

# Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

May 2025

***Alleluia! Christ is Risen, Alleluia!***  
***!This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad!***  
***Alleluia! Alleluia!***

The message of the Resurrection of Christ rings out everywhere at this time of year. For well over two thousand years both the yearly celebration and the daily lives of those who profess it are *a sign of contradiction* (Luke 2: 34; Acts 28: 22). The message of the Cross and Resurrection is *foolishness to (some)...* but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18) For those who believe, it fills one with hope, especially in this Jubilee Year 2025 when the Holy Father Pope Francis challenged us to be “Pilgrims of Hope”.

We look to the future with joy. Joy? Of course! In the Lord Jesus Who has conquered fear and death in His Resurrection we remember the “Rest of the Story” written in the Gospels and the letters of the Apostles. The “Rest of the Story”, that many fail to remember because their present challenges seem overwhelming. The Resurrection of Jesus is the emphatic reminder of what awaits us at the end/beginning of the journey, the end” of time and the “beginning” of timelessness, eternity.

At the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday, 28 March 2013, Pope Francis addressed the world’s priests and made it quite clear the type of “shepherds” priests should be: *The priest who seldom goes out of himself ... misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. ... This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied, lose heart and become in a sense collectors of antiquities or novelties — instead of being shepherds living with ‘the smell of the sheep.’ This is what I am asking you — be shepherds with the smell of sheep.*

Resurrection Week of 2025 will always echo a remembrance in the hearts of Catholics. It was on Easter Monday that our Holy Father Pope Francis was called back to the Home of the Father. Not being able to project his voice and with an obvious deteriorating physical condition, Pope Francis had the sermon he prepared delivered in His Presence to the city of Rome and to the world for The *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing. His last words will always bear truth to the conviction and commitment to Pope Francis’ concerns and message for all people of good will. This has been the hallmark of his pastoral ministry in the Church. He reminded us that we are Pilgrims of

Hope (Theme of this Jubilee Year of Grace) who have encountered the Resurrected One on the road and now must joyfully bring that “hope fulfilled” to others.

Consistent to the last, Pope Francis never lost the opportunity to be among his people, His Flock. Though someone else read what he had prepared for the people, He was there. It seemed obvious that the end of his journey was approaching quickly. Yet, with all the strength and determination, and the assistance of his aides, the “People’s Pope” had Himself driven around the Square of St. Peter to greet the thousands who had come to wish him well. Then, he appeared at the *Loggia* (The Balcony over St. Peter’s Main Entrance) where newly-elected Pontiff’s greet the people for the first time as Pope, and also where, on various solemn occasions, the Pope will speak to the people and bless the *City and the World (Urbi et Orbi)* in the Name of Jesus. Francis did this, and blessed the people around whom he had been driven before and among whom he was always comfortable and happy.

May’s Group letter is the sermon the Holy Father prepared for Easter 2025 but could not read himself. It was read from the Loggia as a prelude to His last Blessing as Pope given to the City and World. As you read his words, think of what you read. Imagine Pope Francis speaking directly to you. Remember that you are one of the sheep that he wants to “smell like”.

An Act of Faith helps us to accept what makes us who we are. An Active Faith tells others what we believe and who we really are. Only an active Faith can truly lead us to be Pilgrims of Hope and “Heralds of the Great King”. Hope possesses in the heart what is has not yet possessed in the hand. Hope, the fruit of Faith, must inevitably lead to Love. Why? Because Love is that total surrender to the Other Who surrendered Himself to us that we might be one with Him. Each surrenders to the other and the two stand out in the world as One. This is total conformity to the image and likeness of God in Christ in Whom we were created.

*Thank you God, for creating me* (St. Clare) just as *I am who I am before God and nothing more* (St. Francis). Our own Franciscan/Capuchin spirit reminds us that we have all we need uniquely our own to be saints. The differences are as many as there are people in the world, but the goal is the same when we minister to one another, and do not seek to “overpower” the other. The Pope of the people knew and lived this way always as best he could.

Pope Francis saw and recognized the concrete realities of the world. His last sermon makes this quite clear. He saw a world challenging too many who had rarely if ever been noticed before in their need. The Resurrection of Christ offers hope that changes and transforms. It is not enough to notice and acknowledge a difficulty or need. We are called to actively be a “Resurrection People” who assists others to “come out of their tombs” (cfr. John 11: 43), to roll back the stone, and to walk in the brilliant light of the Son, the Son of God. The darkness of life will always give way because *You Cannot Hold Back The Dawn*. It is up to each one to walk beyond the stone, or to remain in the darkness of the “tombs” of false security, cowardly prudence, divisive prejudices, and so on. *I have come that they have life and have it abundantly* (John 10: 10). Our security is in the Lord Jesus the Christ. Therefore we need not fear because *It is I* (John 6: 20).

