

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

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Several weeks ago the Church celebrated the Solemnity of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The Real Presence of Jesus, Incarnate Son of the eternal God, is Center of all we are on this earth. Without this Presence, life itself would make no sense. The Eucharist makes the Church as the Church continues to “make” the Eucharist. The blood of Christ flows in the bodily veins of the one who receives Jesus in the Eucharist. For a few minutes, but there nonetheless, the Presence challenges our faith and also our need to spend some time with the Lord after receiving Him in Holy Communion. The truth of His “physical” presence in mystery continues an awesome presence that persists through the centuries. The Apostle Paul warns that *anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord without discerning the body of Christ is bringing judgment upon themselves.* (1 Corinthians 11:29)

A well known saying of our beloved Padre Pio is: *It is easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.* This statement reflects his deep belief in the centrality of the Eucharist to the spiritual life of the Church and the world. The comparison to the sun is striking: just as the sun is essential for the physical survival of life on earth, Padre Pio saw the Eucharist as the “life-giving” force for the spiritual life of humanity. Without the sun, the planet would still exist, but without the Eucharist he believed the soul would lack the grace and sustenance needed for true life in God.

For Padre Pio - and all Catholics - the Holy Mass is not merely a liturgical act but a living participation in the sacrifice of Christ. He taught that every Mass, heard with devotion, produces *marvelous effects, abundant spiritual and material graces which we, ourselves, do not know.* The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life, sustaining both the soul and the community. The Eucharist is the Real Divine Presence among us! Nevertheless, there are many Roman Catholics who do not believe in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the transubstantiated Sacrament of the Altar.

Padre Pio's love for the Eucharist he celebrated compelled him to write to Fr. Benedetto: *What hurts me most is the thought of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. My heart feels drawn by a higher force each morning before I am united with him in the Blessed Sacrament. I have such a hunger and thirst before I receive Him that I almost die, and precisely because I am incapable of not uniting myself with him, I am sometimes obliged to feed on (Him) when I have a fever.* (to Fr. Benedetto - 29 March 1911)

The words reveal a soul consumed by love for Christ and transformed by the mystery of the Eucharist. They express not merely devotion but an intense longing that reaches the deepest levels of human existence. We encounter a heart that has discovered where true life is found and therefore experiences pain whenever separation from Christ, The Life, seems possible.

The statement, *What hurts me most is the thought of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament.* Most people naturally think that suffering comes from physical illness, emotional wounds, rejection, failure, or loss. Yet Padre Pio identifies a different source of pain. The greatest sorrow is connected to Jesus present in the Eucharist. This reveals a profound reversal of values. The soul has become so united to Christ that spiritual

separation is felt more deeply than bodily suffering. Such a perspective challenges modern attitudes that often place comfort and personal well-being above everything else. It reminds us that the deepest hunger of the human heart is not for pleasure, success, or security but for communion with God.

The Eucharist is not merely a religious symbol or ritual. Jesus is encountered as a living Person. The language used is intensely personal. The speaker does not long for an experience, an emotion, or a spiritual idea. The longing is for Him. This distinction is important because authentic Christian spirituality is always rooted in our relationship with Christ. Faith is not primarily adherence to doctrines, although doctrines matter. It is not primarily participation in ceremonies, although worship is essential. At its center is a living encounter with Jesus Christ. The Eucharist becomes the privileged place where that encounter reaches its fullest expression.

The soul recognizes that this attraction to Christ is not self-generated. There is a force beyond human effort at work. God Himself is drawing the person toward union. This reflects a fundamental truth of the spiritual life: every movement toward God begins with God. We often imagine that holiness is achieved solely through discipline, determination, and personal sacrifice. While these have their place, the deeper reality is that God initiates the relationship. He calls before we answer. He seeks before we search. He attracts before we respond.

This awareness can be deeply encouraging for people of faith. Nevertheless, there are many who struggle with prayer because they feel weak, distracted, or inconsistent. Yet spiritual life does not depend entirely on our strength. Even the desire to pray is already evidence of God's action within us. Whenever we feel drawn toward goodness, truth, worship, or repentance, we can recognize the gentle pull of divine grace. The "higher force" that draws the soul each morning continues to work in every person of faith today and every day.

