

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

St. Francis of Assisi Friary

1901 Prior Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19809

tel: (302) 798-1454 fax: (302) 798-3360 website: pppg.org email: pppgusa@gmail.com

Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

May 2022

Peace and Blessings in the Risen Savior!

The world is ever going through its millennial “growing pains”. It seems as though we never get beyond the rebellious adolescent stage of development. You would think eons of existence as creation would teach us from the past. We never learn!

“Growing pains”, though considered part of the “process” of maturing, when seen on a worldwide and political level, still leave the nations of the world uneasy, and often alarmed at the consequences of humanity’s inhumanity towards its own. One nation invades another. Thousands are killed. Millions are displaced. Billions follow the happenings through various media around the globe with anxious concern...and never seem to learn the lesson. Too much info too soon! We have “developed” our ability to obliterate ourselves at the push of a button by destroying the “enemy” as well ourselves in the balance. But at least we, whoever “we” is, “won”!? It seems as though there can never be peace unless some part of the world is trying to destroy another part and the inhabitants thereof. Everyone rallies to find answers on their own terms. Dialogue turns into emphatic monologue. We see each other as “enemies” and not as “children of the One God and Creator” of us all, regardless of religious affiliation. This we also notice during times of relative peace. This is happening not only on the political scene, or on the local and family scenes, but even among “spiritual” and/or “religious” people, as some distinguish themselves. What a farce we make of faith! What a “fool” we attempt to make of God!! Have we forgotten that God must be, and is in fact, a part of the response to evil that attacks us, or perhaps of the “evil” of which we ourselves are the instrument?

Pope Francis requested that the entire Church pray with him to Our Blessed Mother in consecrating Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We said/prayed the prayer of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the hope that this will “appease” the Almighty. God does not need to be appeased! Prayer is not a “negotiation” with God. We pray to praise God’s love and wisdom. We pray to understand the Will of God and find the faith to accept it and live it with hope-filled serenity, while doing our part to fulfill it. Most prayers make requests or even demands. Nevertheless, ultimately, each prayer must end either verbally or in our heart with the words: *Your will, not mine be done* (Mark14: 36)

It is imperative that we change and begin living as we know we are expected to live. Faith is a life lived in the presence of the Ever-Present One. Faith is not a verbal expression of affiliation

to a club or organization. One is only as good as the word given. Prayer cannot be just from the lips, it must be from the heart. Have we forgotten that our Heavenly Mother Mary has and is still offering us a Plan from Heaven to win over evil and its influence on the world? Have we forgotten the last words our Mother says to us in the Gospel: *Do whatever He tells you* (John 2: 5)? Why do we expect God always to answer our prayers as we demand, and we seem never to seek to effectively do the Will of God, except in the formality of the Prayers we recite. How often do we rush through our “conversation” with God. Our “shopping list” of “holy requests” is often unending and rather than “pray about” them with God, we “say” the prayers as a part of our daily routine. How often do we find ourselves “try” the “spiritual influence” of another saint, when we don’t get the help of the one we “tried” originally! The eternal “lobbyists” are numberless, but ultimately they must await the response and action of the Only One Who can respond with any finality...God!

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 granting us the peace and harmony we so desperately need and desire. 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 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 assisted in “turning the tide of events”. Mary helps us to see, accept, and “enjoy” the loving response of God Who wants us first to want His Will and to trust enough, through the help of His holy ones, to recognize His peace to the Church, a nation, a city, a person, 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. God, through our cooperation/collaboration, can and will give spiritual rebirth to Jesus in this world so much in need of the Savior it often fails to recognize or invoke until there is a dire need. Mary believed the impossible and said *let it be done to me according to your word* (Luke 1: 37-38), because *nothing is impossible with God* (Luke 1: 37). Let us begin to reflect on this beautiful prayer...

Hail Mary: 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 awesome message of God entering time. With a simple “Hail” to Mary, Her attention is focused on what is to follow. (Though the word in the original is simply a greeting, a play on grammatical structure of the greek “Kairos” could also be meditatively be translated “now is the time”... The “time” for God from all eternity to begin the realization of His promise of restoration in grace to humanity! Wow!) Our Lady listens with

great kindness and attention to the Angel. She continues to listen to Her children as they seek Her loving attention and response.

