

# 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](http://pppg.org) email: [pppgusa@gmail.com](mailto:pppgusa@gmail.com)

Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

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At the very beginning of the New Year 2025, let the blessing of God for His People that our Seraphic Father St. Francis made his own and that our Mother St. Clare embellished be a prayer and desire for us all. These words are the hope of all people of good will on whom the *Father's favor rests*. God's favor blossoms in Peace, leading to Joy, in God's Love. Our hope that God bless us all and our loved ones, and all His creation, with His peace, is the yearning of the human heart. The peace the world seeks, is a peace the world cannot give unless we disarm our hearts that we might recognize the Lord within each one us, the children of God.

*The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!  
The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!  
May He live in you. May you always live in Him!*

In this Holy Jubilee Year of Grace we say *Praise Be You, My Lord* in the words of the Cantic of the Creatures. This Jubilee Year is a year inviting us to Christian Hope and Reconciliation. Christian Hope sees and encourages us to recognize the goodness of God in all His children. Yes, we are faulty. Created in God's Love we still lose our way at times. God offers us a lifetime to get "back on track" as we experience the goodness of God through our reconciliation with God and one another, especially through the sacramental life of the Church – Reconciliation and Eucharist.

St. Francis of Assisi would often greet the people with: *Buon Giorno, Buona Gente* (Good Day Good People). The goodness of God manifest in the People of God is what we strive to live and grow in every day

If our Seraphic Father were here in the flesh, this is most likely one of the ways he would greet us as well. His love for God and all creation gave him the ability to look beyond the flaws that envelop all human beings. He seemed to see a ray of goodness in everyone. We can see this in his *Cantic of the Creatures*. Everything and everyone speak to the "Poverello" of the wonder and goodness of God.

We all know that only God is truly *good, all good, the highest good, the Lord God living and true* (The Praises of God – St. Francis of Assisi). The response of Jesus to the question *Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life* (Luke 18:18), and the greeting of Saint Francis

mentioned above, should make us realize that in each of us there is the fruit of God's eternal love. There is an image of the goodness of God. We are challenged to recognize, accept and manifest this image to the world. The strength of the reflection of God in us is determined by the intensity of our relationship with God and how we live His Word and Holy Will. The greater we conform ourselves to Jesus the more we reflect the goodness of God.

In the *Canticle of the Creatures*, after praising the beauty and majesty of God in the sun, Francis continues: *Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven. You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.*

The sun Francis praises, resplendent with light, power, brilliance of majesty and glory speaks to us of the immensity and power of God. It is that power that enables us to look and see the goodness of God in everyone and everything, even when it is hidden from view.

Nevertheless, goodness by nature is forever overflowing with new life. The sun is a source of the maintenance and development of life. St. Francis understands that as nature follows its daily course, God provides the necessary continuity of the sun's powerful presence even when it seems to "hide from us" during the night. The light now shines through its reflection on the heavenly body we call the moon. We know the stars are suns in their own areas of the vast universe. Nevertheless, their distant flickering lights are like so many "Christmas lights" that dispel the total darkness of the universe. The moon and stars brighten the hearts of those who look at the heavens and see with the eyes of faith the splendor, magnificence, power, and care of the Creator for His inimitable work of Creation.

Sister Moon reflects the brilliance of Brother Sun who is a sign of the Creator. In the beginning, He created the light by day that regulates the mirror of the night (cfr Genesis 1). The goodness of God can never be matched or equaled. Its reflection can be seen in the hearts and lives of other. They are like mirrors that offer an indirect way of seeing what no human eye can see without being overwhelmed.

Like the moon, that reflects the power, warmth, and brilliance of the sun, we too stand with the Son, the Son of God. We follow in His footsteps. We too hope to reflect the goodness of the Lord Jesus in all we are and do. He is Son of God and Redeemer of Humanity. His birth in Bethlehem signaled the Promise made in Eden come to fulfillment, and the beginning of the Redemption of all of God's children. We can never hope to be as resplendent as Christ. We are however expected to reflect the image and likeness of Christ, the Son of God, in every moment of our lives. Thus, through the centuries, we continue the one great act of Redemption accomplished on Calvary by reflecting the attributes of Christ and imitating His surrender to the Father's Will. Our reflection of the Redeemer's Act completed once and for all times, encourages others to participate with God's graces towards one's own salvation.

