

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

Peace and Blessings in the Risen Savior!

The world is ever going through its millennial “growing pains”. We have been facing a tragic reality for a number of months. Extremists in the name of God are killing hundreds of our sisters and brothers in Christ, because they are of Christ. Talks, sanctions, military threats, open combat are only a few of the tactics employed to defuse and destroy the “enemy at the gates”. Have we forgotten that God must be a part of our response to evil that attacks us? Have we forgotten that Mary has and is still offering us a Plan from Heaven to win this and other battles that aim at destroying all we hold dear and in Whom and which we believe.

For centuries the great saints have taught us of the almighty intercession of Mary. Accepting us as Her children at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, She intercedes for us and accompanies us. She has promised so many times that Her Immaculate Heart will ultimately win out and Jesus will again reign in our troubled world. Why are we so hesitant to publicly acclaim our Mother consecrating ourselves to Her and universally implore Her Son to come to our aide? The prayer we so often pray calling to mind the Incarnation of Jesus and Mary’s willingness to cooperate with the Will of the Father has been the “spiritual weapon” prayed by saints and sinners, Catholics and even non-Catholics. When prayed in the Rosary remembering Mary’s role in the History of our Salvation we enter a relationship with Jesus through Mary. Great saints have considered this prayer the one that “turned the tide” of events and brought peace to the Church, a nation, a city, a person, or brought healing to the sick and infirm, stopped the progress of a plague, and so much more.

May is the month dedicated to Our Blessed Mother Mary. It is almost universal in the Church that we Roman Catholics recite the “Hail Mary” everyday. Let us focus on this simple, brief, and beautiful prayer. Let us reflect on the words and ask Our Blessed Mother Mary to open our hearts as hers was that we may accept God’s Will and “give rebirth” to Jesus in this world so much in need of the Savior.

Hail Mary: At the beginning of the prayer, we can put ourselves in the frame of mind to talk to our Blessed Lady and Mother. We can do so because she is the Mother of Jesus and the Queen of Heaven. Our Lord Jesus, her loving Son, wants us to go to her. Remember the words from the Cross that were addressed to the Apostle John: **Son, behold your mother** (John 19: 26). In John we accept Mary as our Mother, Mother of the Church. From the side of Jesus opened for us by the soldier’s lance flowed the Saving Blood of Sacrifice. In that Blood we are redeemed. Mary becomes the Mother of all the redeemed and accompanies us through life. We greet Our Lady personally as one of Her loving children. Prayer is not simply the saying of words in a formula, but a personal encounter in which we converse – primarily with God, but also with, Our Lady, St. Joseph, the angels, the Saints, the holy Souls, and so on. Our love and friendship with them in the Communion of Saints grants serenity and confidence in the words that follow.

We can imagine ourselves bowing with the deepest respect before our Queen and Mother as we try to imitate the reverence shown to her even by such a great being as the Archangel Gabriel who bore the undescribly awesome message of God entering time. With a simple “Hail” to Mary her attention is focused on what is to follow. We know that if we are sincere, we will not be held at fault for our clumsiness or lack of knowing how we should speak properly. Our Lady listens with great kindness and attention to our humble words.

Full of grace: Our Lady is sinless and perfect. This does not distance her from us. On the contrary, it makes Mary the perfect friend for us. Mary is someone who is always seeking our good. She will speak in the name of a “humanity in waiting”. Though we are not born “full of grace” but the contrary is fact, God loves His creation. Our own faults and sins sometimes make us ashamed or fearful of God. The eternal Father offers us Mary who is so much superior to us in holiness and goodness and that very goodness is itself a guarantee of her graceful understanding...and “almighty intercession” before the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Such holiness in Our Lady does not accept any offense against the Love of God. However, like a good mother, she knows that temptations are prevail, and sins exist. Our love for her and her intercession for us, her children born from the side of her Son Jesus on the Cross, encourage us to repentance. She guides us to seek God’s mercy and grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and does not despise us. The very thought of Mary can help us to resist

temptation, avoid sin and what leads us to it.

The Lord is with thee: Our Lady was constantly listening to God and His voice in Her heart. He was with her by grace but this was an active presence, an exchange in which she was in continual peace and companionship with God. Even when distracted by worldly chores and business, God's presence was the backdrop of her life. Our Lady followed her conscience – only her conscience, unlike ours, was perfectly formed. Not only was she instructed in the law of God, her judgements on what to do here and now were unsullied by that self-seeking and inclination to our own desires that mark our own struggles to choose what is right and good. The Lord wishes also to be with us, not only at our fixed times of prayer or in the Church itself, but at all times as He is always present whatever we do, wherever we are. The **Hail Mary** can remind us of this constant truth that God is indeed everywhere, and is also with us.

Blessed art thou among women: St Elizabeth immediately recognized Our Lady's greatness when she came to visit her after being told of her relative's unique vocation as mother of the forerunner of the Savior by the angel Gabriel. Her humble response to Mary's visit is immortalized in this simple prayer we recite everyday: **who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?** (Luke 1: 43) At the same time, St John the Baptist leapt in her womb – an unborn child making an act of faith in the presence of his cousin as an embryo of only a few days implanted in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. The recognition of these great saints teaches us the fundamental reason why we give so much honour to Our Lady. She carried God the Son in her womb for nine months and was chosen for the supreme privilege of nursing and nurturing Him in His childhood. If we really reflect on this great truth, played out on the world of whose history we are a part with her, we can only bow down in love and awe at the greatness of this woman who acknowledge in humility **All generations shall call me blessed** (Luke 1: 48).