Thus, 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. Our Mother's name, Mary, has a number of possible meanings from various traditions: "cherished one", "beloved", "bitter", "suffering one", just to name a few. Already at the beginning of the prayer we are reminded that Mary is cherished and beloved because She is also the one who will share, in our name, the great gift of God's redeeming Passion-Death-Resurrection.

Remember the words from the Cross addressed to the Apostle John: *Son, behold your mother* (John 19: 26). In John we accept Mary as our Mother (Mother of Christ, Mother of the Christian, 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 saying words in a formula, but a personal encounter in which we converse – primarily with God, but also with God through our relationship 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.

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 "humanity in waiting". Though we are not born "full of grace" but the contrary is the 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. That very goodness is itself a guarantee of her graceful understanding...and "almighty intercession" before the Father of Whom She is Daughter, Son of Whom She is Mother, and the Holy Spirit of Whom. She is Spouse. (cfr. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi and others) Such holiness in Our Lady does not accept any offense against the Love of God. However, like a good mother, she knows that temptations 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, and find strength and refuge in Her "when the going gets rough".

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 involved in 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 and in harmony with her mind, heart, desires. Not only was She instructed in the law of God, Her judgments on what to do here and now were unsullied by self-seeking and the inclination toward our own desires that affect our

own struggles to choose what is right and good. The Lord wishes also to be with us, not only at times of formal prayer or when in Church or other “sacred space”, but at all times as He is always present in 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, recently conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit and still in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. The recognition of these great saints teaches us the fundamental reason why we give so much honor 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 in 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 acknowledges 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 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. May Our Lady set us all on fire with the genuine devotion of true disciples who will bring Jesus, blessed fruit of her womb, to others.

Jesus: The Name – *God is salvation* (Isaiah 12: 2) – says it all. Jesus, the Name above every other name. The Name of Jesus is the center of the prayer. We praise the Incarnation – *God’s condescension of compassion* (cfr. St. Leo the Great), with assurance of being heard, through Mary. The Mother reminds the Son of His sisters and brothers needy of eternal assistance through life’s journey to Life’s true beginning without end.

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. 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 conveniently avoid arguments or being ridiculed or belittled for our beliefs, 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-righteousness, but through that legitimate pride in being under the banner of the Cross, of being His men and women, His Family redeemed in His Blood

Pray for us sinners: Our Lady never sinned but She knew more than anyone the damage caused by sin. We call Her Coredemptrix because of Her share in the passion of Christ. Her perfection in grace means that She above all creatures 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 implore Her prayers for us who are sinners because the intercession of Our Mother Mary is most powerful, both in helping us to resist temptation and in putting new hearts 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). With and through Mary's presence and assistance we need not worry of the folly of ever despairing of God's Divine Mercy. We can always pray with total confidence: *Jesus, I trust in You!* (Prayer of Divine 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 forever. 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: So it is! In other words: "I mean everything I have said". Let us make sure that the "Amen" we say is the "Amen" we mean, and not just a pious expression to end a mantra of words that we repeat over and over again. "Amen" is our "signature" of confirmation of conviction and commitment to all "prayed" and the hopes expressed. **"All to/from Jesus through Mary!"**

The Hail Mary is a simple but very rich and powerful prayer. We should sometimes take a little time to reflect upon the prayer. It is, after all, a very brief prayer. Pray the words more slowly. Don't just repeat words. Savor the sweetness of the words. Ask Our Blessed Mother to grace us with her prayers that we may be formed anew as the disciples of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Place yourself in Her Immaculate Heart. Remind yourself that the Blessed Virgin Mary accepted to be our Mother also at the most solemn day of humanity's salvation history, The Day of

Redemption. Pray that Mary, our Mother, always sees in each one of us the image of Her Son, our Brother, Jesus the Christ. Thus, how can this Mother ever forget Her child?

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. 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 Pope 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, Mary is eminently greater than all of us. Invoke Her loving protection and almighty intercession by grace. While living with Her in this life, may She 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. Be open to the working of the Holy Spirit, Gift breathed from the Cross and first Gift of the Resurrection. The Paraclete, pardon and peace were the greeting gifts of Easter Sunday when the Risen Lord Jesus appeared to the apostles gathered in the Cenacle. Our Mother was undoubtedly with them, as we will see on the day of Pentecost fifty days later. May the Spirit inflame our hearts as He filled that of Mary with love and total surrender to the Will of God. Thus animated, may we follow the Spirit's inspiration and confidently respond, as Mary, Padre Pio, Pope St. 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 and good St. Joseph 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