



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

NINTH SHRINE: JUNE 2025

THE HEART OF GOD

BIBLE COMMENTARY

From the Gospel according to John (15,12-17)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

"God is love", St John's letter tells us; it is a great, immense love, to which man, who is a human creature, can certainly not respond adequately. And yet Jesus allows us to love him as equals: "I no longer call you servants, but friends"; it bridges the distance by presenting us to the Father as children: "whatever I have heard from my Father I have made known to you".

It is through Jesus that our communion with the Father is so intense. The Church is like a branch of His, and it is called to bear fruit, which comes directly from the heart of God: "I have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide". The sacraments are the means by which the heart of God bears fruit in the heart of all human beings.

The evangelizing mission of the Church thus becomes a new proclamation, a "gospel". God continually comes to visit his people.

SPIRITUALITY

From Padre Pio's letter to Girolama Longo (Epist. III, p. 1031)

"The bitterness of love is sweet and its weight is mild: why then do you say that, while feeling its immense intensity, you also feel it is too difficult to carry? Your heart is small, but it is also expandable, and when it can no longer contain the greatness of our Beloved, and resist its immense pressure, then you need not be afraid, as our Lord is both inside and outside of us. He will invade all of your being. Just like an open shell in the ocean, you will drink its waters till you are full, and you will be surrounded and imbued with its power."

While this image of the shell is obviously just a rhetorical image, it well describes that mystery of love that Padre Pio experienced in his life. In a particular way, through the sacrament of the Eucharist, every day he experiences that sap of salvation that reaches the branches from the vine and produces fruits of holiness.

Love for the Eucharist

«... Just for a moment I would like to uncover my breast to you," Padre Pio once wrote to his spiritual director, "to show you the wound that the most sweet Jesus lovingly opened in this heart of mine! He has finally found a lover who has fallen in love with Him so much that He no longer wants to embitter me in any way.



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You already know this lover. He is a lover who never gets angry with those who offend him. Infinite is the number of mercies that He has bestowed upon my heart. My heart realises that nothing is owed to it, as the Lord loved me first and He made me feel He placed me before many creatures.

... I sometimes ask myself if there are souls who do not feel their breasts burning with the divine fire, especially when they stand before Him in the sacrament. To me this seems impossible, especially if it concerns a priest, a religious person. Perhaps those souls who say they do not feel this fire, do not feel it because of their larger heart. Only this benign interpretation helps me associate with them, so as not to accuse them of the shameful label of liars" (*Epist.* I, p. 316).

One is amazed at this poignant logic, made up of a simplicity that is not just a silly and childish interpretation, but rather a gradual stripping of one's ego, a liberation from one's own emotions, in favour of a definite choice: everything is included in the Eucharist. Padre Pio's confreres remember not only his long Masses, but also the anxiety he felt in the morning as he had to celebrate as soon as possible and then the frequent invitations to those who left to participate in the Holy Mass first. Everything in his existence revolved around the Eucharist.

Padre Pio tangibly showed the truth of one of the most intense expressions of the Second Vatican Council: "The Eucharist is the source and summit of one's Christian life" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47). He showed this with deeds and by guiding, even firmly, his spiritual sons and daughters to detach themselves from him and to refer exclusively to the Lord, present in the Bread and Wine.

One day Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti met a poor man in the square of the convent who was crying because he could not approach Padre Pio and ask him for a grace for his wife. Taking pity, he accompanied him to the Father, who listened to him and blessed him, assuring him he would pray. Back at the hotel, he received a phone call from his wife who told him that she was completely healed. Full of gratitude, he hurriedly went to the convent and strangely managed to reach Padre Pio. He was about to thank him, when he sent him away abruptly without giving him any explanation. Shortly after, the man was in church, praying and crying. A friar noticed him and asked for the reason and he told him the whole story. That friar, who was rather in confidence with Padre Pio, felt compelled to ask him why he had treated that man so badly. Padre Pio asked: "Where did you find him?" and he said: "In church he was thanking the Lord." And Padre Pio: "It was there that he had to go, in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for these things one goes there to give thanks."

The Heart and the Mind in God

Charity is this deep and all-encompassing love that originates in our encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist. This encounter would give meaning to Padre Pio's whole day and in particular to his way of praying. Perhaps this is why he felt a strong discomfort when - either because he was in Naples for military service, or because of an illness - it was not possible for him to celebrate Holy Mass.

At the end of the celebration, Padre Pio received the faithful in the sacristy and - after a long thanksgiving - passed among them greeting and blessing them. Even if, at times, he stopped to greet someone, it was still perceived that his inner recollection was still going on, and this was an attitude that accompanied him throughout the day. Father Agostino da San Marco in Lamis, his spiritual director, wrote about this attitude of Padre Pio's in his *Diary*: "One admires in the father the habitual union with God. When we speak to him while he is praying, we realize that his heart and mind are not distracted from the thought and feeling of God" (*Diary*, p. 124).

Monsignor Paolo Carta says: "Padre Pio prayed well. Padre Pio always prayed. One can say of him what Thomas of Celano, biographer of St. Francis, wrote about him: He was no longer just a man who prays, but "a man made prayer." Padre Pio was a living prayer, too."

