

To know Padre Pio is to know God's love for mankind and the love that a person can have for God. From Padre Pio, we can learn to be true Christians and to understand that prayer must lead to charity, and that without prayer, charity does not exist.

For Jesus, Himself, tells us: "Without Me, you can do nothing!" It is only when we are in communion with Him that our deeds become efficacious. Only God can teach us how to love. God is love. Love is found in Him alone.

Prayer radiates love. One day, one of Padre Pio's spiritual daughters was half awake when she had a vision. In this vision she saw that in the middle of the sky there was a priest dressed in richly adorned robes. Then she saw his face: it was Padre Pio's. He became like the sun, and from this sun myriads of rays radiated in all directions. The rays were made up of little white and red roses.

When she asked Padre Pio what it meant, he replied: ***"The rays made up of roses represent the prayer groups which are springing up all over the world. The white roses represent those souls which strive to live in the grace of God, and be loved by God, and to practice fraternal charity. The red roses represent those souls which bear with joy the cross of suffering, and united to Jesus and to me, they collaborate in the conversion of sinners and in the salvation of our brethren."***

This is what Padre Pio wants from each of us. We are called to become roses ... either white or red roses ... but roses in any case. Padre Pio is with us; he will not abandon us; but, he cannot respond for us. He has already done his part, now it is up to us to do ours.

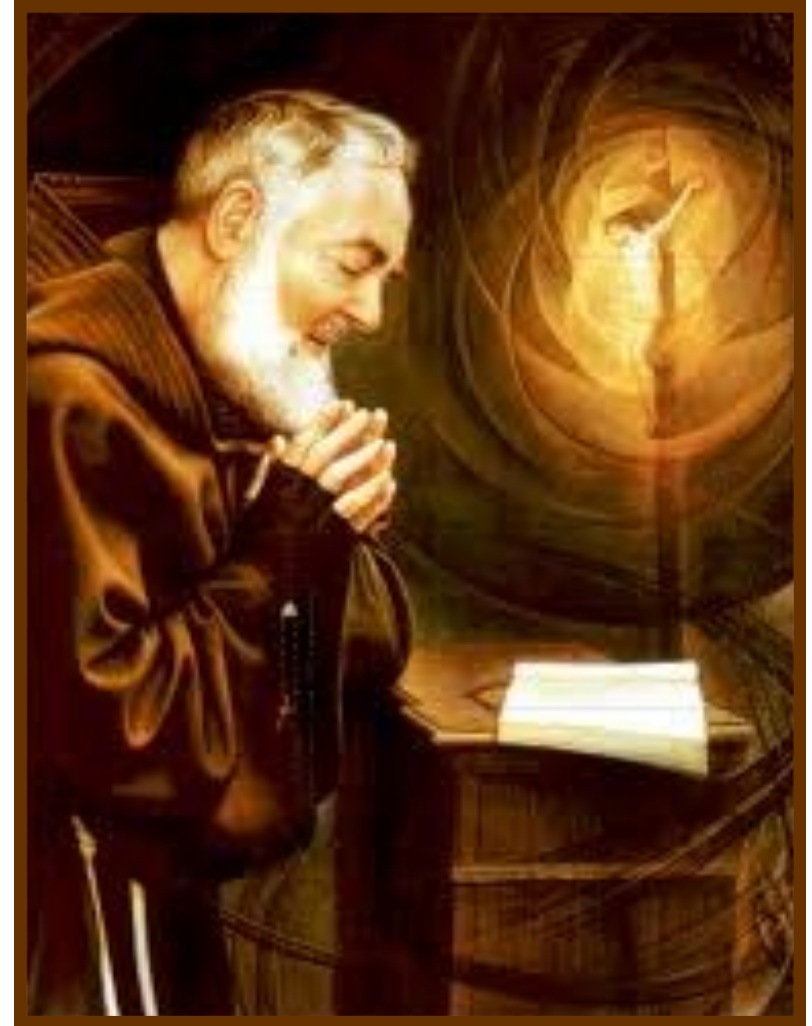
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Just a Monk Who Prays **Saint Padre Pio**

FEAST DAY: SEPTEMBER 23



***"Let us climb Calvary without getting tired,
carrying our Cross and be certain
that the climb will lead us
to the beatific vision of our dear Savior."***

Just a Monk who Prays
by Fr. G. Biacamelli in Il Cuore di Padre Pio

Padre Pio was canonized on June 16, 2002.-- " They seek God in books; but He is found in prayer," said Saint Padre Pio one day to his spiritual children.

"If no one believes today, it is because no one prays. God is not found in books, but in prayer. The more you pray, the stronger your faith gets, and the more you find God ... My children, do not ever neglect your prayer. Pray often during the day. Do a bit of meditation, too. You will find and you will see God." Pio would often say: "Prayer is bread and life for the soul; it lets the heart breathe; it is an intense and prolonged encounter with God."

The Bible is full of people who conversed with the Creator. Jesus prayed and urged us to pray. Early Christians were called men and women of prayer. Prayer must be intense because you cannot pray without preparation when you are full of your own problems, worries, and concerns.

It must be prolonged because you cannot pray in a second... it takes time to turn inward. It often happens that as we begin to pray we stop, for we have to go to do something, but when we go, also our prayer goes.

To pray is to love. We cannot fool ourselves. Just as there is no love without suffering, neither is there prayer without suffering, because to pray is to love. A person who loves God prays; a person who says words to God does not pray.

When a person loves God, everything becomes prayer, every moment is a prayer. The reason is because when you love, you think constantly of your Loved One, and want to be with Him. So, your heart breaks out with a song, words of praise, of thanksgiving, a good deed, etc.

Prayer was Padre Pio's daily bread. A few years before he died, he said: "All I want to be is a monk who prays." And, where do we remember Padre Pio? ... at the altar, in the chancel,

on his knees, in the confessional, and always with Rosary beads in his hands.

On the subject of prayer, Padre Pio wrote on November 1, 1913, to Padre Benedetto, his spiritual director: "When I pray, my soul loses itself in God ... other times it consumes me with love for God ... I perceive within my soul that it ardently desires being loosened from life ... I feel that time gets away so quickly; there is never enough time to pray..."

Prayer for him meant to be lost in God, to forget oneself so as to find oneself in God, to - consume oneself for love of God, and the most ardent desire to be in communion with God. It was leaving this time behind, so as to participate in a reality that was way beyond time.

Prayer is indispensable for every day life. This is what Our Lady has been telling us for centuries. Padre Pio paid heed and put Her calls into practice, and for all of us, he became a teacher of prayer. Not that he attended courses to specialize in prayer, but because, with great humility, he prayed.

Our Most Effective Weapon

He would say: "When you are feeling discouraged because of doubt, anxiety, pain, or sorrow, it is then that you need to have recourse to the Lord through prayer, and find in it support and renewed courage." And: "Prayer is our most effective weapon; it is a key which opens God's heart."

Padre Pio started **prayer groups**. He said: "If you are my children, be united to me, and together we will respond to Jesus' commandment and to the Pope's invitation and desire to pray together. **When my children will be united in groups to pray, Jesus will be amid them, and also Jesus' Mother will be with them in spirit, and united in prayer.**"

Prayer is not an end in itself. If praying is encountering God, then a **prayer meeting** must change us, and make us witnesses of the Gospel in the family and in the world, and be for us a fount of joy and good, of charity and peace. Padre Pio would often say: "***If you are my children, I want you to pray together in the evenings, as a family; and together recite the Holy Rosary in honor of Our Lady.***"