The image of hunger and thirst is particularly powerful. Throughout Scripture, hunger and thirst symbolize humanity's deepest desires. Physical hunger reminds us of our dependence on food for survival. Spiritual hunger reminds us of our dependence on God for life itself. Some have such a desire for the Eucharist they cannot wait till receiving Him. There is a hunger and thirst before receiving the Eucharistic Christ that they feel they are dying, the yearning is so strong. This is not exaggeration born of emotional excess. Rather, it reflects the conviction that Christ is the true nourishment of the soul. He is "Viaticum", that is "Food for the journey". There are more souls than you may think whose love for the Eucharist creates a sense of emptiness when they are not able to receive the Eucharist. It is not a personal "pious devotionism". It is a real desire for Christ.

In a world overflowing with distractions, many people experience a vague sense of emptiness. They pursue achievement, entertainment, possessions, relationships, or recognition, hoping these will satisfy their longings. Yet even after obtaining these things, the heart often remains restless. Ultimately, human desires point beyond earthly realities. We were created for God, and therefore nothing less than God can fully satisfy us. The intense hunger described here is simply the recognition of this truth.

There is also a practical lesson hidden within this spiritual longing. Hunger motivates action. A hungry person seeks food. A thirsty person seeks water. In the same way, spiritual hunger should move us toward practices that deepen our relationship with God. Prayer, Scripture reading, Eucharistic adoration, participation in Mass, acts of charity, and regular examination of conscience, all become ways of responding to the soul's deepest needs. The danger is not that we hunger too much for God but that we settle for substitutes that leave us spiritually malnourished.

Perhaps the most moving part of the passage is the confession of being "incapable of not uniting" oneself with Christ. This language reveals the transformative power of love. Love changes obligation into desire. What once required effort becomes natural. What once seemed difficult becomes necessary. In ordinary human

relationships, we see something similar. People who deeply love one another do not view time together as a burden. They seek each other's presence because love creates longing.

The same principle operates in the spiritual life. As love for Christ grows, prayer ceases to be merely a duty. Worship becomes a privilege rather than an obligation. Communion becomes a necessity of the heart. The soul begins to recognize that life without regular contact with Christ is incomplete. This transformation does not happen overnight. It develops gradually through fidelity, grace, and repeated encounters with God. Yet the passage offers a glimpse of what mature love can become.

Another remarkable feature is the reference to receiving the Eucharist even while suffering from fever. Physical illness would normally discourage activity and diminish enthusiasm. Yet here illness cannot extinguish the longing for Christ. This demonstrates the difference between emotional fervor and genuine spiritual desire. Emotions fluctuate according to circumstances. Authentic love endures despite circumstances. The soul continues to seek Christ not because the soul feels strong but because it knows where true strength is found.

This aspect carries significant practical relevance. Many people assume that spiritual growth depends upon ideal conditions. They imagine they will pray more when life becomes less stressful, attend worship more regularly when their schedule improves, or deepen their faith when difficulties disappear. Yet spiritual maturity often develops precisely in seasons of weakness. Illness, disappointment, grief, and uncertainty can become opportunities to discover a deeper dependence upon God. We are encouraged to persevere in achieving our desires. Faith in the Eucharist encourages us not to abandon spiritual practices during difficult times but to cling to Christ even more firmly.

Padre Pio's words also reveal the paradox of Christian spirituality. The soul experiences both pain and joy simultaneously. There is pain in longing for Christ and pain in feeling separated from Him. Yet there is also profound joy in the anticipation of union. This paradox mirrors the entire Christian journey. We live between promise and fulfillment. We have encountered Christ, yet we still await complete union with Him. We experience His presence, yet we continue to long for more. The spiritual life is therefore marked by both satisfaction and desire.

This tension is not a sign of failure. It is evidence of growth. The closer a person comes to God, the greater the capacity to desire Him. Saints often speak of an increasing longing for God because love continually expands the heart. Just as a healthy appetite reflects life, spiritual desire reflects the vitality of the soul. The hunger described in this passage is not meant to be eliminated but fulfilled again and again through communion with Christ.

For contemporary Christians, Padre Pio's words pose important questions. Do we approach the Eucharist with expectation or routine? Do we recognize Christ as the source of our deepest life? Do we allow ourselves to be drawn by grace, or do we resist the invitations of God because of distractions and competing priorities? The passage invites a renewed appreciation for the gift of the Blessed Sacrament. It calls believers to move beyond habit and rediscover wonder.

