

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!

How do we respond to the gift of life entrusted to us by God? Do we take time to realize that the gift is as unique as each person? Often we believe that we have been “short-changed” by God. We look at the moment – this is normal – but we often stop short of looking and going beyond. The unknown, the difficult, the challenging so often stop us from looking beyond and seeing the whole picture. These are the subtle moments when often it is the unseen “disruptor” (satan) who is at work.

The spiritual warfare, begun millennia ago, is ongoing. The saints were quite aware of the power of satan. They didn’t take temptations, distractions, confusion, spiritual difficulties of any kind lightly. Padre Pio, his entire life, seemed to always be in “the front line” of battle. He understood the strength of the opponent and the fierceness of the battle. He knew better than most what this war being waged meant. Bearing the scars of his many encounters with “lo zampino”, as Padre Pio sometimes called satan, he knew firsthand how fierce the battles could be. Most could see the effects of Padre Pio’s encounters but none, thank God for their sakes, had to experience what it means to face and fight evil itself. Padre Pio’s own wounds became a healing remedy for so many. *In his wounds we are healed* (Isaiah 53: 5) can easily apply to him. Conformity to Christ’s sufferings offered those who saw Christ at work in him to be spiritually, and at times even physically, restored to health of mind and body.

In all his spiritual struggles, Padre Pio never forgot God’s love for him. He translated that love into a total surrender to God and trust in His Holy Will. Spiritually attuned to the truth of the Communion of Saints, Padre Pio offered the benefits of his every action and prayers for the sake of others, especially for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

We are integral “family members” of the Family of God, the Communion of Saints. We must never disconnect ourselves from the reality of this ongoing relationship with those who have gone before us and now live with God. The Communion of Saints is a reality that invites us, especially in the more demanding moments of life’s journey, to remember those who have fought the good fight and have won the battle in Christ’s name. They bear the wounds of Christ as “trophies” of their patience, perseverance, and prayer. Conformed to Christ through the battle, they now live with Him in the Presence of the Father.

The Holy Souls form part of the Communion of Saints. The Holy Souls are saints in process. They are certain of they will be with God in His Kingdom forever, just not yet. There is a famous saying that can be seen in one of the cemeteries of Rome: *You are what I was. I am what you will be.* It is not intended to be as dire a thought as it sounds, though the site can be very troubling to some.

The spirituality of the time when these “cemeteries” were constructed presents a visual starkness to the public as an eye-opener to a reality most would rather not consider. But these places are thought-provoking. What visitors see are the soul-less shells of earthly beings. They were living human beings who had passed the crucible of life’s daily purification. Now, the crucible of the purification of God’s mercy in Purgatory, prepares them to be with God and all the saints and angels in God’s eternal Love.

In the following excerpt from a letter of Padre Pio to his Spiritual Director, Padre Benedetto, he helps us to focus on a fact we tend to forget when we get caught up in all the extraordinary moments we read about concerning saints, especially the uniquely blessed ones with special gifts like Padre Pio. We forget that to be a saint, one has to start out as a vulnerable human being. We, created to the image and likeness of God, have an entire lifetime to learn how to eventually make the correct decisions in our relationship with God. We are given innumerable opportunities to understand our actions, correct our faults, and receive the graces to grow in God’s love.

A saint is created to the image and likeness of God the Creator. In time we live the uncertainties of a bodily life that is preyed upon in many ways. The challenges of life have failures as well as successes in what is both material and spiritual. Offering every moment to God and asking that the spiritual benefits of faith that underlies life be shared, or totally given, for the relief of the Holy Souls in Purgatory leaves us in the wonderful predicament of having to trust in God’s Mercy. You can’t get better than that! Remember what Jesus “promised”: *The measure you measure with will be the measure used to measure you* (Matthew 7: 2). Use the “correct measure” and you have it made! ... otherwise, you are in for trouble! ... and you are the one who brought it upon yourself.

Padre Pio’s letter is simple in his feelings, suffered in his desire, surrendering in his faith. The words we read below are few. The message is powerful. Padre Pio is at peace in his soul, patient in his expectations, and powerful against the “adversary”. Why? He views every moment from the perspective of the Will of the Father, that he might be conformed to Jesus the Son, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit he might vanquish the “enemy”. Victory may leave scars, but that is so we remember and that others can praise with us the power of grace at work in the one who trusts.