Pope Francis' last sermon to the People of God is the follows. Please read and note the simplicity and straightforwardness of what he sees in the world. Even sensing – I truly believe – that he was soon to be called to eternity, he still, on the Day of the Lord's Resurrection, reminded us what has been and still is keeping us in our "tombs". So many seem to prefer the "security" of the closed tomb rather than the warmth of the light of the Son's Love and New Life. There can be no "new life" when we refuse to roll the stone away that keeps us in a blindness of the soul worse than that of the eyes.

Pope Francis' final words to the City and the World:

*Today at last, the singing of the "alleluia" is heard once more in the Church, passing from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, and this makes the people of God throughout the world shed tears of joy. From the empty tomb in Jerusalem, we hear unexpected good news: Jesus, who was crucified, "is not here, he has risen" (Lk 24:5). Jesus is not in the tomb, he is alive!*

*Love has triumphed over hatred, light over darkness and truth over falsehood. Forgiveness has triumphed over revenge. Evil has not disappeared from history; it will remain until the end, but it no longer has the upper hand; it no longer has power over those who accept the grace of this day.*

*Sisters and brothers, especially those of you experiencing pain and sorrow, your silent cry has been heard and your tears have been counted; not one of them has been lost! In the passion and death of Jesus, God has taken upon himself all the evil in this world and in his infinite mercy has defeated it. He has uprooted the diabolical pride that poisons the human heart and wreaks violence and corruption on every side. The Lamb of God is victorious! That is why, today, we can joyfully cry out: "Christ, my hope, has risen!" (Easter Sequence)*

*The resurrection of Jesus is indeed the basis of our hope. For in the light of this event, hope is no longer an illusion. Thanks to Christ — crucified and risen from the dead — hope does not disappoint! Spes non confundit! (cf. Rom 5:5). That hope is not an evasion, but a challenge; it does not delude, but empowers us.*

*All those who put their hope in God place their feeble hands in his strong and mighty hand; they let themselves be raised up and set out on a journey. Together with the risen Jesus, they become pilgrims of hope, witnesses of the victory of love and of the disarmed power of Life.*

*Christ is risen! These words capture the whole meaning of our existence, for we were not made for death but for life. Easter is the celebration of life! God created us for life and wants the human family to rise again! In his eyes, every life is precious! The life of a child in the mother's womb, as well as the lives of the elderly and the sick, who in more and more countries are looked upon as people to be discarded.*

*What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day in the many conflicts raging in different parts of our world! How much violence we see, often even within families, directed at women and children! How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!*

*On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life and ideas! For all of us are children of God!*

*I would like us to renew our hope that peace is possible! From the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Resurrection, where this year Easter is being celebrated by Catholics and Orthodox on the same day, may the light of peace radiate throughout the Holy Land and the entire world. I express my closeness to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine and Israel, and to all the Israeli people and the Palestinian people. The growing climate of anti-Semitism throughout the world is worrisome. Yet at the same time, I think of the people of Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation. I appeal to the warring parties: call a ceasefire, release the hostages and come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace!*

*Let us pray for the Christian communities in Lebanon and in Syria, presently experiencing a delicate transition in its history. They aspire to stability and to participation in the life of their respective nations. I urge the whole Church to keep the Christians of the beloved Middle East in its thoughts and prayers.*

*I also think in particular of the people of Yemen, who are experiencing one of the world's most serious and prolonged humanitarian crises because of war, and I invite all to find solutions through a constructive dialogue.*

*May the risen Christ grant Ukraine, devastated by war, his Easter gift of peace, and encourage all parties involved to pursue efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace.*

*On this festive day, let us remember the South Caucasus and pray that a final peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan will soon be signed and implemented, and lead to long-awaited reconciliation in the region.*

*May the light of Easter inspire efforts to promote harmony in the western Balkans and sustain political leaders in their efforts to allay tensions and crises, and, together with their partner countries in the region, to reject dangerous and destabilizing actions.*

*May the risen Christ, our hope, grant peace and consolation to the African peoples who are victims of violence and conflict, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Sudan and South Sudan. May he sustain those suffering from the tensions in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, as well as those Christians who in many places are not able freely to profess their faith.*

*There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and respect for the views of others. Nor is peace possible without true disarmament! The requirement that every people provide for its own defense must not turn into a race to rearmament. The light of Easter impels us to break down the barriers that create division and are fraught with grave political and economic consequences. It impels us to care for one another, to increase our mutual solidarity, and to work for the integral development of each human person.*

