

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

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The Lord give you His peace!

Our Liturgical Year is filled with reminders of Our Heavenly Mother. Feasts in honor of Mary's role in our salvation history, and local remembrances celebrating some particular experience people have had of Our Lady's powerful intercession with God for humanity fill our religious calendar. We must never forget how much this simple Maiden of Israel, Who became Mother of the Christian because She willingly became Mother of the Christ, is also Mother and Teacher by word and example for all the Church. She is the Model and Teacher of all who seek to deepen their relationship with God. A simple and attentive reading of the Gospels uncovers for us ten 'mysteries' that present Mary as 'The One Who Prays'.

In the early history of our nation, this was the title that native Americans gave some of the Christians ministering among their people. Interesting! The great characteristic they noticed was their dedication to prayer. To be a Christian is to be "one who prays". Who more than Mary, as the perfect Christian, is also the perfect 'pray-er'. Every moment of Her life was a prayer. Her very life teaches us how to enter this personal experience between God Who is Eternal Love and Life, and ourselves.

A simple journey through the Gospels offers powerful insights into Mary's life of prayer, and life as prayer. Considering how these events affected Her, we might also notice the effect they had on Her prayer. We might discover elements that could assist us in our own personal prayer. We may learn how to pray more peacefully and effectively. where to pray, how to pray, when to pray, what to pray, and the like, may find a response in the following 'stations' Mary travelled on Her earthly journey with Jesus.

1 - *The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary* (Luke 1: 26-38): The Archangel Gabriel introduces Mary to a dialogue with God. She responds with sincerity and humility, and asks to be enlightened as to what God wills of Her. The result of this encounter with the Divine is Mary's absolute availability to God: *Let it be done to me according to your word*. This prayer is the 'yes' of faith's response to Love. Mary allows Herself to be grasped by God for His Eternal Plan as He wills, what He wills, why He wills, when He wills, and because He wills. She believes and accepts the impossible. She becomes Mother of the unimaginable!

2 - *The Visit of Mary to Her cousin Elizabeth* (Luke 1: 39-56): From Her dialogue with God, Mary immediately enters into Her service to others, laying out for us an unmistakable process. To serve God and to serve one another go hand-in-hand. There is no separating one from the other. Mary's beautiful 'Magnificat' is the fruit of this marvelous encounter between Her and Elizabeth, between Jesus and the Baptist still in the secrecy of their mothers' wombs. This prayer, sung by the Church at every Evening Prayer of every day, is the fruit of prayer and charity that nurture it, and the sign of a profound joy.

3 - *The Birth of Jesus at Bethlehem* (Luke 2: 1-14): In an ecstatic contemplation of the Son of God, the Christ, the Savior, Her Creator and Her Son, Mary lives a moment of Divine Presence. There is no need for words; the Presence says it all. This moment of prayer unites heaven and earth.

4 - *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Purification of Our Lady According to The Law* (Luke 2:22-39). Faithful to all the prescriptions of the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph go to the Temple in Jerusalem. They did not allow the sacrifices and difficulties of the journey to dissuade them from living the Covenant of the People of Israel with their God. They reconfirmed their acceptance of the Covenant. It is in the Temple where Mary makes an offering of Herself, known only to God, together with that of Her Divine Son. God, on His part, accepts Her oblation promising Her a share in the Redemptive ministry of Her Son through the words of Simeon, *and your heart also a sword shall pierce* (Luke 2: 34-35). Mary's prayer in the Temple is the offering of Herself, the acceptance of the sacrifices requested of Her, and full availability to and communion with the Will of God.

5 - *The Infancy Years of Jesus* (Luke 2: 19, 51): Mary sees all that Her Son does and says. She ponders them in Her heart. Mary becomes the model for all contemplative souls, who seek to learn the 'lessons' God teaches by pondering over God's Will manifested through life's many and varied experiences.

6 - *The Loss of Jesus in Jerusalem* (Luke 2: 41-52): Just like the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, Mary goes in loving search of Jesus. Prayer is a continual search for God and His Will. When She finds Him, Mary listens to what Jesus says in response to Her question, *Why have you done this to us?* Mary accepts the response but does not understand fully the extent of these perplexing words, *Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house?* Anyone seeking the pathway to God must be ready to accept the mystery and often the painful silence that can come with it. Mary continues to live in faith, and in that faith She continues to say 'yes' to the Father.

7 - *The Hidden Years at Nazareth* (Luke 2: 51-52): Mary lives in the silence of the home. She lives in the presence and conversation with Her Son. Mary awaits in loving hope in anticipation for the Scriptures regarding Jesus - and Herself - to be fulfilled. She is a soul totally available to the working of the Holy Spirit Who directs and strengthens Her as She 'prays' God's revealed Word and allows it to unravel itself for Her at God's pace.