Ultimately, these words testify to a heart that has found its treasure. The intensity of the longing described may seem extraordinary, but its underlying truth is universal. Every human being is created for communion with God. The restlessness, searching, and yearning that characterize human existence are signs pointing toward that destiny. In the Eucharist, the soul encounters the One for whom it was made. Hunger meets nourishment. Thirst meets living water. Love meets the Beloved. We are challenged to examine our own desires and priorities. We are reminded that the deepest wounds are spiritual and that the deepest healing

comes through union with Christ. We are taught that grace precedes every step of faith, that true love perseveres through weakness, and that spiritual hunger is not something to fear but something to cultivate.

The transforming power of the graces flowing from the Eucharist into the heart and person of the one receiving Jesus worthily is a fact always to be remembered. The means and reason for our perfection, fulfilling the purpose of our creation, is to *achieve the stature of Christ* (Ephesians 4: 13). As believers we should strive to attain unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God, ultimately growing into maturity that reflects the fullness of Christ. This maturity is not just about individual growth but also about the collective growth of the church as the body of Christ.

Padre Pio's words to Maria Gargani convey this truth simply: *I think that the Holy Eucharist is a great means through which to aspire to perfection. But we must receive it with the desire and intention of removing from the heart all that is displeasing to Him with Whom we wish to dwell. Therefore my daughter, you must try to continually overcome yourself in those daily struggles which the Lord presents to you. And these efforts must extend also to the constant exercise of correcting your defects, acquiring virtue and in doing good.* (to Maria Gargani - 27 July 1917)

The Holy Eucharist stands at the very center of the Christian life because it is not merely a symbol of Christ's presence but a profound encounter with Him Who gives Himself entirely to His people. In this sacred gift, heaven touches earth, and the soul is invited into a communion so intimate that no human friendship, affection, or earthly joy can fully compare with it. Yet the greatness of this gift also calls forth a response. If we desire to dwell with Christ, if we truly long to welcome Him into the depths of our hearts, then we must prepare that dwelling place with sincerity, humility, and love. The Eucharist is not only a consolation for the soul; it is also a summons to transformation.

To receive the Lord worthily is to receive Him with a desire to become what He calls us to be. It is to approach Him not merely seeking comfort but seeking conversion. Christ enters the heart not to leave it unchanged but to renew it from within. Every Communion is an invitation to allow His grace to penetrate the hidden corners of our lives, revealing what is still selfish, impatient, proud, fearful, or resistant to His will. The soul that truly loves Christ does not fear this revelation. Rather, it welcomes it because it understands that whatever displeases Him ultimately hinders its own peace and freedom.

There is a tendency in human nature to settle into a comfortable spirituality, one that desires God's blessings without embracing the work of interior change. Yet the Eucharist gently challenges such complacency. When Christ gives Himself to us, He asks for our hearts in return. He desires not a portion of our affection but the whole of it. He asks us to surrender habits that keep us distant from Him, attitudes that weaken charity, and attachments that distract us from His presence. This surrender is not accomplished in a single moment. It unfolds gradually through countless acts of faithfulness, through daily choices, and through a willingness to cooperate with grace.

The path toward holiness is often found not in extraordinary achievements but in ordinary struggles. Every day presents opportunities to overcome ourselves. These small victories are precious in the eyes of God because they reveal a heart striving to love Him more completely. The Lord often works through ordinary circumstances, using them as instruments for our sanctification. What appears to be an inconvenience may actually be an invitation to patience. What feels like a disappointment may become an opportunity for trust. What seems to be a burden may be the very means through which God strengthens virtue within us.

To overcome oneself is one of the greatest challenges in the spiritual life. It is often easier to identify faults in others than to confront our own weaknesses. It is easier to dream of heroic acts than to persevere in hidden

sacrifices. Yet genuine growth in holiness requires honesty. We must recognize those areas where self-love still governs our actions. Pride may disguise itself as confidence. Impatience may present itself as efficiency. Selfishness may appear as self-preservation. Without careful examination, these defects can remain deeply rooted within us.

