

# Padre Pio Prayer Groups

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

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The Lord give you his peace!

***Live tranquilly, always, as regards your spirit, because God reigns there as supreme King. Believe me, teacher, in order to live happily while on pilgrimage we must keep before our eyes the hope of arriving at our Homeland where we will stay for eternity, and in the meantime we should believe this firmly. Because given that it is God who calls us to himself, he watches how we make our way to him, and will never permit anything to happen to us that is not for our greater good. He knows what we are, and he will extend his paternal hand to us while we are going through rough stretches, so that nothing will prevent us from running quickly to him. But in order to receive this grace, we must have total confidence in him.***

***Do not anticipate the problems of this life with apprehension, but, rather, with a perfect hope that God, to whom you belong, will free us from them accordingly.***

***Live tranquilly, my dearest daughter, remove from your imagination that which upsets you and often say to our Lord: 'Oh God, you are my God and I will trust in you. You will assist me and be my refuge and I will fear nothing', because not only are you with him, but you are in him and he is within you. What can a child fear in the arms of its father? (Letter to Erminia Gargani, 23 April 1918)***

The counsel that Padre Pio gives to Erminia Gargani, is a simple reminder and encouragement for us. Often enough our lives are enmeshed in so many tangled circumstances and coincidences that we lose our perspective. We may even go so far as to lose our way. Oh, this does not mean that "we are lost forever". But the moment may feel that way. And the "moment" may last like what seems an eternity to the one who suffers. Each one of us will have their own challenges.

How we travel through them depends on a little word that "packs a wallop" when we understand more of its meaning. The word is HOPE.

This Jubilee Year of the Church 2025, encourages the faithful to go on pilgrimage. As *pilgrims and strangers* (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11: 13) we journey through life "homeward bound". The journey may be short or long. It does not really matter, as long as we are focused on Who leads us and Who awaits our arrival to be with Him. It is important that we know where we have been in our life, know where we are here and now, and ultimately know where we are going. We truly are *pilgrims and strangers* wandering and wondering through time. The question asked, that we feel often enough in the depths of our souls is: *What's it all about*. When we

believe we have the response to the question, the next question is: *How do I accomplish my purpose successfully?* What? and How? These two questions find their simple response in the letter of Padre Pio quoted above and in the words of Pope Francis taken from his proclamation of the Jubilee Year of Grace 2025 quoted below.

We are pilgrims. Why? Because once our journey begins it never stops until we reach our destination. The destination for all creation is eternity. Never forget that eternity is a *new heaven and a new earth* (Revelation 21: 1). The New Heaven and New Earth is God's Will fulfilled. The promise of redemption is fulfilled and consummated on the Cross by Jesus. In His Passion-Death-Resurrection, Jesus "resets and recreates", in obedience to the Father's Will, the heavens and the earth, where sin and the effects of sin will no longer be present. John writes in the Book of Revelation that he saw a *new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away* (Revelation 21: 1). The new heaven and new earth will be a state of immaculate wholeness in God's grace. In the "freshness" of that state, those who have achieved the destination of their journey will be able to enjoy the beauty of God's presence in all of his glory, unhindered by the presence of sin and its effects.

We are also strangers. The faith-filled stranger lives the gift of life received but knows it is only to travel through time. *For there is no permanent city for us here on earth; we are looking for the city which is to come* (Hebrews 13: 14). Our ultimate destination is eternity and heaven, by God's grace. The true stranger in Faith is the one who lives the gift of life he/she has received, is grateful for his/her own life and that of all others, and looks forward to sharing the fullness with God in eternity. The stranger to the world lives the words Jesus spoke the night before He died: *Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world ... They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world*" (John 17: 11, 16). This "stranger" knows where they are going and is always ready for the unexpected.

The other "stranger" wanders aimlessly, even though they may seem to "have it all together". Their lives are empty of real purpose beyond the moment and personal gain. They know where they are, and still wander aimlessly through life creating goals that never lead to the ultimate and everlasting one. They are their own counselors. St. Bernard of Clairvaux is famous for saying that *Anyone who takes himself for his own spiritual director* (we could say "his own guide or counselor") *is the disciple of a fool*.

These often stand as "unknowns" even to their own family and friends. They see only the here and now. Their focus is on their personal opportunities and gains. Their friends are often benefactors who donate, acquaintances who serve a purpose but are never real friends beyond the moment. Even their God seems far away because they never recognized Him in the other. They saw others as mere objects of convenience and personal gain.