The spiritual war has not ceased and, in fact, it is fiercer than ever. To put it briefly, dear Father, the enemy of our salvation is so furious that he hardly leaves me a moment’s peace and wages war on me in a variety of ways. I desire the grace from Jesus to be set free from this, because I fear to offend him. If he wants to mortify me, I wish he would do so by corporal suffering, which I would diligently accept... Patience! It is true that I am suffering, but I am very happy in this state for you have assured me that it does not mean that God has abandoned me but rather shows the delicacy of his exquisite love. I hope that the Lord is pleased to accept my sufferings in satisfaction for the innumerable times I have offended him. After all, what is my suffering in comparison to what I deserve for my sins? ... However that may be...for me it is sufficient to know that God wills it and then I am quite happy...For some time past I have felt the need to offer myself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory...It seems to me that Jesus really wants this... (Letter to Padre Benedetto, 29 November 1910).

We know Padre Pio's life was marked by extraordinary holiness and profound suffering. This letter to Padre Benedetto speaks of a spiritual war. One that has not ceased. In fact, this war *is fiercer than ever*. He writes of *the enemy of our salvation, who wages war* on him in a variety of ways, *leaving him little peace*. Through all this, Padre Pio does not despair. He does not ask for comfort or escape. He asks for grace. His deepest concern is not the pain he endures, but the possibility of offending the One he loves. This is the heart of holiness, not the absence of suffering, but the presence of love so deep that it transforms suffering into a gift.

Padre Pio's words reveal a profound spiritual struggle that is both deeply personal and common for those who walk the path of faith. He does not merely lament his suffering but offers us a testament to the transforming power of divine love and the redemptive nature of pain when united with the will of God.

He speaks of the fierceness of the spiritual war he is experiencing. His words set the tone for the entire letter. He is speaking not of a passive enduring of hardship but of an active engagement in a battle, a spiritual battle. Padre Pio sees himself as a soldier in a war for salvation. The enemy is satan, who seeks to disrupt his peace and draw him away from divine grace. The image of "spiritual warfare" is quite common in the writings of many saints. But, in Padre Pio's case, it is particularly vivid. He writes of the enemy's fury and the relentless nature of the attacks. His life is lived in constant vigilance and spiritual alertness.

This is not the logic of the world. The world tells us that suffering is a failure, and that pain is to be avoided at all costs. But the Gospel tells us something different. It tells us that the cross is the path to resurrection, that suffering can be sanctified, that love is proven in sacrifice. *Per Crucem ad Lucem (Through the Cross to the Light)*, these words of Pope St. Paul VI summarize briefly the reality of Franciscan "perfect joy".

Padre Pio hoped that his suffering would be accepted by the Lord in satisfaction for the times he had offended Him. He did not see himself as a victim of injustice, but as a sinner redeemed by mercy. He understood that suffering could be a way of making amends, of drawing closer to the heart of God. And then, in a beautiful act of self-giving, he offered himself as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. *It seems to me, he writes, that Jesus really wants this.*

Rather than giving in to despair or praying to escape, he desires the grace from Jesus to be set free, not for comfort's sake, but out of fear of offending God. This reveals a heart that is not centered on self-preservation but on fidelity to divine love. His fear is not of pain itself but of spiritual failure, of falling short in his devotion. He even expresses a willingness to accept corporal suffering if that is God's will. He prefers physical affliction over spiritual compromise. He is always faithful to the Christian tradition of redemptive suffering. Pain is not meaningless but can be offered up as a participation in Christ's own Passion. He embraces suffering as a deeply theological value rooted in the belief that suffering, when united with Christ, becomes a channel of grace.

Padre Pio acknowledges his suffering but immediately counters it with a declaration of happiness. This paradox, suffering and joy coexisting, is at the heart of our Christian relationship with God.

