

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

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In the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
may you enter the loving embrace of the Eternal Father
Whose Holy Spirit fills us with Life and Love!

How can we begin our reflection on the Sacred Heart of Jesus without remembering the love and availability of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, His Mother and ours? The human Heart of Jesus was able to beat its rhythmic harmony of redemption for all of us because Mary accepted the challenge of the Father's request to become the Mother of the Savior. As the Holy Spirit filled her with Life, that Sacred Heart became a Human/Divine muscle of strength and mystery of Love. It was His Heart, torn open by the soldier's lance, that flung wide open the Threshold of Heaven leading us to the Father's Eternal loving embrace!

Two months have passed since the great day of our Redemption. The Cross, earth's greatest pulpit, raised our King for all to see in the glory and majesty of His infamy and humiliation. The Heart of Love, unloved by those loved by Him, must have felt such deep sorrow and pain that human words cannot fathom to understand, much less explain.

His words cut deeply into the hearts of all who stood by. The words by the bystanders to The Cross, filled with anger, ridicule, blasphemy, were reciprocated with the Words from the Cross, filled with understanding, compassion, forgiveness and LOVE. That Heart that beat for love of all humanity during its earthly journey, never ceased, even at this most solemn moment, to offer itself totally and unreservedly for the sake of others. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23: 34) The first of the Seven Words of the Sermon on the Cross sets the atmosphere for all that will follow. These Words were addressed not just to those standing there on that fateful solemn day, but to all God's People.

There is, however, among those Words, an expression that simply yet profoundly and definitively resounds throughout the millennia of history as the turning point of humanity's journey. The Cross-Road of Calvary offers a challenge to all who look upon the Crucified, and indicates a needed directional change upward and beyond. Jesus, exhausted and weak, musters up the strength to say *It is finished.* (John 19:30) If we only would reflect and understand the powerful meaning and impact of these few words, how our lives might change!

While the English translation is good, it is the Latin expression that so powerfully expresses the deeper significance of the words. They speak not just of the termination of a mission, the fulfillment of the Will of God and all the prophecies up to that time, but they speak of the intimacy and fruitfulness of the greatest act of God's love: **CONSUMMATUM EST! - It is consummated!** (John 19: 30) When an agreement is consummated, when a love is consummated, the total surrender of one to the other is made without reserve, and from the two a new way of being emerges, unique in its own personality, but similar to those whose agreement and love have allowed it to be. We are the children of that consummated act of love that introduced humanity once again to the loving embrace of the Eternal Father. In the Blood of the Savior, and His love for us, we are re-born into a new creation and *receive our status as children of God*, (cf. Galatians 3: 26) in the blood of Christ. We are unique in our individual personalities but are one with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through the Blood of Christ.

The Easter Proclamation of Light Service chants: *What good would life have been had Christ not come to us as our Redeemer! Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.* It is this same Son Who finished His mission by being consumed upon the cross. It was that consummation that ended His earthly life and began a new Life for us. His end was our beginning. The image of His Divine Heart burning with love for all and crowned with thorns is a constant reminder of that *Love that is not loved* as it should be, that *Love that is not loved* for which Saint Francis of Assisi wept so profusely.

Many great Saints have either promoted or been the spiritual initiators of this great devotion. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has so often been seen as some emotional expression of pious prayers intended to excite our feelings. While all true prayer should be able to arouse within us a sense of the Divine Presence, when prayer is intended only to make us feel good rather than be good, it is useless. Devotion to the Sacred Heart offers us the image that society uses to express the transparency of truth (*cross my heart and hope to die* - used by children), unquestionable integrity (*put my whole heart and soul into it*), and the depth of limitless love (*I love you with all my heart*). We use the heart to confirm and seal many a relationship we desire to establish with others. The heart is mentioned not just as an emotional symbol but as a verifying reality of the depth of a person's desires and availability. The heart tells a great deal about who a person is.

The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, following The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), is the crowning celebration of the liturgical year. All the other liturgical celebrations originate and revolve around the great Paschal Mystery celebrating the Passion-Death-Resurrection of Jesus. The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus summarizes in this image, the love of Jesus for humanity, and it becomes the ultimate explanation for all the events celebrated during the year by reminding us of their origin in God's Love, their development and progression in God's Love, and their ultimate fulfillment in God's eternal Loving Embrace. Our reflection and meditation on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Lord and God, Crucified Savior, Pierced Redeemer, invites all to come to the Throne on which hung the Savior

of the world. *Come, let us adore Him!* As we do, our eyes are open to see, our minds are open to understand, and our hearts are open to receive the message of love and compassion that we are called to continue in our lives. Unless we can open our hearts to envelop others in our love, our love remains stale and life-less, or better, love-less.

