



Fourth step
THE EUCHARIST, THE ALTAR AND THE VICTIM

BIBLICAL COMMENTS

"Then he said to them, "Those who want to be my disciples must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me". (Lc 9, 23)

Through the Incarnation, the Word of God complies with the Father's will, it becomes human in all its essence, till His death on the cross.

It is in this faithful obedience that Jesus becomes the Eucharist, which can be considered as an act of thanksgiving, as it is through obedience that He fulfils the Father's loving care towards humanity. If we want to become Jesus' disciples, we want to surrender ourselves totally to Him who chose to become as an altar, giving Himself up for us, while we ourselves become victims of love with Him, for Him and in Him.

We shall live every day with love, we will choose to live all our daily chores with love, and in so doing we shall be pleasing the Father, just like Jesus did, becoming immaculate hosts of love, offered for the healing of the world.

SPIRITUALITY

The passage chosen to speak about Padre Pio's relationship with the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist dates back to a particular period of his life: he is in Pietrelcina, prevented from returning to the convent due to a severe lung disease. His life is made up of prayer and study, with a small apostolate among the sick and in parish life. Padre Pio's mystical experience has become more and more intense and day after day he gets closer to God.

From a letter by Padre Pio to fr Agostino of San Marco in Lamis

Pietrelcina, 3rd december 1912

My very dear Father, I should like to undress my chest for a moment and show you the wound which our tender Jesus has lovingly opened in this heart of mine!

My heart has found at last a Lover, so close to me that I am incapable of hurting him any more. You already know this Lover. He is one who never gets angry with those who offend him. My heart carries in itself endless acts of His mercy towards me, while it is aware of how totally unworthy it is of these. He has loved me and chosen me among many to be one of his favourites.

Whenever I ask him what I have done to deserve such consolations, he smiles and says repeatedly that nothing is refused to such an intercessor. In return he asks me for nothing but love, but do I not perhaps owe him this out of gratitude? Oh, my dear Father, if I could only make him happy just as he makes me happy! He is so much in love with my heart that he makes me burn with his divine fire, with the fire of his love. What is this fire that pervades my whole being? Dear Father, if Jesus makes us so happy on earth, what will heaven be like? I often ask myself if any people exist who do not feel their breast burning with divine fire, especially when they are close to him in the Blessed Sacrament. This seems impossible to me, especially in the case of a priest or a religious. Perhaps those who say they do not feel this fire do not notice it because their hearts are bigger. I resort to this kind interpretation of their words so as not to accuse them of shameful falsehood.

...

Dear Father, let us pray that the Lord may wish to dispel the dense clouds which are gathering on the horizon of the Church.

The Eucharist is the center and summit of Christian life, according to Sacrosanctum Concilium. Padre Pio often refers to this sacrament in his symbolism; from these images it is easy to understand how much the Eucharist really was the cornerstone and the direction of his existence. The altar is the sign of Jesus' sacrifice: the union of love that springs from the Eucharist pushes Padre Pio to lift himself up with Christ on that altar to be a victim offered to the benefit of all brothers and sisters.

His many references to the Eucharist are a sign of the depth of his mystical experience, and while they refer to his own person, they also hint to a possible itinerary for every Christian. First of all, Padre Pio teaches us how to place the Eucharist at the center of our existence, how to feel within ourselves the constant desire to encounter Jesus, how to choose him renouncing sin, how to surrender ourselves totally to Christ in the Eucharist so as to overcome temptation.

In the Eucharist, Padre Pio finds both the meaning of his existence and the great value of the cross which he embraces out of love; from this sacrament springs the power of charity which also unites him concretely to his brothers and sisters, promoting many good initiatives in their favour.

GETTING TO KNOW PADRE PIO

¶ On Sunday, 14th August 1910, Padre Pio celebrated his first solemn mass in the Mother Church of Pietrelcina. During his years in the seminary, the young friar suffers from very high fevers which prevent him from nourishing himself except on Holy Communion: in a letter dated 29 March 1911 he writes to Father Benedict: "my heart feels as if it is attracted by a superior strength before joining him [Jesus] in the morning in the Blessed Sacrament. I am so hungry and thirsty before receiving Him, that I feel as if was going to die breathless. As I cannot join him yet, I feel as if I am feverish, and I am then forced to go and eat his meat».

