

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord bless you and keep you!

The Lord let His face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

(May He live in you. May you always live in Him)

(Blessing of St. Francis and last line added adaptation by St. Clare)

The prophet, speaking in the name of God, says, *My Word will not return without fulfilling the purpose for which It was sent.* From the very beginning of time, when the Almighty Creator and Father of all life brought out of nothing all that is and all that ever will be, there has been a yearning in creation for something, or better 'Someone'. This 'hope' that *groans until now* (Romans 8: 22) is our constant companion on life's journey that urges us to move forward into God's Providence. We journey without knowing what the next moment will bring. We journey, and we trust. We trust because we believe. We believe because our hearts have been touched at birth by the Spirit of God Who enables us to see signs of The One greater than all Who encourages us to know Him more deeply as we see Him in and through the many gifts of His Creation. We are the epitome of His creating love; and Jesus is the excellent and flawless example of His magnificent creation.

Jesus is the Word that the Father sent Who returned to the Father having fulfilled the purpose for His becoming one with humanity. We continue that ministry of fulfillment each time we represent the Mystery and "miracle" of the Eucharist. The same Holy Spirit of God that overshadows the Blessed Virgin Mary giving flesh to the almighty-eternal God within her immaculate womb overshadows the bread and wine at the celebration of the Eucharist. The "overshadowing" power of the Holy Spirit by the hands of the priest and the words of Consecration make Jesus the Christ real for us, not just in His Word, but in His Sacrament. This "Real Presence", through the power of the Holy Spirit, urges us to enter the mystery more deeply and personally. In the same Holy Spirit we acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior in Whose Name there is salvation. We courageously and unconditionally accept the mission "to be sent", as was He, to be a living message of peace and blessings to all. *In Persona Christi* the priest celebrant of

the Eucharist is both Jesus the Master Who celebrates by virtue of his ordination, but also a disciple and apostle - as are all the faithful - who must listen to what he himself preaches and teaches, live the message he conveys in harmony with God's Word, Church teaching and Tradition, and go among the People of God inviting all to receive the Good News in the Name of Jesus.

The Eucharist is not just a prayer but an experience of 'at-one-ment' with God through Jesus in the Spirit. It is that Holy Action of the people - liturgy - into which we enter, often oblivious to the awesomeness of the moment and even to the Divine Presence before Whom we confect with the priest the Sacrifice and Sacrament of our Salvation in Jesus. The Eucharist re-presents for us - subtly, succinctly, and soundly - all of Salvation History. The Father's Spirit and Word, present at the beginning of time and down through the millennia, are in the liturgy breathing life for those who are participants, not merely spectators. In the Eucharist, celebrant and people acknowledge their personal and collective sinfulness and need for a Savior. Together they hear the words of Early Israel in the Old Testament passages, the teachings of the Early Church, and the words and life of Jesus in the Gospels. All this preparation (Liturgy of the Word) takes time, valuable time needed to make us realize the awesome experience we are soon to witness and become (Liturgy of the Eucharist). In this celebration the Spirit encourages us to consume the Victim - *consummatum est* (John 19:30) - so that all can be fulfilled and we might share in the fruits of the 'mission accomplished' of the Lord.

Padre Pio, in a letter to his spiritual daughter Raffaolina Cerase, writes of the Person, Will, and Power of the Name of Jesus: *Of His own free will and to the fullest extent this divine Word was pleased to abase Himself to our level, by hiding His divine nature beneath the veil of human flesh. In this way, says St. Paul, the Word of God humbled Himself to the point of emptying Himself, as it were: 'He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant' (Philippians 2:7). Yes, my dear sister, He was pleased to hide His divine nature so fully as to take on the likeness of man in everything, even exposing Himself to hunger, thirst and weariness and, to use the very words of the apostle of the nations: 'in every respect as we are, yet without sinning' (Hebrews 4:1). The climax of His humiliation, however, was in His Passion and Death, when He submitted His human will to the will of His Father, endured great moments and suffered the most infamous death, the death of the cross...His obedience...was highly pleasing to the eternal Father, who exalted Him 'and bestowed on Him the name' - says the apostle - 'which is above every name' (Philippians 2:9). It is by virtue of that name alone that we may hope to be saved...This most holy name is venerated on earth, for all the graces which we ask in Jesus' name are fully granted by the eternal Father...This name is terror to the demons...If we are imitators of Jesus Christ and face up to all life's battles, we too will share in His victories.* (Letter to Raffaolina Cerase, 14 November 1914)