8 - *The Marriage Feast at Cana* (John 2: 1-11): Mary nurtures solidarity with all humanity - children of the same Father in Heaven. She is transformed into a living act of supplication for those who suffer or are in need. She is quiet, discreet, and totally trusting in the response of Jesus to His Mother's request - *Woman, how does this concern of Yours affect Me?* Jesus begins His journey to Calvary at the request of His Mother for the sake of the joy of a newly-wed couple.

9 - *Mary Standing Beneath the Cross* (John 19: 25-27): Mary becomes a prayer of oblation and sacrifice. She unites Her suffering to the redemptive suffering of Jesus. Her presence at the Cross becomes a painful intercessory prayer. She becomes the Co-Redemptrix in spirit with Her Son Who fully, totally, and personally fulfills the Will of the Father in His one personal act of salvation for all humanity. In the name of humanity, Mary associates Herself with Jesus, and all humanity with Her accepts, offers, and participates in the one redemptive act of Jesus.

10 - *Mary Prays with the First Christian Community in the Cenacle Awaiting the Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 1:14): Mary "the Woman who prays", prays with the Church. She is the center of the community as Mother of Jesus, but She is also 'One of the Rest' as a Woman, or better 'The Woman', of Faith. Mother and Queen of the Family of Christ, She fulfills Her role as Mother and Teacher through Her example of prayer. She is almighty by intercession. She continues to fulfill Her ministry down through the ages for the sake of all humanity.

If we would think of these moments in the life of Our Lady once in a while, we might find it easier for ourselves to understand what prayer is. So often we reduce prayer to a number of specific acts or particular words. There is nothing wrong with praying prayers. But, in order that our prayers lead us 'to pray' in a relationship with God that opens our heart to His presence everywhere and at all times, Mary's ten 'stations' in Scripture can be a wonderful resource and encouragement.

Pope St. Paul VI, in his beautiful document *Marialis Cultus* speaks of Mary as: *The Attentive Virgin, the Virgin Mother, the Prayerful Virgin, the Virgin Presenting Offerings*. Pope Paul VI continues saying: *Mary is not only an example for the whole Church in the exercise of divine worship but is also, clearly, a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians. May the heart of Mary be in each Christian to proclaim the greatness of the Lord; may her spirit be in everyone to exult in God. Mary is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one's life an offering to God. This is an ancient and ever new doctrine that each individual can hear again by heeding the Church's teaching, but also by heeding the very voice of the Virgin as she, anticipating in herself the wonderful petition of the Lord's Prayer-"Your will be done" (Mt. 6:10)-replied to God's messenger: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me" (Lk. 1:38). And Mary's "yes" is for all Christians a lesson and example of obedience to the will of the Father, which is the way and means of one's own sanctification.* It is this same spirit that we find in Padre Pio.

Padre Pio is well-known for his childlike confidence and love for Our Lady. He was never to be seen without his rosary. When asked, Padre Pio stated that he prayed numerous rosaries every day. Yet, his prayer was not a mechanical repetition of words, but a childlike desire to constantly see Jesus through the eyes of Mary, and thus always have Jesus in his sight with the love that only a mother can give. His contemplative prayer was prayer of presence, and it lasted hours. In view of the 'ten stations' mentioned above, he prayed *with, as, in, and to* Mary as he came closer to Jesus in his personal contemplation / meditation, celebration of the Mass, reconciliation ministry, and any other moment in which he was called upon to be the grace-filled healing presence - spiritually or otherwise - of God. No doubt, together with the fortitude God's grace instilled in him, it was also the thought of Mary staying beneath the Cross that gave Padre Pio the strength to bear the physical pain that the stigmata he bore caused him daily for well over fifty years. Mary prayed with and for him as he continued to say 'yes' to his ministry of being the image of Her Crucified Son Jesus. Padre Pio would no doubt repeat in his heart the words that one of the great Fathers of the Church said centuries before: *We can never have enough of Mary.*

The Church, the Saints and our own Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, have always encouraged us to accept the invitation to trust in the 'almighty intercession' of Our Heavenly Mother who speaks on our behalf to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With Mary as our companion on life's journey, we can be assured of living in the grace of God by faithfully responding, as Mary did, each day with our 'yes' to God's Will. As faithful Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, let us strive to pray *with* Mary, *as* Mary prayed, *in* Mary as a child trusting in his/her Mother's protection and advice, and pray *to* Mary. May the heat of the summer months and the opportunities for a change of pace and even place, not change but enhance our opportunities to pray more deeply with Mary as our Mother and Teacher.

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

Peace and Blessings

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

National Coordinator