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¶ On September 8th, 1911, for the first time Padre Pio writes to Padre Benedetto that he has noticed on the palm of his hands "a red patch accompanied by a strong and acute pain" and also adds that " when I am close to Jesus in the blessed Sacrament, my heart starts beating very rapidly. At times I feel as if my heart is about to burst out of my chest ».

¶ From October to November 1911, Padre Pio resides in Venafro. In the small convent of Molise, between 29th November and 1st December, he lives the mystical experience of ecstasies: every day, several times a day, the friar speaks with Jesus. His talks will be witnessed and transcribed by Father Agostino, who is present in those hours of conversation with the Lord.

¶ On June 28th, 1912, in an epistle addressed to Father Agostino, Padre Pio writes: "Then, last night, I spent the entire night with Jesus in his Passion. [...] I felt myself tightly bound to Jesus. I burned with a thousand flames, which made me live and die. Hence, I suffered, lived and died continuously».

¶ In 1915, in response to the insistent requests of his confessor Father Agostino, Padre Pio states in an epistle that he had already received heavenly visions in the years in which he lived in Sant'Elia, "if I am not mistaken, these must have begun not long after the novitiate "(October 10th, 1915)."

¶ On August 26th, 1917, Padre Pio was in Naples for military medical examinations. There are no chapels there and young soldiers are not allowed to go out. He will write to Father Agostino "I am very distressed that I cannot say Mass [...] what desolation without Jesus!".

¶ On 22nd September 1968, at 5 in the morning, Padre Pio celebrates his last mass in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. At the end of the celebration, in an attempt to get up, he staggers and falls into the arms of Father Bill who manages to support him with the help of the other brothers. Taken back to his cell, he will greet his spiritual children for the last time with the words: "My children, my children ...".

PADRE PIO'S WORLD: *The ecstasies of Venafro*

Venafro was an important Roman city, a transit route and connection between the Sannio and Campania, whose strategic importance is attested in the various eras. A place rich in history, the town is characterized by many churches with soaring bell towers, that determine the urban skyline. The Capuchin convent, built in 1573, when Padre Pio arrived accompanied by Father Benedetto, in the second half of October 1911, was intended as a place of study. Here, during the month and a half of his stay, the young friar experienced numerous ecstasies but also many diabolical oppressions, as Father Agostino of San Marco in Lamis tells us in his Diary. His food in this period consisted of the Eucharist alone. On 7th December 1911, Padre Pio, seriously got worse, and left Venafro to go to Pietrelcina.

CLOSE-UP ON PADRE PIO'S PRAYER GROUPS: *A Eucharistic spirituality*

Sacramental life, and especially participation in the Eucharist, should be at the centre of our spirituality. From the very beginning, Eucharistic Adoration and community participation in the monthly Mass have been the main elements of our spirituality. Whenever possible, we should ask our spiritual director or the parish priest to take care of this meeting specifically for our human and spiritual formation. When this is not possible, we will participate in Mass and Adoration with the parish community, in the awareness that the charism of prayer must be carried out together, not in isolation from the community.

OUR COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

22 January (Anniversary of the religious Dressing of Padre Pio) - The Day of Fidelity In line with the evangelical essence that characterizes the life of Padre Pio, all Groups commit themselves to a community celebration (for individual Groups or for dioceses) in which, always keeping to the theme of the year, baptismal promises are renewed, always equal in form, to commit ourselves to consistency and testimony. This meeting can be a preamble to the upcoming Lenten period and can constitute the beginning of a journey of revision of personal and community life.



PADRE PIO PRAYER GROUPS
“Follow the path that God has chosen for you”

The Day of Fidelity

22 January 2022

Anniversary of the Religious Dressing of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Every year our Prayer Groups are called to confirm their commitment of fidelity to the Gospels, following the spirituality of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, their founder.

THE RITE OF THE OATH OF FIDELITY

The rite of this commitment of fidelity is celebrated on the day we commemorate the dressing of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, January 22 (or another day agreed upon with the Spiritual Assistant). If Holy Mass is celebrated, this rite can be performed after the homily or before the final blessing.

Song

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

the Lord is with you.

and with your spirit

Let us open our spirit to his voice, and in remembrance of our Baptism and in prayer we show our gratitude to the Lord for the gift of faith.

We give thanks to the Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus says: “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness”. (John 12:46)

Lord Jesus, our light, make it possible for us to walk in the light of your Word and live in the light of your friendship.

