



Eight step

OUR LADY' INTERCESSION

BIBLICAL COMMENTS

"Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!". And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." (Jn 19, 27)

Mary of Nazareth is a Jewish girl who is part of Jesus' story from day one. It is thanks to her "Yes" that the Word of God can take flesh in her womb; it is thanks to her humanity, made of firmness and tenderness at the same time, that the baby Jesus can grow up; it is thanks to her faith in God that the young Jesus is able to decide to leave everything and follow the Father's plan; it is thanks to her patience and her wisdom that she is able to encourage Jesus to live his Passion and death on the Cross, with total and extreme dedication.

Mary of Nazareth will become the Mother of the Church by the will of her Son himself, on the cross. He hands her over to each one of us. The Mother of God has been an unsurpassed mother with Jesus, and she is "promoted" to continue her work as a mother for each one of us, as well as for the whole Church. Her ability to intercede must not be relegated to the simple "postwoman" of prayer intentions, but to her ability to help us make us pleasing to the Father, while we are carrying out His plan of salvation.

SPIRITUALITY

As you are probably aware, Mary, Mother of the Church, is a title attributed to Mary in a solemn form by Paul VI. Padre Pio experiences this motherhood, it is not a simple devotion, he realizes that the Virgin really helps him get to know and understand Christ, particularly in the liturgy. His loving expressions towards Our Lady are a clear example of a relationship that is not abstract at all, but which plays a very concrete part in his existence.

From a letter by Padre Pio to Fr Agostino (*Letters I, p.*)

Pietrelcina, 1st May 1912

My very dear Father,

Oh, the lovely month of May! It is the most beautiful month of the year. Yes, dear Father, how well this month speaks about the tenderness and beauty of Mary! When I think of the innumerable benefits received from our dear Mother, I am ashamed of myself, for I have never sufficiently appreciated her heart and her hand which have bestowed endless benefits upon me with so much love. What troubles me most is that in exchange for the affectionate care of this Mother of ours, I have kept on offending her.

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

For me the month of May is a month of graces and this year I am praying that I am granted just two. The first, is that she should take me to herself, or else, I can go on living, while all the consolations of this world be changed into sufferings for me if she will only prevent me from seeing the wicked faces of those people whom I shall not mention... The other grace I desire is that she obtains for me... you know what I mean dear Father.

I don't dare ask Her for this latter grace, because if this were to displease her, she would then hide her lovely face from me again as she has done on other occasions in the past.



Poor dear Mother, you love me so much! I observed it once more at the dawn of this beautiful month. What great care she took to accompany me to the altar this morning. It seemed to me that she had nothing else to think about except myself, as she filled my whole heart with sentiments of holy love.

I felt as if I had a mysterious fire burning in my heart, which I could not make sense of. I felt the need to put ice on it, and quench this fire which was consuming me.

I wish I had a voice strong enough to invite all sinners in the world to love Our Lady. But since this is not within my power, I have prayed and will pray my dear Angel to perform this task for me.

Pray for me and give your blessings often to

Your poor disciple,

Fr Pio

Maria was Padre Pio's teacher of life. He attributed graces to her when someone went to thank him for a sudden recovery or for an extraordinary help from heaven. Our Lady consoled him in the most difficult moments and helped him to fully live his Eucharists.

He used to have his Rosary in his hands all the time. Padre Pio would call it 'a weapon' and on more than one occasion he reiterated: all prayers are good, but the graces I get with the holy rosary, I don't get with the other prayers. Among the virtues of Maria, Padre Pio emphasized her ability to make herself small in front of God's plan: commenting on the Magnificat, he affirmed that the words "he looked at the humility of his servant" had to be understood as the total annihilation of Mary.

"The Lord - Padre Pio explained - looked at His servant and appreciated the complete negation of her own self".