It seems an exaggeration, but it is so true, especially in the corporate world, and also in certain circles in the world of religion. The glitter of "gold and silver" like the glitz of Mardi Gras, is fun when it lasts but ends in clutter, hard cleanup work, and regrets that cannot be reconciled. How many "strangers" may even be reading these few simple words? If you take that one Quantum Leap into God's hands, *you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household* (Ephesians 2: 19)

That we are pilgrims is easy enough to accept. We are all on a journey that begins with conception and is fulfilled when time becomes eternity. This is common for all. Even the true(?) atheist falls into this category of wayfarers on the road of life. Are there really any persons who

believe in nothing or no one greater than themselves? How can they believe in nothing? That is not faith, and so it is devoid of hope. Thus, deep down, St. Paul would say, *They are the dearest of the dead* (cfr. Letter to Galatians), and St. Bernard calls them “fools” (quote above). When there is no hope, what must a person’s life be? How many substitutes for joy must be created to make life livable? How often people are seen only as objects of service or pleasure in order to fill a void? Yet, the void just swallows all that enters, and there is nothing once again. One response could be to engage others as companions and friends on the journey, supporting, encouraging, and enjoying the road into the mystery of the unexpected until we reach the splendor of our hopes fulfilled. Hope is the fruit of an active Faith.

On December 24th, 2024, the Holy Door was opened by Pope Francis as he declared the Jubilee Year of Grace. He challenged all the Church to be Pilgrims of Hope. We have been challenged to continue the spirit of the Jubilee Year of Mercy with the Jubilee Year of Hope. We receive the Mercy of God so often. What we receive as a gift we must give as a gift. Thus, we are challenged to be for others what God’s Mercy has rekindled in us, Hope. This is an essential because: *One cannot give to another what they do not possess*. This is a basic truth. In His Letter proclaiming the Jubilee Holy Year 2025, our Holy Father Pope Francis wrote:

***Experience the Holy Year in all its pastoral richness. A significant step on this journey was already taken with the celebration of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which allowed us to appreciate anew all the power and tenderness of the Father’s merciful love, in order to become, in our turn, its witnesses.***

***In the last two years, not a single country has been unaffected by the sudden outbreak of an epidemic that made us experience first-hand not only the tragedy of dying alone, but also the uncertainty and fleetingness of existence, and in doing so, has changed our very way of life. Together with all our brothers and sisters, we Christians endured those hardships and limitations. All of us saw certain freedoms curtailed, while the pandemic generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation. The world will return to its usual pattern of personal relationships and social life. This will happen more readily to the extent that we can demonstrate effective solidarity, so that our neighbors most in need will not be neglected.***

***We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope. This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity. Let the voices of the poor be heard throughout this time of preparation for the Jubilee, which is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone. As the Bible teaches, “The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you; for your cattle also, and for the beasts that are in your land, all its yield shall be for food” (Lev 25:6-7).***

***The spiritual dimension of the Jubilee, which calls for conversion, should also embrace these fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a coherent whole. In the realization that all of us are pilgrims on this earth, which the Lord has charged us to till and keep (cf. Gen 2:15), may we never fail, in the course of our sojourn, to contemplate the beauty of creation and care for our common home.***

***It is my hope that the coming Jubilee Year will be celebrated and experienced with this intention too. Growing numbers of men and women, including many young people and children, have come to realize that care for creation is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will.***

Both Padre Pio and Pope Francis speak of Hope. Hope as a constant companion in life that keeps our vision clear and every step we take an anticipation of fulfilling the dream. An old children's song sings: *A dream is a wish your heart makes*. Wishes are unfulfilled hopes we strive to achieve. Hope is to possess in your heart what as yet you do not possess in your hand. The desire is so strong and the certainty of achieving the desire so sure, that any challenge demanded to achieve the desire is worth going through. No great explanation needed here, we have all experienced the truth of the statement.

Those of us who are devoted to Padre Pio of Pietrelcina are quite aware of his life and various sayings. We often hear or maybe even say ourselves to encourage someone: *Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry*. The saying summarizes the recipe for serenity of soul. They are contained in both the words of Pope Francis above as well as in the passage from the letter to Annita Redote. Padre gives the formula to Annita for serenity and peace of heart and soul.