*During this time, let us not fail to assist the people of Myanmar, plagued by long years of armed conflict, who, with courage and patience, are dealing with the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Sagaing, which caused the death of thousands and great suffering for the many survivors, including orphans and the elderly. We pray for the victims and their*

*loved ones, and we heartily thank all the generous volunteers carrying out the relief operations. The announcement of a ceasefire by various actors in the country is a sign of hope for the whole of Myanmar.*

*I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger and to encourage initiatives that promote development. These are the “weapons” of peace: weapons that build the future, instead of sowing seeds of death!*

*May the principle of humanity never fail to be the hallmark of our daily actions. In the face of the cruelty of conflicts that involve defenseless civilians and attack schools, hospitals and humanitarian workers, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that it is not targets that are struck, but persons, each possessed of a soul and human dignity.*

*In this Jubilee year, may Easter also be a fitting occasion for the liberation of prisoners of war and political prisoners!*

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

*In the Lord’s Paschal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever (cf. Easter Sequence). He fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more. Let us entrust ourselves to him, for he alone can make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5)*

*Happy Easter to everyone!"*

Thus ends the Easter Message of Pope Francis from the Loggia.

Our own beloved Padre Pio of Pietrelcina lived through the pontificates of several Popes. From the time the visible signs of the Passion of Jesus were visible, Padre Pio became an “attraction” to the Church. What was attracting was the uniqueness of the “sign” and popularity with people. In verifying such extreme signs, the Church is often so careful to render no credibility or exceptional status that the person in question can suffer greatly. He was not permitted the celebration of Mass in public for a while. He could not hear Confessions. He was not even permitted to speak with anyone, even a friar, not of the friary of San Giovanni Rotondo. Padre Pio bore misunderstandings from Church representatives with faith and courage. He wept but never criticized or condemned anyone who was or could have been responsible for this harshness. Padre Pio always remained faithful and accepting, even in tears. And, he never criticized or condemned the Holy Father.

Padre Pio bore the wounds of Jesus and thus realized he too was called to be a “Sign of Contradiction”. Like the Savior, he was called to refute his detractors and challengers by patient endurance awaiting the truth to set him free. His rough but kind exterior was the cloud hiding this man whose life burned with the same desire to help a confused and often belligerent world that seemed to forget its origin and destiny. We must look to see what is before us, then respond accordingly.

What Pope Francis saw from Santa Marta where he lived simply, to what Padre Pio saw from the simplicity of the friary life of a Capuchin. Each saw the world from there “perch”. Each responded in a manner that touched hearts and transformed lives. What did Jesus see from the Cross?

Jesus, Francis, Pio and so many other sincere persons see a world who at Easter repeats in liturgy what all year it lives. Regardless of religious or no affiliation, all people see the world from their perspective and often are disconcerted to realize that it seems no one desires real answers to alleviate the world’s problems. They are often aggrandized for reasons of political, economic, power oriented, prestige, hedonistic gains and more. *We know that the whole creation groans together and travails together until now* (Romans 8: 22-24) waiting for the “new world” that awaits us to bring it into being.

As we enter the Month of the Woman, our Mother Mary, we turn to Her. It is She who said “yes” to the impossible and “allowed” God to enter time as a human being. It was Mary’s “yes” that set the whole gift of God’s redemption of humanity from its foolishness in Eden and its continued infidelities down through the centuries on the course of redemption. Mary’s Immaculate Conception reminds us of the grace we were created in but lost because of pride. Mary’s Assumption keeps alive the reminder that the total human person – body and soul – is called to live eternally in heaven. It is Mary’s words that encourage us to trust and just “do”. Yes, *Do whatever He tells you* (John 2: 5).

So, as we enter the Month of Mary Mother of the Church, let us pray for our Holy Father Pope Francis that he be in the fullness of God’s peace, that the world be transformed into God’s intended “gift” to Himself and all creation, and that we spiritual children of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina may always follow our Father’s example of humble trust and acceptance of whatever our Mother (the Church) expects of Her children. *Hope does not disappoint.* (St. Francis de Sales and Pope Francis) Let us live in the Hope-filled Faith that journeys to the fullness of God’s Love in a world that needs this witness to roll the stone away and bring us once again into the light of the Son of God Who keeps saying to us, as to His first followers: *Why are you so afraid?* (Mark 4: 40). *It is I. Do not be afraid* (John 6: 20). *I am the Way, the truth, and the Life* (John 14: 6). *Follow Me* (Matthew 16: 24).

***Alleluia! He is Risen! Alleluia! Truly He is Risen! Alleluia!***

Peace and Blessings

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