

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

St. Francis of Assisi Friary

1901 Prior Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19809

tel: (302) 798-1454 fax: (302) 798-3360 website: pppg.org email: pppgusa@gmail.com

Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

August 2026

May the Lord grant you all the precious gift of His peace.

Padre Pio's love and devotion for our Blessed Mother Mary was undeniable. The tenderness and beauty of Mary were always present to his mind and heart. And he made sure that all those who met him were reminded how much they must never forget her. The Mother of the Incarnate Son of God, because of her intimate participation in the History and Mystery of our Salvation, became at the foot of the Cross, the Mother of all God's children. The following passages from a letter he addressed to his spiritual director Padre Agostino, offer us a slight insight into the heart of this "Child of Mary"

How often I have confided to this Mother the painful anxieties that troubled my heart! And how often has she consoled me! But in what did my gratitude consist? In my greatest sufferings it seems to me that I no longer have a mother on earth, but a very compassionate one in heaven. But many times, when my heart was at peace I have forgotten all this almost entirely. I have even forgotten my day of gratitude towards this blessed heavenly Mother! (letter to Padre Agostino, 1 May 1912)

Padre Pio reveals a truth that many believers discover only through experience: the Blessed Virgin Mary becomes especially close when our hearts are burdened. He confessed, "How often I have confided to this Mother the painful anxieties that troubled my heart! And how often has she consoled me!" These are not the words of someone speaking about a distant devotion, but of a son who knew he could always turn to his Mother. Mary never grows weary of listening. She never dismisses our fears or turns away from our tears. As she stood faithfully beneath the Cross of Jesus, she continues to stand beside all who suffer, offering the quiet strength that comes from leading every soul to her Son.

Padre Pio recognized that in his deepest trials, he had not lost a mother (Mamma Maria Giuseppa) but had gained an even more compassionate one in heaven. This reflects the gift Jesus gave to the Church from the Cross when He entrusted Mary to the beloved disciple. In that sacred moment, Christ entrusted His Mother to every disciple throughout history. Mary's spiritual motherhood is a living reality. She watches over her children with tenderness, intercedes for them with unwavering love, and encourages them to remain faithful even when darkness seems overwhelming. When we feel abandoned, misunderstood, or overwhelmed by the burdens of life, Mary gently reminds us that we are never alone because her Son is always near.

Yet Padre Pio's honesty also exposes a weakness that touches many of us. He admitted that once peace returned to his heart, he often forgot the Mother who had comforted him. He even forgot to express gratitude for her loving care. How easily we fall into the same pattern. It can happen even to saints! Thank God! That means there is hope for all of us. In moments of distress, our prayers become fervent, our rosaries are held tightly, and we seek Mary's powerful intercession with confidence. But

when life becomes calm again, gratitude often fades into the background. We begin to rely once more on ourselves, forgetting the countless graces that carried us through our darkest nights.

This is an invitation to examine our own hearts. Do we remember Mary only when suffering drives us to our knees? Or do we honor her also in times of joy, thanking her for her constant love and guidance? True devotion is not built only on desperate petitions but also on faithful gratitude. A grateful heart recognizes that every consolation, every answered prayer, every hidden protection is ultimately a gift flowing from God's mercy, often received through Mary's loving intercession.

Mary never asks us to remain focused on her alone. Like the servants at Cana, she always directs us to Jesus, saying, "Do whatever He tells you." Her mission is to deepen our trust in Christ and to help us persevere in holiness. Every time we pray the Rosary, every time we whisper a simple "Hail Mary," every time we entrust our worries to her Immaculate Heart, we place ourselves beneath the mantle of a Mother whose greatest joy is to lead us into closer union with her Son.

As Padre Pio continued with his letter to Padre Agostino, he confided that: *I felt a mysterious fire in my heart which I could not understand. I felt the need to put ice on it, to quench this fire which was consuming me....The devil continues to fill me with terror, and since you wrote saying that perhaps at the middle of this month we shall meet again, he is frightening me by saying he must destroy me...I am ready for anything, but I hope that Jesus will not grant him this permission...* (letter to Padre Agostino 1 May 1912).

In these deeply personal words, Padre Pio opens a window into the hidden spiritual battles that shaped his life. His description of "a mysterious fire" burning within his heart is not the language of physical illness alone, nor is it merely poetic imagery. It reflects an intense interior experience that he believed was connected to God's action within his soul. Throughout the history of Christian spirituality, saints have often described divine love as a fire - one that purifies, transforms, and consumes everything that prevents complete union with God. Yet unlike an ordinary fire, this spiritual flame does not destroy the person. Instead, it gradually burns away pride, selfishness, fear, and attachment, leaving the soul more fully open to God's grace.

For Padre Pio, however, this experience was accompanied by extraordinary suffering. He speaks of wanting to place ice upon his heart, as though the intensity of this mysterious fire had become almost unbearable. His words remind us that God's work within the soul is not always accompanied by pleasant feelings or emotional consolation. Sometimes growth in holiness is painful because it requires surrender. The closer a soul is drawn toward God, the more everything opposed to God must be purified. Padre Pio accepted this painful mystery even when he could not fully understand it himself.