He finds peace and comfort in the assurance that his suffering does not signify abandonment by God but rather the delicacy of God's exquisite love. This is a profound insight: that suffering can be a sign of intimacy with God, a mark of divine favor rather than divine wrath. It challenges the common thought that suffering is a punishment or a sign of spiritual failure. For Padre Pio, suffering is a gift, a means of drawing closer to God and participating in His redemptive work.

There is a deep desire and hope that his sufferings are accepted by the Lord as satisfaction for his sins. Padre Pio's deep sense of contrition and humility does not allow him to see himself as a victim of injustice but as a sinner who deserves far worse. In his view, the suffering he is undergoing is not only bearable but also so little compared to the weight of his offenses. This attitude displays recognition of the gravity of sin and the boundless mercy of God. It is a theology of grace that acknowledges human frailty while exalting divine compassion. His willingness to suffer is not rooted in guilt but in love. And it is in this love that he seeks to repair the breach between himself and God.

When we seek to repair "the breach" between ourselves and someone else, we must be the ones who take the first step. Padre Pio speaks of his desire to offer himself as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. This is a remarkable act of self-giving. He does not merely endure suffering for his own purification but extends it as a sacrifice for others. How well the good Padre understood the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints. What a beautiful reminder of the interchange among God's children where the merits of one can benefit the many! Intercessory prayer goes a long way. It leaps from time to eternity and back. Everyone benefits!

Padre Pio sees his suffering as an interchange, a currency as it were, of grace, one that can be spent on behalf of those who are most in need. His identification with the souls in Purgatory and poor sinners is not abstract but deeply personal. He feels called, perhaps even chosen, by Jesus to take on this role. The phrase *It seems to me that Jesus really wants this* suggests a deep mystical awareness. He senses a divine prompting that goes beyond the merely human desire.

Surrender is the depth awareness of what is his to do. He does not resist the will of God but embraces it, even when it leads to pain and struggle. His happiness is not based on external circumstances but on the knowledge that he is in harmony with God's will. This is the essence of holiness: to find joy not in comfort but in conformity to the divine will. The few words above, addressed to Padre Benedetto, offer us a window into the soul of Padre Pio who has been refined by suffering and transformed by grace. It is a testament to the power of faith to transcend pain, to turn torment into triumph, and to make of one's life a living sacrifice.

The letter is more than a personal reflection. It is a spiritual declaration of purpose and intent. It speaks to the heart of Christian discipleship, where suffering is not avoided but embraced, where the will of God is the ultimate source of joy, and where love for others motivates the deepest acts of self-sacrifice.

Padre Pio's words challenge us to reconsider our own relationship with suffering, to see it not as a curse but as a potential blessing, and to offer it up in union with Christ for the salvation of souls. His words inspire us because they reveal a soul that has been consumed by divine love.

The Love mentioned here does not flinch in the face of pain but finds in it the path to holiness. It is a reminder of what Jesus desires from us. We are not expected to experience the same intensity of suffering that Padre Pio endured. But Jesus does want our hearts. He wants our willingness. He wants us to say, "Lord, whatever you ask, I will accept. Whatever you permit, I will trust. Whatever you desire, I will offer." This is the path of discipleship. It is not always easy. It is not always comfortable. But it is always filled with grace.

In whatever suffering you may experience - physical, emotional, or spiritual - do not think that God has abandoned you. Do not think that you are far from His love. You may be closer than ever. You may be sharing in the mystery of the Cross, the mystery that transforms pain into redemption, sorrow into joy, and death into life.

Ask for the grace to suffer well if the Lord asks this of you. Though we may not seek suffering, let us accept it when it comes as a "gift": to unite it with Christ, to offer it for others, to trust that even in the fiercest battles God is near.

Keep the example of Padre Pio always alive in your hearts. He was a man who suffered deeply, loved fiercely, and found joy not in comfort, but in surrender.

May we learn to surrender to the Eternal Love of God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit. May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary and good Saint Joseph help strengthen us in the battle, and may our beloved Padre Pio teach us by his example and words how to encounter the enemy and be victorious with the Victor over sin and death.

Peace and Blessings
Fr. Francis A. Sariego, OFM Cap
National Coordinator

*Happy Thanksgiving 2025
Be grateful. Thank God always, in all ways, for everything.
Thank you God that I am who I am and nothing more.
Thank You for creating me.*