In one of his letters to Padre Agostino, Padre Pio writes: *(Jesus) continues to love me and to draw me closer to himself. He has forgotten my sins and one would say that he remembers only his own mercy...Praised be the mercy of Jesus! Jesus asks me almost all the time for love, and my heart rather than my lips answers him: O my Jesus, I wish...and then I cannot continue. But then in the end I exclaim: Yes, Jesus, I love you...* (21 March 1912). Again, in another letter to Padre Agostino, Padre Pio writes: *Jesus made his voice more clearly audible in my heart, My son, love is recognized in suffering...I hear him (Jesus) say to me Courage!, After the battle comes peace. He tells me I must be faithful and courageous. I am ready for anything as long as I am doing his will.* (29 December 1912). And finally, in a letter to Padre Benedetto, Padre Pio writes: *I am consumed by love for God and love for my neighbor. God is continually fixed in my mind and imprinted in my heart. I never lose sight of him. I have to admire his beauty, his benevolence, the agitation he causes, his mercies, his vengeance, or rather the severity of his justice...I feel nothing except the desire to have and want what God wants...What a nasty thing it is to live by the heart! It means living at every moment a death that never kills, or experiencing a living death and a dying life. Who will set me free from this consuming fire!* (20 November 1921)

Our Father and Founder, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, lived in the presence of God and was consumed by God's love. This love, as we can note from the years of ministry among God's People, did not take him away from others. God's Love by its very nature leads us to be more aware of the concerns and needs of our sisters and brothers. How can we speak of love of God in our hearts, when we have no love for our sisters and brothers?! Love is not always materially fruitful. In fact, some may think us foolish, others may think us exhibitionists, other may call us hypocrites. We may be ridiculed by those who cannot understand a forgiving heart. Some may think us weak because we have disarmed our heart towards those who may oppose or offend us. Others may fail to recognize us now that we have unmasked our fears and are willing to stand courageously and trustingly before one another in the Name of Jesus. True devotion for the Love of Jesus in His Sacred Heart is found in its epitome in our love for the Hidden Prisoner of the Tabernacle. This love is a transforming antidote to all that ails us in spirit and often even in the body. *Jesus, I trust in You!* (Divine Mercy Prayer) We trust in Jesus, because Jesus has shown us the depth of his trust in us, to the point of being pierced that we might be healed. *Through His wounds we are healed.* (cfr. Isaiah 53: 3; 1 Peter 2: 24)

It is most obvious how Padre Pio lived out the image of the Crucified. The wounds of his hands and feet were the most obvious since he celebrated Mass without his gloves and walked with painful steps. But it was the wound of the heart, seen by only a privileged few, that continued the image of the mystery of the Passion of Christ in his body, astounding even medical teams who could not explain the relative strength of a body with the constant loss of blood and open

heart wound. He lived as the Crucified, dying each day for so many years, until in his death he could finally live with the Resurrected Jesus.

We as Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio know the Novena Prayer to the Sacred Heart that Padre Pio recited every day for those who asked his prayers. We know of his profound love for the Passion of the Savior as he celebrated It in the Eucharist each day, as he re-presented the moment when creation was redeemed and offered its restoration in grace on the Cross. We know and have read the many exhortations Padre Pio made to those who spoke with him telling them to be patient, to trust, to bear the cross, to remember God's love that far surpasses any evil or burden we may have to bear.

In this month of the Sacred Heart, then, let us, as true Spiritual Children of so holy a Father, follow his example. Let our hearts be open to Jesus that as He enters our lives we may enter the Father's Will more confidently through His Sacred Heart. As we allow our hearts to be opened and disarmed out of love for one another as Jesus' Heart was pierced open by a lance out of love for humanity, let us begin to see one another as sisters and brothers and no longer, as often happens, as strangers, rivals or even enemies.

Let us also remember to always have recourse to the Most Holy Immaculate Heart of our Heavenly Mother. As Mother given to us and to whom we were given at the foot of the cross, She never fails to direct our hearts to that of Her Son. How often are we able to "listen" to Her Son when She is the channel through Whom He speaks to us, and/or receives our hearts' pleadings! May She always be there for us, who are at times degenerate and not so faithful children, to embrace us, intercede for us, and calm our fears with a Mother's love!

May the Good Lord bless you; Our Lady and good St. Joseph guide, guard and protect you; and may our beloved Padre Pio watch over you, his Spiritual Children, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings

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

National Coordinator