**Live tranquilly** – Hurry up slowly. God is in charge. If the matter is pressing, do what you are able. Do not let what you do define who you are.

**Believe** – The word can mean “be alive”. Who you believe yourself to be will often determine what and how you seek to accomplish things. Believe in “the Source” and you will reach heights never imagined possible.

**Happy** on the journey – Accepting to move forward should mean I “know” the goal is available. So, be happy ahead of time anticipating your goal. That joy will encourage you on the way with healthy anticipation. Children excited on a trip often ask: “Are we there yet?” The excitement, and prospect of arriving where our hearts were set on going, bring anticipated joy. The journey is also the dream.

Believe **firmly** – Don't lose heart at the first obstacle, or any for that matter. “Firmly” signifies that nothing will dissuade you from the purpose you believe and believe in.

**Total Confidence** – Move forward with all you are and have, with the firmness of what you believe. “Confidence” means to do it “with faith”. And “Total” indicates that half measures are not permitted. We must be fully involved or not at all where God and His Holy Will are perceived, understood, and accepted.

**Don't Anticipate Problems with Apprehension** – Don't foresee difficulties before they appear. So similar to people who are capable of much but do little or nothing because they fear failure, ridicule, and the like. How many are there who “could have”, “would have”, “should have” done something, and knew it, but never did? Persistent Hope always succeeds!

Padre Pio would say, and did many times: ***pray, hope, and don't worry.***

**Pray** – Prayer is a relationship with God. Whether with words or more intimately with our heart, mind and soul in silent presence. This prayer signifies that I believe in God. The God I believe in is a personal God Who creates, redeems and sanctifies all He created to His image and likeness. Faith tells me that this God is ever-present to all He created. He is present to me and knows every thought, word, and action, and even our desires. He is a God Who does not create trash, therefore I am valuable in His sight. He is a God Who listens to and responds to His creation. Nothing exists or happens that God does not know. Prayer indicates I believe in the reality and personal involvement of God in His Creation. The Act of Faith of whom and what I believe is a static foundation that encourages me to and Active Faith that lives what I believe. We must have both. They cannot not fruitfully exist independently and still be spiritually fruitful.

**Don't Worry** – Life's many happenings often cause anxious feelings in people. The world situation so often makes it seem that we are on the brink of annihilation. Pandemics kill millions around the world, people distance themselves from participating as a Church in what they believe about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Social values as well as religious values seek the majority vote rather than a Faith conviction rooted in God and Life.

The examples are numerous. The responses may be evident or not. The secret is the "connecting word". As Pilgrims of Hope in the Jubilee Year, we have been directed by the Holy Father Pope Francis to break through the lethargy of complacency, or the refusal of charity because of prejudicial bias, or the misuse and abuse of the gifts of creation.

Prayer is a gift of Faith. Seeking inspiration and assistance for all our endeavors indicates we believe in an unseen Presence capable of assisting our needs, whether spiritual or worldly. Serenity is the fruit an active faith that thus proclaims loudly to all the *Faith that underlies my works* (cfr. James 2: 18-19). The serenity and peace ("don't worry") that follows are overwhelming. Total giving to God in trust leads to God's total giving of Himself in love to us. How can anyone worry if they truly believe this? Without hope, we become like "zombies". We walk dead to joy because dead to life.

We are Pilgrims of Hope. The love we seek to live eternally calls us. Our response to Love's call is to believe the One who calls, know that we are able in the One Who calls, thus have no reason to worry. We share the gift with others as we have received it and thus empower others to be Pilgrims of Hope.

Spiritual Children of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, let us take advantage of the Holy Year by living St. Pio's saying: ***Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry***. The implication of those simple words can change the course of life. Let Faith lead us to open our hearts to the love of God Who called us to life and calls us to Life. May the truth of what and Whom we believe allow us to see the moment and tomorrow as the best experience we could ever have or expect, regardless of it challenges

and uncertainties. Thus let us live life with serenity, sincerity, inner peace and Christian Joy. God loves us. Even when we sin, God gives us all the time and opportunities we need to make use of His gifts within us, that we might reflect, realize, repent, reform, and be restored in His Eternal and Tremendous Love. This might be the best Lenten Journey for us to attempt. It could be a truly transforming journey *Into God* (title of St. Bonaventure's work *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum*) through Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

May Lent begin well and continue in God's graces so that the journey from Ashes to Palms may lead you to a spiritual renewal in the spirit. A simple suggestion may help the serenity of soul to help you truly focus on the deep meaning of the Season. Read Scripture. It does not matter how much but how attentively. Reflect upon your reading. Spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament in Church/Chapel, and when that cannot be find quiet time, imagine yourself face to face in the Divine Presence and just let your heart listen to the Heart of Jesus for some time. Other practices are helpful. Do these, though and the penances and devotional practices will come on their own to bring body and soul into the harmony and serenity of the Lenten Pilgrimage of Hope for each one of us.