Alongside this burning love came another reality that appears frequently in his letters: spiritual warfare. Padre Pio states that "the devil continues to fill me with terror." This was not an isolated remark. Throughout his correspondence with Padre Agostino and other spiritual directors, he repeatedly described fierce temptations, frightening visions, and what he believed were direct attacks from the evil one. Whether physical, psychological, or spiritual in their outward appearance, Padre Pio interpreted these experiences through the lens of faith. He believed that Satan especially attacks those who sincerely desire to belong completely to Christ.

Notice that fear becomes one of the enemy's primary weapons. Padre Pio does not describe the devil tempting him primarily with wealth, pleasure, or worldly ambition. Instead, he describes terror. Fear

has always been one of Satan's most effective tools because fear can weaken trust in God's providence. When fear dominates the heart, hope begins to fade, prayer becomes more difficult, and discouragement can easily take root. Yet Padre Pio refuses to allow fear to have the final word. Even while honestly acknowledging his terror, he continues writing to his spiritual director, continues praying, and continues placing his confidence in Christ.

This letter also reveals the importance of spiritual obedience in Padre Pio's life. He writes to Padre Agostino not simply as a friend but as the priest entrusted with guiding his soul. Rather than making private judgments about his extraordinary experiences, Padre Pio consistently submitted them to the discernment of the Church through his spiritual director. This humility protected him from pride and from deception. Mystical experiences, no matter how extraordinary, were never for him a reason to trust himself more than the wisdom of the Church. His willingness to obey even when it was difficult became one of the defining characteristics of his holiness.

An interesting detail appears when Padre Pio mentions the possibility of meeting Padre Agostino. Instead of finding only comfort in that prospect, he says the devil uses it to frighten him even more, telling him that he must be destroyed before such a meeting can happen. This reveals something significant about the nature of spiritual encouragement. Satan seeks to isolate people. Healthy spiritual relationships strengthen faith, provide accountability, and offer consolation during difficult times. If Padre Pio could receive encouragement and guidance from his spiritual director, then the enemy's influence would be weakened. His fear of losing that opportunity became another battlefield in his spiritual struggle.

Yet despite these frightening thoughts, Padre Pio concludes with remarkable surrender: "I am ready for anything, but I hope that Jesus will not grant him this permission." These words beautifully express the balance between courage and dependence upon God. Padre Pio does not presume upon his own strength. He knows he cannot overcome evil by himself. At the same time, he is willing to endure whatever God permits. His confidence rests not in his own endurance but in the mercy and sovereignty of Christ.

This attitude echoes the story of Job in the Old Testament, where Satan can act only within the limits allowed by God. Padre Pio believed that even the devil's attacks could never escape God's providence. Evil is real, but it is never equal to God's power. Whatever suffering God permits always remains under His loving authority and can ultimately become a means of sanctification. That conviction gave Padre Pio the strength to persevere through years of darkness, misunderstanding, illness, and persecution. For modern believers, this letter offers several important lessons. First, it reminds us that genuine faith does not eliminate struggle. Even great saints experienced fear, confusion, and intense spiritual trials. Holiness does not mean living without battles; it means remaining faithful in the midst of them. Second, the letter teaches us the importance of seeking wise spiritual guidance rather than trying to navigate every difficulty alone. Padre Pio's humility in submitting his experiences to Padre Agostino provides an enduring example of trust and obedience.

The letter points us toward hope. Although the language of fire, terror, and destruction may seem overwhelming, none of these realities has the final word. The final word belongs to Jesus. Throughout every trial, Padre Pio keeps turning his eyes back to Christ. His hope is not that suffering will necessarily disappear but that Jesus will remain present and will never allow evil to triumph over the soul that continues to trust Him. In that confidence, Padre Pio found the strength to endure the unimaginable,

leaving behind a witness that continues to inspire Christians throughout the world to place their confidence not in themselves, but in the unfailing love and victorious power of Christ.

May we learn from Padre Pio's humility. Let us run to Mary in our trials without hesitation, but let us also remain faithful in thanksgiving when those trials have passed. A child who remembers a mother's love only in moments of need has not yet fully understood her heart. May we become children who never forget the compassionate Mother God has given us, rejoicing in her presence in sorrow and in peace, until she leads us safely into the eternal embrace of her Son, Jesus Christ.

May our Heavenly Mother be a constant companion on our journey through time to eternity, as she certainly is. But, may we recognize Her presence and follow her as she leads us to Jesus.

May all of you be blessed in God's love and find peace and inner joy through your love and openness of heart to our Father Padre Pio's example, and gentle yet firm words encouraging us to live Jesus through Mary and be at peace. Pray, hope, and don't worry! We know the words. Let's live them and show Padre Pio that we truly follow his direction even after time turned to eternity for him.

God bless you and all your loved ones. May the end of the summer season offer you some time we of rest and relaxation. These too are a necessity of the spiritual life. They offer us the time and space to "regroup" our strengths and ambitions to "begin again" to follow Jesus.

Peace and Blessings

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

National Coordinator