

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord grant you his peace!

Our relationship with Jesus and living in, with, and for Him each day is a wonderful experience for those who accept it. Why? Because, among other things, the “ordinariness” of our daily routine takes on an “extraordinariness” that fulfills our lives and can become “contagious”. It is up to us to keep the pace of the tempo of life and the flow of God’s gifts moving forward to envelop everyone in our path. We do not have to do hand-stands for God. When the good Lord wants something extraordinary done it is the Lord Himself Who will not only inspire it through the Holy Spirit, but will have us undoubtedly know it is from Him. Let us not forget the words of an insightful elderly friar: *The saint shows his face and not his gifts*. In other words: Be “ordinary” and leave the “extraordinary” secret and up to God to be manifest.

It seems to make sense, but often we are disheartened that things do not continue to seem as “exciting” as we think they should be. How can we discover the extraordinary power in our ordinary lives? What about life’s ordinary moments, which happen much more often? How does married life grow in love when the honeymoon is over? How does a young man or woman who enters religious life feel the excitement of the call/response after the “formal formation” period is complete? How does a priest continue to live each Mass and his “alter Christus” encounters with God and God’s people as though, paraphrasing a well known saying: it was his first, his last, his only encounter? How do we who were excited and desirous of being “spiritual children of Padre Pio” continue to live the spirit he challenged us to live with joy, persistence, excitement, enthusiasm, personal commitment, and so on?

Whenever you can do something big to serve God or go on a radical adventure with him, you likely feel important. Such extraordinary experiences seem to validate the fact that your life really matters. The mundane routine of living day to day may seem like nothing special because it doesn’t feel exciting. But it’s in the midst of the ordinary that God helps you to grow most powerfully into the person he wants you to become. The ordinary becomes extraordinary when you approach it with faith, inviting God to work through you in every moment you live for him. Perhaps some of the following suggestions might be a help for us to discover the “extraordinary” in our “ordinary” lives.

Accept the circumstances into which God has placed you. Recognize that God has called you to do what’s right in every situation you face, and when you do your best to live faithfully in all circumstances, your life makes a significant impact over time in God’s kingdom. If God calls you to do something adventurous like building schools or clinics or wells in a developing country on a mission trip, go do so. But realize that the ordinary ways God calls you to respond with faith – such as working diligently to earn money for your family, helping your children learn something new, doing errands and household chores, praying for your neighbors, and participating in your parish life – are just as significant as the more adventurous opportunities to serve. Realize that what matters most to God isn’t what you’re doing, but how you’re doing it. Be encouraged that whenever you do anything at all with faithful love for God and the people he has made, God is using your life to accomplish important purposes. Be willing to say “yes” to God wherever he has placed you.

Realize that ordinary doesn’t mean mediocre. God’s call to embrace the ordinary aspects of life doesn’t involve settling for mediocrity by doing less. It actually means doing more, with excellence, but investing in things that you’re tempted to give up on when you don’t see an immediate return on your investment. Far from giving up your God-given passion, embrace the ordinary means tapping into that passion to foster deeper growth in grace, more effective outreach, and a more sustainable vision of loving service to others over the course of your lifetime.

Check your motivations. Reflect on what’s really motivating you to spend your time and energy engaging in spiritual disciplines and serving people in need. Are you pursuing these noble activities because they make you feel important and radical – or because you want to express your love for God through them? If you discover that you’re motivated by a desire to justify yourself through your activities, you won’t be satisfied with what’s ordinary, even though God is working through ordinary moments in your life. Confess any misguided motivations you have, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you focus simply on pleasing God.

Grow in maturity through time and community. As you mature spiritually, you'll develop a greater appreciation for how God works through the ordinary moments of your life. Time and community are two key elements that God uses to help you grow: committing time to your activities long term without getting restless and giving up on them prematurely, and submitting to the accountability and encouragement of others who share our Faith and commitment to the Catholic Christian life common to us.

Shift your focus from extraordinary breakthroughs to ordinary disciplines. Rather than expecting that you have to wait for some kind of next big thing to see God at work powerfully in your life, expect God to show up powerfully as you engage faithfully in ordinary spiritual disciplines (like prayer, Scripture reading, lives of the saints, Church documents, and so on). Seek to deepen your understanding and acceptance of all your Faith as a Catholic Christian expects of you. Let them be truly meaningful for you, and practice them faithfully to draw closer to God.

Trade selfish ambition for a passionate drive. Let go of ambition to build yourself up by doing good work in attention-grabbing ways. Instead, focus on passionately using the talents God has given you to help meet the needs you care about the most in the world through ordinary work, which will maximize your impact over time.