Padre Pio was imbued with a love for Jesus and Mary, his own priesthood, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Through these 'loves' of his life, Padre Pio sought to assist Raffaolina in her own life's journey, and the challenges she was being asked by God to accept. Padre Pio pulled no punches with those he loved, especially with those whom he directed. Raffaolina was one of these. He helped her to grow more deeply in her love for Jesus, and encouraged her in that total surrender to God's Will. Raffaolina eventually completed her surrender at an early age passing through her

own 'calvary' to the peace of the just. The words in the passage above are not only a powerful reminder of the dignity of the priest and all he represents, but also every Catholic who is one with the priest in the simple yet solemn celebration of the Mass.

The Person of Christ is present throughout the entire liturgy. The priest, 'in persona Christi', leads, encourages, instructs, feeds, and commissions the People of God. The humble ministry of forgiveness given and accepted, teachings offered and received, nourishment prepared and shared, communion extended and embraced, empowerment instilled and undertaken, are all beautifully expressed in the Eucharist. The Will of Christ is re-presented each time the words of Consecration are pronounced. Jesus is the Eternal 'Yes' Who accepts for all humanity the office of Victim so that we can become victors with Him through the 'at-one-ment' that is reserved for all who journey with Him in Word, Sacrament and Life. The *Power of the Name* repeated and responded to with 'Amen' so often throughout the liturgy, gives all who call on the Name of Jesus power to live in His Name, to recognize His presence every moment, to be a powerhouse of grace and blessings for those whom we encounter, and to trustingly move forward in God's Providence trusting His Holy Will and the graces and strength that are ours through Christ in the Eucharist we celebrate, share, and become.

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio we cannot afford to begin a new year regretting the past or worrying about the future.

Everyone looks for opportunities to 'clean the slate' and 're-write' our decisions to avoid past mistakes. One thing among many that Padre Pio teaches us is to learn from the past to grow in the good, and to correct what is not good by reconciling ourselves with God and one another, especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Where the future is concerned, since Jesus Himself reminds us that every hair on our head is counted and all the worry in the world cannot add or subtract one moment of the life entrusted to each one of us, Padre Pio's famous saying should serve as our constant reminder for greater serenity and joy: *Pray, hope, and don't worry*. All this can so easily be accomplished by remembering that in the Person of Christ we find the trust and courage to live in the Will of the Father and are Empowered in His Name to be an instrument of God's life-giving Love. The Eucharist reminds us, renews within us, and repeats for us the wonderful outpouring of His Spirit that will guide us throughout the New Year and for all our life.

Be happy! God loves you! Tell the whole world of His Love! Don't be afraid to be Catholic, not just "universal" but "Roman" Catholic! Help others see in the Eucharist the treasure that must still be discovered in all its richness by so many. Let us all share in the priesthood - ministerial priesthood and that of the laity - by 'celebrating' our 'extension of the Mass' in our daily lives. Make the Jesus you receive in Holy Communion be the Jesus others see in you - the *Person* in your compassion and understanding, the *Will* in your humility and acceptance of others, and the *Power of the Name* in your living without compromise the Catholic-Christian values we profess in a society that seeks to challenge - (if not at times that seems to desire to eliminate) - 'Christ' in us and in His Church.

May God bless you; Our Lady guide, guard, and protect you; and Padre Pio watch over you, his Spiritual Children, with loving care. This is a wonderful year the Lord has granted us. The Lord give you His peace and blessings now and throughout the New Year 2021! May the Prince of Peace reign in our hearts and homes!

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