The graces of God, the love of Our Lady and good St. Joseph, the intercession and protection of our patron Padre Pio accompany us and our loved ones.

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



"Jesus is my hope, and the living source of my happiness"  
Padre Pio Prayer Groups, pilgrims of hope

## SIXTH SHRINE March 2025

### A COMMUNITY THAT THRIVES ON CHARITY

#### BIBLE COMMENTARY

##### **From the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (4:1-9)**

*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

We are here in the final part of Paul's letter. The apostle exhorted the believers in Philippi to have the same sentiments that were of Jesus Christ, keeping in mind the gift he made of himself: although he was God, he chose to make himself one of us. Now Paul summarizes here his message through an invitation: we are to create a space in which Christ can dwell: "... stand firm in the Lord as you have learned." Paul's invitation is not a generic exhortation from a father who takes leave of his children. Evòdia and Syntyche are two women in the community who worked with Paul spreading the Gospel among them, but they were currently finding it difficult to collaborate. The invitation to "get along" is not the search for a compromise and an exhortation to put up with one another, rather it is rooted in that "standing firm in the Lord". Indeed only the bond with Jesus can lead to that communion of intent that fosters understanding, acceptance and forgiveness. The first communities did not hypocritically hide their tensions; rather they tried to resolve them in that spirit of faith that could bring inner changes in people, thus producing a different kind of joy: "Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say it again, rejoice." It is not necessary, therefore, to present the image of a perfect Church, but that of a community finds inner joy in rediscovered harmony the reason for its mission: "May your gentleness be known to all men and women. The Lord is near!". In a society that made economic, physical or political supremacy over others a reason for honour, Saint Paul insists on a profound bond with Christ as the centre of his pride and joy. This bond is capable of detaching us from earthy concerns, helping us not to be distressed – following the path of the Sermon on the Mount – while opening us to higher thoughts: "... whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, honourable, whatever is virtue and deserves praise, let all this be the object of your thoughts."

#### SPIRITUALITY

##### **From a letter from Padre Pio to Raffaelina Cerase (Epist. II, p. 225)**

*Therefore, my dear sister, let us greatly esteem this virtue in the highest esteem, if we want the heavenly Father to show us mercy. Let us be very fond of charity and let us practise it. This is the virtue that makes us all children of the one Father who is in heaven. Let us love and practise charity,*



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*as this is our divine Master's precept. By his we shall be distinguished from the unbelievers by our loving and charitable behaviour. In our love for charity, we must flee from even the shadow of anything that might dim its splendour. Yes, in loving this virtue, let us always bear in mind the great teaching of the Apostle: "We are all members of Jesus Christ who is the head of us all, the members of the body". We should show great love for one another, remembering that we have all been called to form a single body and that if we keep our love for one another, the beautiful peace of Jesus will invariably triumph joyfully in our hearts.*

Both St. Paul and St. Pio insist on the same ecclesiastical vision of charity: this is the virtue that makes us the body of Christ, his own members, the expression and continuation of his generous love. This "feeling of being one" has been the characteristic element of Christian witnesses from the beginning: "Believers kept growing in numbers and all of them felt they were part of one heart and soul, and no one counted what belonged to him as their own, but all things were in common among them" (*Acts* 4:32). The word of the Gospel is a proclamation of hope, which can remain empty if it is limited to doctrinal declarations or a few engaging homilies. It is necessary that Christian hope, in that better world as proclaimed in the Scriptures, finds a valid support in the witness of a community who testifies with deeds to the possibility of the Word of Jesus to change our hearts.