How much Goodness - Godliness - is here these days! How much goodness there is in many areas of our lives, and in the world itself! How much goodness there is in our world! Yes, in our world! A world filled with violence, war, death, natural disasters, disease, illnesses of all kinds,

terminal illness, and so much more. Nevertheless, there is still so much goodness - Godliness - in all creation.

Circumstances of life, world events, media presentation, and the like can make us feel that goodness has left the hearts of the children of God. The good that is ever-present in anything that God does (creation) often can seem to be smothered by the less good, or lack of it, that often seems to prevail. The Spiritual Children of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina are commissioned by the mere fact that we call ourselves Padre Pio's Spiritual Children, to be Heralds of the Great King, and Proclaimers of the Good News of the goodness of God and His Love for us. In this Jubilee Holy Year of Grace for the Church, we accept to be Pilgrims of Hope.

*Instruments of God's Peace* reflect the godliness of the One Who says, *Come follow Me* (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). Our mission is to be a source of encouragement for others that they may discover or re-discover, uncover, appreciate and live in that goodness. Like the moon, we are commissioned to reflect the splendor and the beauty of the Son of God. Jesus' light, warmth, majesty, power, and vital significance, are the fruits of our unconditional acceptance of the mission entrusted to all God's children. As Jesus reminds us: *The sun shines on the just and the unjust* (Matthew 5:45). We reflect the warmth of the Son (of God). Thus, we too must reflect the same benefits we receive together with all creation.

The following paraphrasing of a Chinese Proverb could be a gentle reminder of how much we are truly capable of when we allow God and His goodness to reign in our hearts:

*If there is goodness in our souls, we will shine with God's grace.  
If we shine with God's grace, there will be harmony in our souls.  
If there is harmony in our souls, we will discover order in our lives.  
If there is order in our lives, there will be peace, joy and love in all we are and do.*

Goodness, grace, harmony, order, peace, and joy in love! What greater gifts could we hope for from God! God grants us wonderful gifts that make *Life Worth Living*.

Padre Pio desired the Prayer Groups to be a Militia of Prayer, Prayer Warriors, as well as the prime "backup plan" for the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza. God is the First "mover and shaker" in all things. We reflect the image and likeness of our Creator when we allow the goodness of God to be the catalyst we bring within ourselves as we continue our own process of transformation. The reflection of goodness becomes meaningful, fruitful, attractive and welcoming to others. God invites and expects us to be collaborators with Him in achieving this fullness of *Spirit and Life* (John 6: 36). We would be unable to realize all this without God's assistance. Our God can do all things, yet our God binds Himself to our collaboration. Such is the goodness of God who desires that we be His ambassadors, *as if God were appealing through us* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Thus goodness and godliness become accessible and appealing to others.

To get back in touch with God remember: it is not “ourselves first”. It is God first! Let God burst through in your lives to shine in such a way that those who see you see not you, but the God that lives within each one of us. *You are from God, little children. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.* (1 John 4:4) The God we adore is a God overflowing with Love, Who calls us all to Love Him back, and one another, as we love ourselves in God. (cfr Mark12:30-31).

*For if a mother loves and cares for her son (or daughter) according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother (and sister) according to the Spirit! St. Francis wrote these words in the approved Rule of the Order. Through the centuries all Franciscans have read and reflected upon this essential of fraternal living. These words are also essential elements for achieving world peace and co-existence in peace and harmony.*

The Spirit of God challenges us all to recognize and affirm goodness within each one of us. Since goodness and Godliness are inseparable, you will begin to recognize a Divine Presence mysteriously yet powerfully present and active within and among you. The brightness of the reflection of goodness in each of us will allow the gifts of one another to shine beyond the limitations that we create competing with one another. These limitations separate and destroy - negative criticism, jealousy, pride, manipulation, lack of cooperation, and so many other traits we can all see in some way or another in ourselves.

