



Padre Pio saying grace for his brother friars.

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PADRE PIO AT THE TABLE



*... I see Pio gathering the crumbs from the table,
not only because he valued and loved the goodness
of the labor that brought them to the table,
but for the whole world of God's gifts
in that one little grain....*

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This is from an old book of magnificent essays, *Prayer for All Times* by Pierre Charles, S.J., first published in 1929 and apparently out-of-print (some used copies are available at [Amazon](#)). It is about *our* being a prayer, in between our praying. "Fr. Charles wishes our life to be a 'prayer-life,' " writes Father C.D. Martindale, S.J., in the Foreword. An "embodied prayer."

Certainly not easy, but one can always try. One essay in particular, "*Gather Up Even the Crumbs*," reminded me of Padre Pio. Nurtured in poverty, seeing his parents toil and till the land for their livelihood, how sensitively aware he must have been of the 'holiness' of each meal put before him, and the love that went into his mother's preparations. I can't remember in which books I read that Padre Pio used to pick up the crumbs before him on the table in the refectory, not to let the tiniest morsel of God's gift go to waste. Here are some excerpts--*gems*--from the essay. I am cutting much out, and still the excerpt is a little long.

"Little things have always been sacred in the eyes of faith...the care of little things is the homage of fidelity...We are never far from Him, O God, my Redeemer, who loves me such as I am! Nothing in me is negligible in Your eyes, and that is why all is important, why all should be sanctified, why all is a response and a homage. We shall work together then to make me such as you would have me to be."

Father Charles goes on to say that when we are not exactly the way He would have us... *"He is pained, as one is pained by a defect in a person loved. My bearing and my gestures preoccupy Him: and when they are exaggerated, or too frequent, unruly or merely flippant, He is saddened, for He wants me to keep them simple and restrained. He observes the expression of my countenance, and the tone of my voice; when I raise it, when it grows loud in a wave of anger, when it grates with irritability or temper..."*

He suffers as one suffers from a want of good manners, an uncouthness more or less accepted, in those one loves and of whom one wishes to be proud. He cares about everything since nothing is unconnected with His Will; the paper I take to write upon, the words which my mind dictates to my pen, even the stains on my clothes, and the details of my dress, the swiftness of my glance, and the curl of my lip...everything is noted by Him, to be approved or deplored by His love. And this is what I must understand if I would grasp what is really meant by the care of little things...and answer and give an homage which I can and should offer to Him."

Fr. Charles continues,

"Nothing seems trivial to a great love, and if I believe in the love of my God, if I am convinced that this love is all embracing, that He takes me as I am and intends to change me wholly; if I succeed in persuading myself that nothing is trivial, but that all is but proof of tender fidelity, then I shall be able to avoid...that false liberty of spirit which disdains to gather up the fragments of the divine gift which is our life, the crumbs of heavenly food which is the grace of Christ."

Can we not see what Padre Pio was after in all those wonderful recounting of him in the Confessional, in the things he said to his spiritual children in corridors and letters...These "*crumbs of heavenly food*" resonate with Pio's love of purity of heart, of fidelity, the "good manners" with our God, which he worked at perfecting in his spiritual children. We have only to read his letters to his spiritual daughters.

I see Pio gathering the crumbs from the table, not only because he valued and loved the goodness of the labor that brought them to the table, but for the whole world of God's gifts in that one little grain.

