

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!

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, much less explain. His words cut deeply into the hearts of all who stood by. The words of the bystanders to The Cross were filled with anger, ridicule, blasphemy. Jesus responded with words from the cross filled with understanding, compassion, forgiveness, surrender, and LOVE.

The 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 from the Cross sets the atmosphere for all that will follow. The 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. It 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 of the completion of a mission, the fulfillment of the

Promise God made to our first parents, as well as of all the prophecies up to that time regarding the Messiah. Nevertheless, they also 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. Jesus totally surrendered His Will and existence to the Father and thus also to all humanity.

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*, (cfr: 1 John 3: 1) 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 Incarnate Son Who finished His mission on earth 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 Divine Heart of Jesus burned with love for everyone. The crown of thorns mocked Him as *Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews*. (John 19: 19) His majesty was marked by the throne of the cross, the crown of thorns, nails for jewels, and a beaten body covered in blood for a royal robe. The image of the Crucified Savior and His pierced Heart is a constant reminder that *Love is not loved*. St. Francis of Assisi weeping profusely often repeated this phrase so that others might consider the Love of Christ that is so often taken for granted, or not "taken" at all.

Many great Saints have either promoted or been initiators of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not some emotional expression of pious prayers intended to excite our feelings, as some seem to believe. 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 conditions the thoughts and actions that people often express. The following of one's heart reveals a great deal about who a person is, or desires to be.

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 of the Passion-Death-

Resurrection of Jesus. More often than not they are some truth of our Catholic Faith that we must accept and believe to be “Catholic”. The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus may not be a dogma of faith, but it summarizes in this image the love of Jesus for humanity. In a sense it explains everything we believe as God’s continued act of Eternal Love. 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.

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 to understand, and our hearts to receive the message of love and compassion that we are called to continue in our own lives. Unless we can open our hearts to envelop others in our love, our love remains stale and life-less, or better, love-less. As our Mother St. Clare of Assisi wrote to a spiritual daughter St. Agnes of Prague: *Gaze upon the Lord*. Allow the image of the Crucified and His pierced Heart to enter your soul through the windows of your eyes and experience the love that emanates from that image.

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)*. 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, others 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 in 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!* (Prayer of Divine Mercy) 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 you are healed* (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 visible when he celebrated the Eucharist. The bleeding of his hands and the pain with every movement of his feet were his lot for over 50 years. 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. This astounded 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.

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, the Crucified of the Gargano, and many who are also spiritual children of St. Francis of Assisi the Crucified of La Verna, how much we still have to learn about Love. The Sacred Heart that pulsed from the womb of Mary until it was pierced by the soldier's lance as Jesus hung upon the Cross keeps reminding us that *Love is not loved*. Can we ever learn to love God for God's Love's sake without looking for return?! When we can love without fear, though we recognize our sins and failures that never seem to leave us, then it is that we can truly say *Jesus I trust in you*. Redemption was sealed with the last drop of blood and water from the Sacred Heart of Jesus spilled on the cross at Golgotha by the soldier's lance. This gift of redeeming and forgiving love is repeated whenever we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation with sincere loving repentance. The Love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus knows no limits, *His love is everlasting* (Psalm 136). Do not let human inconstancy, foolish fear, and senseless shame keep you from the well of Jesus' Love that is overflowing for all to drink from the richness of His Most Sacred Heart.

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

Peace and Blessings
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