The grace of the Eucharist provides strength for this work of self-knowledge and self-conquest. Christ does not reveal our weaknesses in order to discourage us. He reveals them so that He may heal them. Like a loving physician, He uncovers the wound so that it can receive treatment. The soul that receives Him with humility discovers that His presence brings both light and strength. He illuminates what needs correction and then supplies the grace necessary for change. What would be impossible through human effort alone becomes possible through union with Him. This is why the desire to remove whatever displeases God is so important. Without that desire, spiritual growth remains limited. A person may receive the Eucharist regularly yet remain resistant to deeper conversion. "Lord, show me whatever separates me from You, and give me the courage to surrender it,"

No one reaches perfection overnight. Even the saints spent years confronting weaknesses, overcoming temptations, and learning greater fidelity. What distinguished them was not the absence of faults but their perseverance in addressing them. They refused to make peace with sin or mediocrity. Every defect left unchallenged could become an obstacle to deeper union with God. This work requires patience. What matters is not achieving instant perfection but remaining faithful in the struggle. A soul that falls yet rises again through grace is moving forward. A soul that continues to seek God despite weaknesses is already responding to His love.

Alongside the correction of defects comes the acquisition of virtue. Virtue is not simply the absence of wrongdoing; it is the presence of goodness. It is the formation of habits that reflect the character of Christ. Patience, humility, charity, kindness, purity, generosity, and faithfulness do not emerge automatically. They develop through repeated acts performed with God's help. Just as a muscle grows stronger through exercise, virtue grows stronger through practice. The Eucharist nourishes this growth because it unites us to the One who embodies every virtue perfectly. Gradually, often imperceptibly, His virtues become reflected in us.

Love cannot remain confined within the heart; it must express itself through action. The Eucharist teaches us this lesson profoundly because it is the sacrament of self-giving love. Christ does not merely speak of love; He gives Himself completely. Therefore, those who receive Him are called to imitate that generosity. Acts of kindness, compassion, service, and forgiveness become natural fruits of Eucharistic living. A word of encouragement offered to someone who is discouraged, a patient listening ear, a hidden act of service, a prayer for those who suffer, a willingness to forgive an offense, these actions may seem small, but they carry immense spiritual value. God frequently works through ordinary acts of charity to accomplish extraordinary things. Every genuine act of love extends His presence into the world.

There is a beautiful connection between the Eucharist and daily life. The grace received at the altar is meant to accompany us into our homes, workplaces, communities, and relationships. Communion is not an isolated spiritual event. It is meant to influence every aspect of our conduct. Having received Christ, we are called to carry His presence wherever we go. Every challenge becomes a chance to grow in virtue. Every difficulty becomes an occasion to rely more fully on God's grace. Every encounter becomes a possibility for love. The Christian life then ceases to be merely a collection of religious practices and becomes a living relationship with Christ that shapes every moment.

The desire for Christian perfection can sometimes seem overwhelming. Yet, it is not primarily about flawless performance. It is about perfect love. It is about allowing God to love us and responding to that love with

increasing generosity. The saints became holy not because they never struggled but because they continually turned toward God. They trusted His mercy, cooperated with His grace, and persevered in love. The Eucharist sustains this journey because it continually places us in contact with the source of holiness. We do not strive for holiness alone. Christ accompanies us every step of the way.

As we receive Him, we can ask for the grace to recognize whatever displeases Him within us, for courage to overcome selfish tendencies, patience to persevere in correction, and generosity to embrace opportunities for virtue. We can ask Him to make our hearts more like His own. Such prayers are never wasted because they align with His deepest desires for us. The Eucharist is both nourishment and transformation. It strengthens us for the journey while also guiding us toward the destination. It reminds us that holiness is not reserved for a select few but is the calling of every Christian. Through daily efforts, repeated acts of fidelity, sincere repentance, and continual reliance on grace, the soul gradually becomes more receptive to God's presence. In the end, the goal is not simply moral improvement but union with Christ. We strive for virtue because we long to reflect His beauty. We do good because His love compels us to share it with others.

Each Communion becomes a sacred invitation. Christ enters the heart and quietly says, "Allow Me to transform you. Let Me remove what hinders love. Let Me strengthen what is weak. Let Me shape you into the person you were created to be." The soul that responds with generosity discovers that holiness is not an impossible dream but a living reality formed one day at a time, one act of love at a time, and one faithful reception of the Eucharist at a time. In this way, the Eucharist becomes not only the food of the journey ("Viaticum") but also the means through which the heart is gradually perfected in the love of God.

May God bless you and your loved ones. May our Blessed Mother Mary and Her beloved Husband St. Joseph be with you to protect you on life's journey. May our beloved Padre Pio guide, guard, and protect you always.

Peace and Blessings

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