Aim to be a servant, not a star. Don't worry about trying to gain recognition for your personal talents in ministry (such as your engaging speaking skills or charismatic leadership). Instead, focus on faithfully serving people throughout life's many ordinary moments – as Jesus himself did, during his time on Earth.

Develop contentment. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you learn to notice and be content with the ways that God is constantly working through your ordinary efforts to live faithfully day by day. Recognize that your calling isn't really your own, but God's power at work in your efforts, as you cooperate with him and help fulfill his redemptive purposes in the world.

Become an ordinary hero. While God may sometimes call you to do remarkable acts of heroism, most often God will use your faithful efforts doing your daily work to make a significantly positive impact on others around you. By simply being faithful to the work God gives you to do each day, you can become just as much of a hero as you could be by doing something dramatic.

Practice spiritual gardening. The way people grow spiritually is like how plants grow in a garden. Rather than expecting fast and dramatic spiritual growth in yourself and other people (which is unrealistic), be patient and diligently work toward slow and steady growth. As you personally engage in spiritual disciplines and keep loving and serving others, God will bring about beautiful growth in all of your lives over time.

Focus on people rather than causes and projects. Although God does urge you to support causes and projects, his main concern is how well you love and serve people in the process of working on those efforts. Don't let yourself get stuck daydreaming about ambitious causes and projects in the abstract, without actually following up on your ideas. Instead, get to work serving the real and specific people whom you encounter on a daily basis. As you keep dying to yourself and inviting God to work through you, you'll do extraordinary work in ordinary ways.

Padre Pio writes: *What you must do when Jesus, in his goodness, puts your faithfulness to the test is to show at all times great promptitude in the observance of your duties, without neglecting any of the practices which you perform in times of consolation and (spiritual) prosperity, without paying any attention to your lack of pleasurable feelings, since such feelings are merely accidental and can often be quite dangerous in the end. True and substantial devotion consists in serving God without experiencing any sensible consolation. This means serving and loving God for his sake.*

The quote refers to the spiritual life and religious devotions, but Padre Pio also applies it to the daily life of his spiritual child. *Promptitude in observance of duties* is the acceptance without question of all that is mine to do. *Without neglecting anything which you perform in times of consolation*, reminds us that whatever and whenever we are required to fulfill our responsibilities we should do so whether we “feel like it” or not. *Without paying attention to your lack of pleasurable feelings*, besides the obvious meaning, also applies to doing things that are great, make me “feel” great, incite applause, and so forth. While appreciation and acknowledgment are not evils or bad, it is more perfect to do what is mine to do, because it is my responsibility. When we act in this way we are *serving and loving God for his sake*. In this simple way, Padre Pio repeats the various suggestions offered above on making the ordinary an extraordinary experience.

Again Padre Pio reminds us: *Those souls who throw themselves into the whirlpool of worldly preoccupations are poor and unfortunate. The more they love the world, the more their passions multiply; the more their desires are lit, the more they find themselves incapable of carrying out their projects, and thus they are uneasy, impatient, affected by that shock that breaks their hearts - those hearts which do not beat with charity and holy love...*

The whirlpool of worldly preoccupations eventually keeps us turning in our own desires and/or need to be busy with things that “only I can do”, and that others will see how well I can do them. We are more concerned about the wonderful

things I can do rather than doing what is mine to do for the sake of the other. *The more they love the world the more their passions multiply...those hearts do not beat with charity and holy love...* is a bleak reminder of how things we should control begin to control us. They lead us off the right track and begin to become the masters of our lives.

The ordinariness of one who lives in the will of God, and seeks each day to grow in whatever God asks of me directly or indirectly makes every moment extraordinary and life fulfilling. Joy and happiness will go together in these moments because the Presence of God will be strong, even when the experience is difficult. And when happiness is not necessarily felt, the joy and serenity of one totally surrendered to the Lord, makes the experience “extraordinary”.

We are a family made up of very unique individuals who have formed a relationship through our common love for Padre Pio, called to ‘make a difference’. As we encounter one another, we recognize the same desires and hopes that bring us together. We are also a task force whose work ethic can be stated in Padre Pio’s words: *Pray, hope, and don’t worry!* Whatever we do, no matter how mundane and “boring”, when completed in the name of God, forms a stepping stone to heaven. Prayer indicates our relationship with God; hope opens our hearts to recognize God’s will in all things, one way or another. The lack of worry in living in the light of God’s will indicates a faith that truly trusts a God that leads all to fulfillment when they confide in Him.

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 at all times. We are truly “ordinary” people whose lives are extraordinary because our daily ministry, as “missionary disciples”, is to be Christ to the world, as He shines through each one of us no matter who we are or what we do.

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. Sariego, O.F.M. Cap.
National Coordinator