GETTING TO KNOW PADRE PIO

- ❖ **Madonna della Libera.** The 'feast of the Madonnella' celebrated in Pietrelcina was always remembered by Padre Pio with great pleasure: his confrere friar Modestino, said that one day, having arrived in San Giovanni Rotondo, he decided to attend Padre Pio's Mass - as the Father himself had asked him to do whenever he was passing through the Gargano town - but on that occasion Padre Pio invited him to leave immediately for Pietrelcina, since the Feast of the Madonna della Libera would be celebrated the next day.
- ❖ **Virgin of the Rosary.** Padre Pio was very fond of the Madonna of Pompei (near Naples) to which he frequently turned to in his prayers. Back in 1915 he asked Our Lady of all graces that he could die in order to get closer to the Kingdom of Heaven. He waited many years: on 19th September 1968, a spiritual son visiting San Giovanni Rotondo gave Padre Pio a bouquet of red roses; the Father thanked him and extracted a rose from the bunch. He asked him to take it to the Madonna of Pompei as a sign of thanks for the grace that he was soon going to receive from her: a few days later Padre Pio would in fact return to the Father's House.
- ❖ **Immaculate Virgin.** This feast shows the great and strong bond that Padre Pio had with his "mother". It is curious to know that in the last years of his life, being no longer able to read the Missal, Padre Pio was given permission to always recite the same function. He chose precisely the Holy Mass of the Immaculate Conception, as he knew it by heart. In 1965, on the occasion of the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Padre Pio asked one of his spiritual daughters to bring, in his name and in the name of the patients of Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, a floral tribute at the foot of the statue of the Immaculate Conception in Piazza di Spagna, in Rome.
- ❖ **Our Lady of the Poor.** In 1933 Padre Pio heard about the Marian apparitions of the Virgin of the Poor in Banneux, Belgium. He said a few days later "I want a Madonna of the Poor for the House, since the Virgin of the Poor has come to relieve suffering, I want a statue for the House for Relief of Suffering". On 21st September 1968 he reiterated: «Do not forget about the statue



of the Virgin of the Poor. Get in touch with Banneux... It is for my sick children of the House. It is so much needed. And her place is here ».

- ❖ Our Lady of Fatima. In 1959 there was the Peregrinatio Mariae of the Madonna of Fatima in Italy and on 5th August it stopped in San Giovanni Rotondo. Padre Pio, seriously ill, said: "My dear mother, you came to Italy and I got sick, and now you are going away but I am still sick." Immediately he felt reinvigorated and healed. As a sign of thanks, through one of his spiritual children, he sent a bronze crucifix and the gold rosary that was placed on the hands of the pilgrim statue in Fatima.
- ❖ Our Lady of All Graces is the patron saint of San Giovanni Rotondo. Since 1916 and for the rest of his life, Padre Pio prayed at her feet in the small Capuchin convent dedicated to her.
- ❖ Our Lady of Loreto. Padre Pio never visited the Holy House of Loreto and yet, Father Remigio da Cavedine, who was its guardian for many years, testified: «at nine o'clock every evening I prayed the rosary in the Holy House. The exact moment in which I started praying, I saw Padre Pio arrive, and he would stay there for the whole time till the end of prayer ».
- ❖ Our Lady of the seven veils. From February to September 1916 Padre Pio stayed in the convent of Sant'Anna, in Foggia. Every day he took short walks to the ancient convent, to pray at the foot of the Madonna dei Sette Veli. (Our Lady of the Seven Veils).

PADRE PIO'S WORLD: *The Marian shrines*

Padre Pio's devotion to the Madonna originated in his childhood and was linked to the image of the Madonna della Libera that is venerated in Pietrelcina. In his life he was linked to many other Marian sanctuaries, such as Loreto or Montevergine. There are many testimonies of his devotion to the Virgin of Grace, venerated in the convent of San Giovanni Rotondo and to Our Lady of Seven Veils of the city of Foggia. In his Letters he often recommended that his spiritual daughters made the three novenas to Our Lady of Pompei. To this sanctuary he went on pilgrimage for the first time as a boy and on other occasions as a priest. On September 20, 1968, a spiritual son from Naples bought many roses to adorn the altar on the occasion of the anniversary of the stigmatization and brought a bouquet to him in his cell. Padre Pio took a rose and asked him to take it the next day to Pompei to the sanctuary of the Madonna, where it is still kept as his last homage to the Virgin before dying.

CLOSE-UP ON PADRE PIO'S PRAYER GROUPS: *The holy rosary, "Padre Pio's weapon"*

Devotion to the Virgin Mary was considered as essential in the life of all Prayer Groups. Padre Pio referred to Our Lady as to "our dear mother" and she guided him into living the Eucharist more fully. The holy rosary is one of the fundamental prayers of the spirituality of the Groups. For this reason in their spiritual growth, the members of the Prayer Groups make it a point to "contemplate Christ with the eyes of Mary", according to the teachings of Pope John Paul II.

OUR COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

May 5 (anniversary of the foundation of “Casa Sollievo” and Groups)

Feast day of the foundation

The date of the foundation of Casa Sollievo is chosen as the ideal date of the birth of the Prayer Groups too. This is because in the speech of the first anniversary from the inauguration of the Hospital, Padre Pio officially mentioned the link between Casa Sollievo and the Groups.

On this occasion it would be nice to promote the official collection of donations from all the Prayer Groups in the world to the benefit of Casa Sollievo.