrated and became more deeply each day. *Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; still, not my will but Yours be done.* (Luke 22:42). It would take several years, but Padre Pio would be vindicated by the very ones who accused him. Free to continue his ministry, Padre Pio dedicated himself even more intensely to prayer and to ministering to his 'spiritual children' in all that would lead them to a greater, deeper and more intense relationship with God. The Prayer Groups he founded and followed throughout his life were the joy of his heart. They were the 'Powerhouses of Prayer' spread around the globe interceding for God's mercy on a world that had grown cold to God's love, a world desperately in need of being rekindled in faith and hope, and renewed in grace - something the world so desperately needs now! Padre Pio knew what God wanted of him. His own personal participation in the Passion of Jesus was the physical burden that strengthened his spirit to progress daily in God's Will. He offered others the same opportunity by extending to them a way to be considered his Spiritual Children. He was 'Father' who encouraged his 'children' to 'make things happen'. He did not sit on the sidelines watching things happen, or despairing when they seemed to be going against him, and he taught others to do likewise. The barriers placed before him became the blessings that would daily transform him into the powerful exponent of God's mercy and love for millions during his religious life and still after his entrance into eternity. We should "tap into" those graces available to us as spiritual children of Padre Pio and faithfully fulfill our commitment. Let us intensify - remember the word is "intensify" and not necessarily "multiply" - our prayers and devotions that God may hear us through the intercession of our Father and Founder, and bring a cessation to the terrible violence escalating around the world, and especially to help and protect all our sisters and brothers in the Faith who call Jesus "Lord and Savior".

Once again, our illustrious 'Anonymous' tells us: *Do not tempt faith in Jesus by trying first to move mountains, start by trying to move molehills and work your way up.* Padre Pio dealt with each mound and moved mountains confident in Divine Providence. He realized and taught others that the only failure that is truly tragic is not to try and fail, but to fail to try. Quite aware of the fickleness of human nature, hypocrisy of 'fair weather friends', and the vast field of souls needful and yearning for a better life in the spirit, he 'plowed forward' in the vineyard of the Lord planting seeds of love and mercy, encouraging and counseling, instructing, and reprimanding when necessary, ... and allowing God to bring all things to fruitfulness as God wills.

My dear sisters and brothers, beloved Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, Padre Pio had a special predilection for you during his life on earth, and still loves you as he himself promised he would from his place in heaven. You are too precious a gift to the Church not to recognize your dignity and your unique role among women and men in the world who seek to grow in holiness. This is Padre Pio's 'vision', not unique in its goal, but truly innovative and effective for those who accept the challenge to live their vocation as a 'Militia of Prayer', as 'Powerhouses of Prayer' in the world of the twenty-first century. We all share in the common bond of a spirit that encourages us to 'Live Jesus'. You do not need to be sister or nun, brother or priest living within the walls of a religious house. The world is your cloister/friary/convent; creation and its needs and demands is the vast arena of grace-filled ministries. By 'just living life' as a true 'spiritual child of Padre Pio' - and I emphasize the word 'true' - in simplicity and joy, not only are you blessed and grow in graces, but also are a blessing to others whom you touch by word and example.

As I mentioned above, we live in a fast paced world. Structure is a necessity that clarifies priorities and perspectives. Simplicity is a 'complicated' dream that keeps matters direct and open. Humility is still valued when it 'asserts' itself with respect and love in a transparency that disarms the most adamant of opponents. We must beware of our 'idols' of social worship, workaholicism, consumeristic 'gluttony', indifferent 'blindness' to those challenged in any way. These 'idols' dominate and eventually destroy us. Look at what has been happening in the world these past months! Why? - it is the 'rule' of pride, power, possessiveness! The first step in turning things around so that we can 'Return to the Future' - that is, return to how we were before the fall of our First Parents so that we can go where we were intended to be forever - is Prayer.

Prayer - real, sincere, heartfelt prayer - is a powerful weapon against the difficulties and evils of our age. Prayer places us in relationship with the One Who Alone can bring harmony out of chaos, enlightenment out of confusion, enthusiasm out of indifference, participation out of disinterested observation, sharing of hopes and dreams out of passivity that waits for others 'to do', renewal and reform out of reactionary manners that refuse challenges to grow, rebirth of our personal spirits out of complacent lethargy that is nothing more than a spiritual 'living death'. The effects of the prayer of presence, alone and together with our sisters and brothers, are the conditions that allow these changes to take place. The effects of this prayer will allow us to recognize with our eyes, and not just with our hearts, others approaching us and asking why we are 'different', and perhaps even asking to join us. Our share in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, following the example of our Father and Guide, leaves us happy, serene, joy-filled, disarmed, sure of the road we are traveling and the destination that awaits us. People will see us as Instruments of Peace and Blessings.

Our acceptance into the Prayer Group Association must not be seen as a mere monthly devotional responsibility by solely meeting and praying with others. We are not alone on life's journey. As part of the greater family of God in Padre Pio let

us seek out others with whom to share this wonderful gift and ministry of prayer and service. We are only as good as our word! We have given our 'word'. How good do you recognize your 'word' to be - the 'word' you gave and give each day to God, to yourself, and to your sisters and brothers in being a beacon of prayer and sacrifice? Much has been asked of us, but much and greater things have been promised (cfr. Luke 12:48). With Padre Pio of Pietrelcina to pray for and guide us, let us move forward, for, as Saint Francis said to his friars: *until now we have done so little*.

Before concluding this letter, I wish all of you a very **Happy Thanksgiving**. In the midst of our personal difficulties, or the problems and fears that we as a nation experience, there is a God who cares for us. Give thanks to God for being God; give thanks to God for His love; give thanks to God for having created you so that you could know, love, serve Him here and share eternity with Him. ***Give thanks to God for He is good, His love is everlasting.*** (Psalm 136: 1)

May the Father in His love shower His mercy upon us; may the Son "be Jesus" to us as Redeemer and Savior and not our judge; and may the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts with the gift of His grace-filled presence. May Our Lady guide, guard and protect us at all times; and our St, Pio of Pietrelcina, our Father and Founder, keep all of us, his Spiritual Children, in his loving care.

Be assured of a remembrance in my prayers everyday, and especially this month on **Thanksgiving Day**, as I personally thank God for all of you and for your love and commitment to the spirit of Padre Pio with which you have accepted to be his "Militia of Prayer" for a world so much in need of opening its heart to God's Will. As we praise God in thanksgiving for all His blessings to us, we thank Him for calling us to be a blessing to others. We thank God for being God, creating us as his beloved children, and giving us in Jesus the grace to be sisters and brothers redeemed in the Blood of Christ.

**Happy Thanksgiving to you and your loved ones!**

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