



Second Step

A SON WHO IS LESS UNWORTHY THAN SAINT FRANCESCO

BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES

*“A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.”
(Lc 6, 40)*

There is nothing more useful than a master of life. Generally parents are masters of life, as well as someone in the family or an outsider who is charming, whom we look up to, and who instils in us the desire for a full life. In the Jewish religion there are the so-called “rabbis”, who were teachers chosen for their testimony and as role-models. Jesus brings novelty in this, too: He chooses the ones He wants. He chooses the ones that other teachers would not choose, because they would not have been able to carry out their tasks. He chooses without any expectations. The disciples of Jesus will receive everything by this Sublime Teacher and, thanks to the Grace of the Holy Spirit, they will be able to be like Him.

We also have been chosen through Baptism, and we have to express our desire to be educated in his school, we want to ask the Holy Spirit to renew his work in us. We want to get ready for we need to be aware of the new orientation our life needs to take, from the human and the Christian perspective: we want to offer our lives like Jesus did, loving without any conditions and, above all, without any expectations.

SPIRITUALITY

Padre Pio’s vocation develops under the inspiration of the Franciscan spirituality. This represents the ideal environment for his reflective and particularly sensitive character. The affection of His fellow monks, which will surround him for the rest of his life, will be one of his points of strength and will support him in several difficult situations. For this reason, we are going to show you a letter in which Padre Pio compliments the archpriest’s niece who has become an oblate and prompts her to go to Assisi, for a first-hand experience of San Francesco’s spirituality.

The fraternity of the Third Order was founded in Pietrelcina; Padre Pio joyfully spoke about a place that was so dear to all Franciscans: the small church called “Portiuncola”, in Assisi.

From a letter by Padre Pio to Graziella Pannullo

San Giovanni Rotondo 30th December 1921

I hope that the day when you can taste a joy similar to that of Paradise is not far, and that will happen when you go to visit Assisi, which is the Franciscan town par excellence, a monument which speaks of the great love and infinite charity of our holy Father, Saint Francis. Yes, I hope that one day, in the not too distant future, you will prostrate right there, in the little church of the Portiuncola, that has become so dark with the passing of time. Throughout seven centuries of religious devotion, penitents

have worn away its surface with their kisses. Mrs. Henrion was a pious admirer of Franciscan works; she tells us how all the kisses through time have made its rough walls as smooth as marble and alabaster, pulsating onto those walls one after the other, with a rhythm that well echoes that of their

hearts of devoted pilgrims. Every single dark brick bears the story of thousands and thousands of souls, who leaned their heads right there, anxious and desperate, in total abandonment.

Pilgrims knee there instinctively, and in divine silence they experience the sweet feeling of a most peaceful blessing. They become part of the infinite echo of all the sweet prayers that preceded theirs, still resounding throughout the centuries, sharing in the same ardent love of the saints, in the holocaust of pure victims, and in the tears of redemption. Oh! How great, how sweet the divine dogma of the Communion of Saints in the Church of Jesus is! This truly is the door to eternal life, as it is written on the front wall of the little church of the Portiuncola. Padre Pio, capuchin Faith needs to find the right places. There are some physical places, like a church where a saint has worked or it was his home or his monastery. We don't visit them like tourists, but to meditate on.

PADRE PIO PRAYER GROUPS *"Follow the path that God has chosen for you"*

how much the work of God has influenced that person or that place with His goodness. The symbols we use in our faith can remain abstract, but they can also become "places" where we meet the Lord. A sacrament can be a cold rite or indeed the place where we meet the Lord. Equally the Church, as a community that gathers people in the name of Christ, is a symbol. The Prayer Group, with the charity and the spirit of faith which animates it, can be a symbol open to others and a means enabling its members to share their faith. It can become a place where the grace of God can be celebrated together.

GETTING TO KNOW PADRE PIO

- ☒ In the first months of 1898, Giuseppa and Grazio Forgione, after realising that their son has been gifted with not indifferent endowments, decide to find a private tutor for little Francesco. Father Domenico Tizzano, a local teacher, starts teaching him and this is when Padre Pio's basics for his spiritual education are laid.
- ☒ In January 1903, two years after meeting with Fr Camillo from Sant'Elia, Francesco leaves for the convent of Morcone, with four friends. This is where he begins his studies for the novitiate: "The pupils must be educated to priestly obedience, to a poor standard of living, to the spirit of self sacrifice, so that they can get used to living according to the Crucified Christ".
- ☒ After professing his simple vows, in 1904 Fra' Pio continues his studies in the convent of Sant'Elia in Pianisi, in the province of Campobasso. Here he asks to be sent to the Missions, but his request will not be accepted. He will therefore choose to be a missionary through his "humble, fervent and constant prayer".

- ☒ In October 1905, Padre Pio is temporarily transferred to the convent of San Marco la Catola in the province of Foggia, where Father Benedetto Nardella taught philosophy, sciences and Italian literature. A very strong filial relationship begins between the two, so that the young friar will choose him as his spiritual director.
- ☒ In April 1906 Padre Pio returns to Sant'Elia. In the following years, he is formed in the convent of Serracapriola in the province of Foggia (1907), where he studies theology under the guidance of Father Agostino from San Marco in Lamis.
- ☒ From 1908 he continues his theological studies in the province of Avellino, first in the convent of Montefusco, then in the convent of Gesualdo (1909).
- ☒ In 1910 he is ordained priest in the Cathedral of Pietrelcina. Due to his precarious health, he will live here almost permanently, until 1916. In Pietrelcina he is engaged in parish activities to help Fr Salvatore Pannullo.

PADRE PIO'S WORLD: the convent of Morcone

Morcone is a small town at the foot of Mount Mucre. The Capuchins settled there on 17th May 1603, when they planted the cross for the construction of the convent. The young men who wanted to become friars were sent here. In fact, this was the place where they were formed to the fraternal and conventual life, according to the Capuchin charism.

Francesco Forgione, the future Padre Pio, arrived at this convent on 6th January 1903, welcomed by Fr. Camillo of Sant'Elia in Pianisi. In fact, the young Fr Pio understood here that the cloister was the best place to serve the Lord, "under the flag of the Poverello di Assisi", the poor from Assisi. Within its walls, the young friar humbly asked Jesus for the grace of being "a son less worthy than San Francesco".

CLOSE-UP ON PADRE PIO'S PRAYER GROUPS: Purposes of Prayer Groups

Prayer groups have a twofold purpose: they gather together to pray together, according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff and for the varied intentions that arise, and to engage in the service of charity for those who suffer, especially aimed at the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza.

The link with the Franciscan spirituality is expressed by a moderate lifestyle, attentive to the poverty, the respect for creation and the peace in every place and in every situation.