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place-- the Most High, who is my refuge— no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Amen

O God, good and faithful, You create the existence of man and renew him, look with love at the people you have chosen and call incessantly new generations to establish their friendly relationship with You, so that, according to your promise, they can joyfully receive as a gift the dignity of children of God. For Christ our Lord.

Meditations from the writings of St. Padre Pio

Pray to this divine Lover for me; this beloved Spouse of our souls, that he may accomplish the work he began in me. [...] He has shown me that not only would he be my Saviour, my supreme Benefactor, but a devoted, sincere and faithful friend of my heart; eternal and infinite love, consolation, joy, comfort, my entire treasure.

[...] A sad but most sweet voice echoed in my poor heart; it was the warning of a loving Father who pointed out to his son, the dangers he would encounter in the struggle of life. It was the voice of a benevolent Father, who wanted his son's heart detached from infantile, innocent love; it was the voice of a loving Father who whispered in the ears and heart of the son in order to detach him totally from the clay, from mud, in order to jealously consecrate himself entirely to Him.

Ardently, with loving sighs, with inexplicable groanings, with sweet and suave words He called him to himself, to make him totally His.

[...] Where better could I serve you, O Lord, if not in the cloister, under the banner of Saint Francis of Assisi? And He, seeing my embarrassment, smiled at length, and that smile left an ineffable sweetness in my heart, so that sometimes I truly felt it so near, that I thought I saw His shadow. And my flesh, my entire being rejoiced in the Saviour, in my God.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Where possible, those who have chosen to be part of the Prayer Group arrange themselves around the altar. Brothers and sisters, through Baptism, in Jesus's Passover we were buried with him in death to rise to new life. In various ways, the Lord has led us to learn about the spirituality of Padre Pio and to look at him as a model in following and imitating Christ poor and obedient to the Father. Following his example, we renew the promises of our Baptism, committing ourselves to recognise the voice of Jesus who calls us by name and invites us to follow Him.

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

I do

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

I do

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?

I do

God and Father of Jesus, who freed us from sin and made us to be reborn from water and from the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of St. Pio of Pietrelcina may He protect us with His grace, in the Lord Jesus, for eternal life.

Amen

Let us invoke together the intercession of Mary Most Holy, of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina and of all the saints, so that with their help we can be persevering in our purposes:

Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us

Saint Michael, Gabriel and Raphael pray for us

St. John the Baptist pray for us

St. Joseph pray for us

Holy apostles and evangelists pray for us

St. Peter pray for us

St. Paul pray for us

St. Mary Magdalene pray for us

Saint Benedict pray for us

St. Dominic pray for us

Saint Francis of Assisi pray for us

Saint Clare of Assisi pray for us

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina pray for us

St. John Paul II pray for us

Saint Teresa of Calcutta pray for us

Saints of God pray for us

FIDELITY COMMITMENT

Brothers and sisters, the Church invites us to live in the spirit of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, the charism of prayer and help to the suffering, living our fidelity to the Gospel to be salt of the earth and light of the world, we now publicly renew that commitment of fidelity that many times, on a personal level, we presented to Padre Pio, invoking his protection.

O Father, you have chosen and called us to be «nurseries of the faith, the fertile soil of love», we commit, here in front of our community,

to be ministers of prayer and service to the sufferings;

to renounce sin with serious commitment;

to grow in virtues, especially within our families;

to share our journey in this Prayer Group,

following the spirituality of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina and the teachings of the Church. We promise fidelity to the Pope, to our pastors and to the commitments we take on the common journey with the brothers and sisters of our Group.

In the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi, we choose to welcome the needy, to support the poor and be loving and respectful of creation.

Virgin Mary, You who guided the journey of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, welcome our holy desires and accompany us on our journey towards holiness.

Amen.

Our Father...

Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

('The Lord's Prayer' is truly the summary of the whole gospel.' 'Since the Lord... after handling over the practice of prayer, said elsewhere, 'Ask and you will receive,' and since everyone has petitions which are peculiar to his circumstances, the regular and appropriate prayer (the Lord's Prayer) is said first, as the foundation of further desires.')

- *Tertullian, De orat.*
from the Catechism of the Catholic Church; 2761.

the Lord is with you
and with your spirit

May Almighty God, through Whom You we were born to a new life from the water and the Holy Spirit, bless you all, so that wherever you will be, you may be living members of his Church: in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen

May the Almighty God give you His peace: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

