

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

From the Desk of the Coordinator

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re: 'Spiritual Child' and Prayer Group requisites

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His peace!

The following excerpts are taken from the book *Padre Pio of Pietrelcina "everybody's cyrenean"*, written by Alessandro of Ripabottoni. They speak of the origin and purpose of the Prayer Groups organized by our Founder and Father Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. Hopefully, this may respond to some questions concerning being a 'Spiritual Child of Padre Pio' and being Spiritual Children of Padre Pio as members of the Prayer Groups.

'Spiritual Child of Padre Pio' - The title of **'Spiritual Child of Padre Pio'** has been somewhat misunderstood.

Requisites for a 'Spiritual Child' were laid down by Padre Pio himself:

- To live intensely on God's grace and make use of the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation often;
- To live one's faith in words and actions, in a true Christian life;
- To love Jesus Christ Crucified, the Most Blessed sacrament, Our Blessed Mother, the holy Father and the Roman Catholic Church;
- To be pro-active and animated by a sincere spirit of charity towards all.

The conditions for a 'Spiritual Child of Padre Pio' **do not involve** donations or belonging to specific groups, as long as the person accepts and fulfills Padre Pio's intentions mentioned above.

Padre Pio Prayer Groups - Those who belong to the Padre Pio Prayer Groups are spiritual children of Padre Pio by the fact that all the members commit themselves to fulfill the will of Padre Pio as members of a Group.

The essence of the Prayer Groups lies in the love which unites them ...

During the *dark hours* of his first year as Pope, Pius XII exhorted (an exhortation which was insistently repeated during the following years) the faithful to turn to prayer which is the supreme strength and the surest hope for all ...

But the Holy Father insistently exhorted ... everyone, to pray: *the suffering members of the Church ... legions of children; families in city and country; Catholic employers and owners of small businesses; the young ...* He said to all: *Raise your hands and hearts to God: Nobody can observe the laws of God for a long time and avoid grievous sin without prayer; prayer is the strongest and most invincible weapon against all the dangers and assaults of the world. You must pray, pray, pray. Prayer is the key to the treasure of God; it is the weapon of battle and victory in the fight against evil.* Pius XII exhorted all to form *a chain of praying and penitent people; men in whom prayer and the thought of God has become second nature and the daily food of their souls ...* to prepare a chain of *strong men and young people who, uniting themselves strongly with Christ, at least every month, nourish themselves with the Bread of Life and even induce others to follow their example* (17 February 1943) ...

In the fight between good and evil even today is the Church's task a secure, and continuous support cannot be found in those who approach Holy Communion only once a year, and we advise you to gather together to form groups of men, women, and young people, who frequent, at least monthly, the Eucharistic Food and who lead as many friends and acquaintances as possible there (13 March 1943).

What the Church urgently needs are faithful, and groups of faithful, from all walks of life who, free from the slavery of human respect, conform the whole of their lives and activities to the commandments of God and the laws of Christ (8 March 1952).

The sorrowful and grief-stricken appeals of Pope Pius XII ... foretold the formation of Prayer Groups, just as Padre Pio immediately saw: *Groups of faithful will fully and openly live Christian lives, as His Holiness wishes, if they are first groups of people who pray together.* And from this thought (Padre Pio) turned to action: *Let's get going! Let's roll up our sleeves and immediately answer this appeal which has been sent out by the Roman Pontiff.*

And so the Prayer Groups were born. They were closely knit groups of praying and penitent people ... men and women and young people ... The structure of this movement was underlined by Padre Pio himself in a declaration of 5 May 1966: ***breeding grounds of faith and sources of love, in which Christ Himself is present every time souls unite in fraternal prayer under the guidance of their directors, pastors and spiritual directors...***

In August 1950, the official appeal for the establishment of the Prayer Groups on a wider scale goes out from San Giovanni Rotondo, and this was followed by some clarifications and general instructions. The Prayer Groups were formed to **better renew the Christian life** around us (love of God and our neighbor), **through communal prayer** ... they fraternally agree ***to unite, in order to pray together, at least once a month, under the spiritual direction of a priest, with no other goal than that of praying, and inviting other friends and acquaintances to pray ...***

As regards the direction of the Prayer groups, ***this should be carried out by a priest, and this in fact is indispensable, so that the spontaneous desire to unite in prayer be carried out, rigorously and faithfully according to the principles and norms of the Holy Catholic Church to which reverence and strict obedience is due. ... to avoid all possible deviations and personal initiatives which, even though they may be purely inspired by sound faith and zeal, could in some way, falsify the nature and aims of the Prayer Groups.***

It is a disciplinary rule that all good Catholics refrain from forming Prayer Groups without the permission of the Bishop or (authority) of the area in question.

The Prayer Groups propose to follow the general principles of Padre Pio's Franciscan spirituality, with full adherence to the Church Magisterium, prayer with the *church with active participation in the liturgical and sacramental life*; reparation through participation in the suffering of Christ *concrete and active charity for the relief of those who suffer ...*

The association's Statutes bears Padre Pio's handwritten approval (Milan, 8 February 1965): *I have read, approved, and blessed it. Padre Pio* . It was established under the direction of a priest for the sanctification of its members and or the realization of charitable and apostolic works in the spirit and example of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina.

(The Prayer Group) is directed and administered by a council made up of a president, assistant, and delegates responsible for the various activities which are spiritual, charitable and apostolic.

This excerpt does not answer all questions but it does mention the basics that are fundamental to the Association as a whole and to each Prayer Group. It helps to be reminded. Another version from another author concerning the origin of the Prayer Groups can be found on the website (pppg.org).

God bless you, and may Our Lady and Padre Pio accompany us on our Lenten Journey.

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