This prayerful attitude of his constituted the element of his personality that could be perceived immediately and that was the source of many conversions. For Padre Pio, however, it was not a matter of flaunting (unfortunately sometimes this also happens) his way of praying, but of proposing to everyone, and in particular to the Prayer Groups and to those who followed him spiritually, a way of life based precisely on the virtue of religion, that is, on that feeling of justice towards God, for which



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we owe him praise and just thanks for all that he has given us. "Always hold tight to the divine will with your spirit," he went on in the letter to Raffaelina Cerasse, "and be calm and serve the Lord in the joy of your heart, for divine love will never fail in your spirit. I beg you, therefore, not to be discouraged by this way of suffering and by all those other doubts in which your spirit finds itself, but pray always in the silence of your heart, and keep unlimited trust in divine mercy."

A missionary church

The image that Padre Pio suggested to us, of the shell open and filled with sea water, represents a synthesis of how he perceived God's love, both with regard to his person and with regard to the Church, because he never separated the bond with Christ from that of service to the Kingdom of God, so much so that he invited us to love Christ and the Church with the same love, "which alone can lay eggs, and give birth to pigeons and doves to the Bridegroom" (*Epist.* III, p. 836).

In spiritual direction he taught people to think of themselves within this love: "Set your gaze on the Bridegroom and the Bride; - he continues to say to Girolama Longo - and say to the Bridegroom: 'Oh that you are the Bridegroom of a beautiful Bride', and to the Bride: 'Ah, that you are the Bride of a completely divine Bride!'" (*ibid.*). Padre Pio's ecclesiology was not only linked to the magisterium and the celebration of the sacraments (which he carried out in the name of the Church), but it was also dynamic. He felt part of his missionary journey and involved others in this tension.

If we read again the words he wrote to Girolama Longo in this letter, they seem to anticipate the mission that from the beginning he entrusted to the Prayer Groups, that is, to gather to pray according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff: "Have great compassion on all the pastors and preachers of the Church, as well as on all the pastors of souls, and see, my daughter, how they are scattered over the whole face of the earth, for there is no province in the world where there are not many. Pray to God for them, that by saving themselves they may fruitfully procure the salvation of souls. And in this I beg you never to forget me when you stand before Jesus, because my strong will to never forget to pray for your soul comes from Him" (*ibid.*).

From the Heart of God to the Heart of Man

It is both from the Eucharist and from prayers that our missionary church receives the full-time commitment to serve the Kingdom of God. Everyone knows that from the moment of the stigmatization, Padre Pio never left San Giovanni Rotondo. Like many other saints, however, in reality he lived in contact with the society of his time. It may seem normal that when important personalities such as cardinals, bishops, great scientists, rulers and wealthy benefactors of his hospital gathered around him, he was ready to welcome them. In reality, with the poor and needy he had an even greater availability; many times he stopped to listen to children's poems, other times he entertained himself (as it happened with Father Eusebio's father) talking to an old man about the war. Especially when it came to listening to suffering people, he not only dedicated all of his time to them, but always looked for ways to help them and be close to them. Father Augustine in his Diary recounts many episodes of this kind.

Padre Pio gives us a mandate: the heart of human beings is like the shrine that must contain the heart of God. As a conclusion of this Booklet, we can thus summarize the thought of Padre Pio with a passage taken from a letter to one of his spiritual daughters:

"Know then, my daughter, that charity is made of three parts: love of God, affection for oneself, and delight of neighbor; and my poor instructions put you on the path to practise all of them.

a) Throw your whole heart, spirit and thought into God often during the day with great confidence, and say to him with the royal prophet: Lord, I am yours, save me.

b) ... Never be afraid seeing yourself miserable and full of bad moods. Just think about your heart with a great desire to perfect it. Take untiring care to gently and charitably put it back on the right path when it stumbles.



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c) Be good to your neighbours, and do not address them in anger; make it a habit of using these words of the Master: I love these neighbours of mine, Eternal Father, because You love them, and you have given them to me as brothers and sisters. I know that just as You love them, so You want me to love them, too."

As Prayer Groups, let us open ourselves to the heart of every man and woman we meet, let us visit them as if we were visiting the heart of God. We must not be afraid of losing ourselves in the hearts of those around us. We will always find, even in the darkest heart, a spark of God's love.

God sends us to kindle hope in the hearts of the men and women we meet, because we cannot remain alone, we need the chorus of praise and thanksgiving to the Father who is in heaven to grow bigger and stronger every day.

JUNE 16th

COMMEMORATION OF THE CANONIZATION OF PADRE PIO

Feast of Communion – Community prayer

On this day, which marks the anniversary of Padre Pio's canonization, in communion with the "Mother" Prayer Group of the Home for the Relief of Suffering, Prayer Groups around the world offer an hour of prayer according to the common intentions suggested by the Prayer Group Center of San Giovanni Rotondo.

PRAYER

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Prayed daily by Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

O my Jesus, You have said: *"Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you."* I knock, I seek and ask for the grace of...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.

O my Jesus, You have said: *"Truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you."* Behold, in your name, I ask the Father for the grace of ...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.

O my Jesus, you have said: *"Truly I say to you, heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away."* Encouraged by your infallible words I now ask for the grace of ...

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on us miserable sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of you, through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and ours.

St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, pray for us.

The Hail Holy Queen (The Salve Regina)

SONG