The ‘brightness’ of those who seek the ‘good’, manifest the wonder of God’s grace that offers each a gift for the sake of the whole body. Padre Pio Prayer Groups, who live faithfully the simple yet powerful desires of Padre Pio, become like ‘little churches’. We become faithful images and reflections of the great Mystical Body of Christ. Working together, accepting, affirming, appreciating, supporting, and contributing to one another. Thus, we bring the spiritual sign of our consecration through Baptism to a concrete reality that overflows from us through the Spirit into the lives of others.

Harmony begins to reign in our lives. Competitiveness and suspicion are dispelled by the image of the Christian reflecting Christ to others. Harmony allows us to enjoy one another and truly share our hearts and souls in the Lord. We rejoice with those who rejoice, and encourage and support those in difficulty.

No longer do we see separation and confusion, but order, serenity, and peace. An ordered life knows where it is going and the means at its disposal to achieve the goal it seeks. An ordered life offers clarity of direction and leads to serenity of heart. The moon reflects the light of the sun. Even at night there is a strong reminder of the source hidden yet always present, that usually helps us see our way around. The stars *so clear and precious and beautiful* (the Canticle) offer a glimmer of joy-filled hope in the darkness of the night that a light still shines.

Peace of soul and peace in our daily lives follow. This peace that only God can give to those who are open to His Spirit, ultimately leads to inner joy. It becomes noticeable. It expresses

itself by our patient and pleasant demeanor with everyone. Above all, it is seen by our conformity to Christ in His acceptance of the Father's Will. He not only is the Eternal God but in His humanity He is the perfect reflection of the Divine One shining through the humanity of creation. Thus He, God made man, reflects and speaks at all times and in every way of the Creator. The greatest reflection of the creatures to the Divine One is when we fully live and reflect the One in whose name we are baptized, God-among-us, Jesus.

*This is a truly sublime sentiment which should be entertained by every Christian. Why do we live at all? We all belong to Jesus Christ as a result of our Baptism. We ought to be familiar with the saying of the Apostle: For to me life is Christ (Philippians 1: 21). I live for Jesus Christ. I live for His glory. I live to serve Him. I live to love Him. Let us appreciate this most noble attitude of soul. Let us recognize in every event of life the most wise order of divine Providence. Let us adore it and be ready to conform our will in all things and at all times to the will of God. In this way we shall give glory to the heavenly Father and everything will be to our advantage for eternal life. Let us offer it (our will) to Him along with the Divine Master Himself in that sublime prayer, the Our Father: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (letter to Raffaelina Cerase February 23, 1915).*

The end result of all this is Love. It is not the "fuzzy feeling" people often refer to. This 'love' is that fearless, faith-filled, confident, total surrender we make to God, the God present in each one of us. He is the God we have discovered and recognized in our search for goodness. He is the God who strengthens us that we may disarm our hearts to one another and live in the bond of Love in the Spirit that fulfills the words of our Father St. Francis in the Rule cited above.

Our Seraphic Father also reminds us in the beginning of the First Version of the Letter to the Faithful: *All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, and with their whole strength and love their neighbor as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and makes its home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do.*

You are committed to the spirit of our Prayer Groups according to the mind and heart of Padre Pio. Through your love for all Padre Pio stands for and through his promised intercession for all who are faithful to their promises, the Lord continues to guide, guard, bless, and protect you. Through St. Pio of Pietrelcina you seek to reflect not Padre Pio but through his example and intercession the one to Whom he and all the saints direct us, Jesus.

Like the moon to the sun, be willing to "reflect" Christ as best you can. People may encounter Jesus in us. Following your example they may thus be able to rekindle their faith, hope, and love of God. Take time to pray, really pray, without words even, for this gift.

As the New Year 2025 begins on the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, we entrust our world and time itself to our Mother's almighty motherly intercession. May Mary see in each one of us the image and likeness of Her Son our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

*Have a Blessed and Joy-filled New Year 2025  
Where the Prince of Peace reigns  
And all creation praises the Creator  
For having created us  
Who are who we are before God and nothing more and  
Nothing less than God's children redeemed in the Blood of Christ and  
Called from limited time to an eternity of God's Love.*

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