Blessed is the fruit of thy womb: Mary leads us always to Christ. It is one of the saddest mistakes of those who oppose our special love and veneration for Mary to think that somehow Our Lady detracts from our devotion to Jesus Christ. On the contrary, she draws us to Him, shows Him to us, and teaches us how to be His disciples. If sometimes we find that we are distracted at Mass, it is a sure way back to true devotion to ask the assistance of Our Lady to help us to make our own offerings at Mass, of adoration, thanksgiving, sorrow, and petition for the grace of God. This is also true for the priest. He can ask for no greater assistance in His attempts to celebrate the Eucharist with due reverence and devotion than to ask the help of that holy Mother who stood at the foot of the Cross and can guide him at the altar. She is Mother of all priests, as She is Mother of the Great High Priest in Whose name each priest ministers as an "alter Christus" ("another Christ"). Let us pray for all priests, particularly those who have grown lukewarm – it happens – that Our Lady will set us all on fire with the genuine devotion of true disciples who will bring Our Lord, blessed fruit of her womb, to others.

Holy Mary, Mother of God: Being the Mother of God is the source of all Our Lady's other titles. They are not simply nice thoughts but they tell us basic truths of our Faith. Mary also safeguards the truth about Jesus Christ. Because she is the Mother of God, it shows us that he is truly God and truly Man. For this reason, Our Lady has been called the "Destroyer of heresies." As Mother of the Church, she gives her protection to those who ask for it, and invokes with us the gifts of the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe Christ and preach Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. In our secular culture it is easy to be swayed by popular opinion, to water down the teaching of Christ and His Church to make it more acceptable, to avoid arguments or sneering, or to make things easier in our own lives. Our Lady's total trust in the Father's Will at the Annunciation and Incarnation, and her fidelity at the Passion can shame us to stand up and be counted, to defend the faith at the cost of ridicule, to be known as disciples of Christ, to be proud to be such – not of course through any self-congratulation considering our weakness, but that legitimate pride in being under the banner of the Cross, of being His men.

Pray for us sinners: Our Lady never sinned but she knew more than anyone the damage caused by sin. We call her Co-redemptrix because of her share in the passion of Christ. Her perfection in grace means that she above all is the terror of demons who flee in terror from her very name as exorcists testify. Yet she is also compassionate towards us, affected by the wound of original sin, and weighed down by our own past sins and habits of sin. We beg her prayers for us as sinners because they are most powerful, both in helping us to resist temptation and in putting new heart into us when we have fallen. She also knows well the infinite mercy of her Son **with whom there is fullness of redemption** (cfr. Ephesians 1: 7) and the folly of ever despairing of this mercy.

Now and at the hour of our death: Every Hail Mary is a way of preparing for the time when we pass over from time to eternity. Death is not the loss of life but the entrance to the fullness of Life. We are not lost at that moment. This is something we should remember often. The Church in her wisdom has placed this petition at the end of the prayer. Many people live as if death were not a fact of our lives. But our life here on earth is short, we have one soul to save, and an eternity to enjoy the presence of God or to lose Him for ever. Nothing is more important than our eternal salvation. Therefore we ask Jesus, Mary and Joseph to help us to prepare for our death by a good life. We also pray for a happy death, which means dying in a state of grace, fortified by the sacraments of the Church.

Amen.

The Hail Mary is a simple but very rich prayer. We should sometimes take a little time – it is after all only a short prayer – to say it more slowly, to savor the sweetness of the words, to ask Our Blessed Mother to grace us with her prayers, and to form

us anew as the disciples of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, let us follow the example of our spiritual guide and father. His simplicity and total dedication to Mary encourage us to do the same. The Prayer Groups are all dedicated to Our Lady in the practices expected of us, but let these religious practices be not just an external act of participation in a group. Let our spiritual practices honoring Our Heavenly Mother be the sign of an internal conviction and commitment to a person whose love for us leads us ever more closely to Jesus her Son. TOTUS TUUS! (TOTALLY YOURS!) Let us make this motto of St. John Paul II our motto and live it with trust and joy, knowing that we have a most powerful and loving intercessor before the Most Holy Trinity. As Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Mary, while only human and infinitely less than God who created her, is eminently greater than all of us. Invoke her loving protection and almighty intercession that while living with her in this life, she may intercede for us and assist us on our final journey to eternity and God's loving embrace.

With every best wish for you during this season of new birth and new life, I pray we all live as the 'Alleluia People' we are and be open to the working of the Holy Spirit. May He inflame our hearts as He filled Our Mother Mary. Thus animated, may we follow the Spirit's inspiration and confidently respond, as Mary, Padre Pio, Pope John Paul II, and all the Saints with a determined 'Yes' to all the Father asks of us, that we may be more like Jesus.

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

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