### **The Word can change the relationship among believers**

Our hope of being one body that bears witness to the Gospel cannot just be a theoretical principle or an empty ideal. To Paul's often fiery words, we would like to add what Pope Saint Clement I wrote in his "Letter to the Corinthians", which still seems to be of great relevance: "Why quarrels, anger, discords, schisms and wars among you? Do we not have one God, one Christ, one Spirit of grace poured out upon us, one vocation in Christ? Why tear the members of Christ, why rebel against one's own body and reach the point of delirium that makes us forget that we are all members of each other's bodies?". The humanity present in our communities should certainly not surprise us, but it ought to empower us, just like Padre Pio's Prayer Groups, so as to be bearers of charity. Padre Pio said to his spiritual daughters: "Let us love and practise charity, since it is the precept of the divine Master: from here we will distinguish ourselves from the other people, if we love and practise charity." Our presence in the Church must characterize us as bearers of that charity which has its origins in the shared Word of God. Too often, we tend to speak to others calling them "brother, sister, dearest, etc.", but often these are only façade words. Each one of these expressions shows our hope and desire for communion and fraternity; we, as Prayer Groups, can be the prophets of these words that become flesh, that become truthful and the fruit of concrete choices. Padre Pio writes: "Oh how sublime is the beautiful virtue of charity, brought to us by the Son of God! Charity must be close to everyone's heart, but even more so to those who make profession of holiness. Without any merit of yours, the Lord has called you to this: and although I can see that you are determined to devote yourselves to charity, yet I will not cease to insist that you should grow and grow in it."

### **The Word That Opens Doors**

We are people walking in charity, Padre Pio tells us, thus creating a sort of circle: that charity that flows from Jesus, also becomes the goal towards which we are heading. If we learn to progress constantly in this virtue, we will be able to become instruments of conversion ourselves, also involving people who encounter difficulties in walking in faith, in our journey of charity. The various experiences of solidarity that our Groups live, both in Italy and abroad, are the most beautiful testimony of a charity that opens the doors to faith. Many of us will know the story of the spouses Carlo and Clara Terzaghi, who came to San Giovanni Rotondo to meet Padre Pio. Carlo, a very gifted engineer, had come to the town of Gargano, as often happened, more than anything else to make his wife happy. Padre Pellegrino has passed down to us the chronicle of his first meeting with Padre Pio:





*"Jesus is my hope, and the living source of my happiness"  
Padre Pio Prayer Groups, pilgrims of hope*

"Padre Pio, I don't believe," was his presentation card. "You work well and you will see that faith will come to you. Go, my son, and may God bless you." Padre Pio did not point fingers, rather he proposed an itinerary based on charity. Carlo, who had not even made his First Communion, although he had married in church, began a difficult journey that gradually led him to be one of the most fervent spiritual children of the Father. In turn, through volunteering in charity, the Terzaghi couple became instruments for many people to draw closer to God. Let me tell you that sometimes our parishes look like large apartment buildings, where everyone is involved in their own ecclesiastical group or parish ministry and only knows what their duty is. Other people, like newcomers, those who participate occasionally, those who do not believe like us, do not find us open welcoming them, sometimes they are rejected. We are called to involve, to give space especially to those who come among us for the first time, to approach those who find it difficult to believe by asking for their help. The saints did wonderful things by involving those we call sinners, in helping to practise charity.

### **The Word that looks to the future**

Padre Pio writes: "I bless God, who has made me meet truly good souls here, and I have also proclaimed to them that their souls are the vineyard of God, the storage tank is faith, the tower is hope, the press is holy charity, the hedge is the law of God that separates them from the children of the world." Love generates a special covenant around hope: it places in us the certainty that it is possible for things to change, because we are not alone in carrying the weight of the cross. Indeed, it is difficult to speak of hope when war, violence and physical suffering loom over us; only a sharing that is based on that love that Jesus poured into our hearts is able to give rise to greater expectations in us. The presence and comfort of others are the sign that continuing to hope is not an illusion but is sharing faith in the One who died and rose for us.

## **PRAYER**

### **Prayer of Monsignor Luigi Renna to St. Pio of Pietrelcina**

Father Pio,  
our brother and guide  
I want to bless the Lord for your gifts.  
In a mysterious way He marked you with the wounds of Passion  
so you may be a witness of His mercy in the world.

Grant me a true conversion,  
your protection for all those dear to me and, if the Lord asks me,  
to know how to carry my Cross.

I pray to you so that the power of the Gospel  
may be for every man a word of hope and salvation.

Bless with your wounded hand the Church and our society,  
grant that all men be workers of solidarity and peace.

## **HYMN**