

IT IS PRAYER THAT SPREADS GOD'S SMILE AND BLESSING

The Spirituality of the Prayer Groups

Formation Text – Liturgical Year A

INTRODUCTION

"Freely you have received; freely give" (Mt 10:8). This is the fundamental attitude of those who belong to Padre Pio's Prayer Groups. Our prayer rises to Heaven as a gesture of gratitude to the Father of mercy for His love and for the gifts He has given us through His Son, Jesus Christ; but it also becomes service and a gift for the entire Church.

To choose to be intercessors for the Church and within the Church is the commitment taken on by the Padre Pio Prayer Groups to give freely what they have freely received. It is beautiful to let our prayer be marked by this spirit of generosity: being in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters without expecting anything in return, other than a deep bond of love.

Through various formation tools, we have emphasized this aspect of the charism in recent years. A multi-year project was developed, beginning with a "Year Zero," in which we reflected on the origin, development, and meaning of the Prayer Groups' life in the Church.

With this booklet for Year A, we present the first resource in a three-year cycle. This year, we will reflect on the core elements of Padre Pio's spirituality. In the second year, we will focus on the Word of God and the virtues. In the third year, we will reflect on our mission within the Church.

The title of this first volume, *"It is prayer that spreads God's smile and blessing"*, comes from a passage in the speech written for the 10th anniversary of the founding of Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza. Although Padre Pio was unable to read it aloud due to his well-known health problems, it was later published. The full passage reads: *"It is prayer—this combined force of all good souls that moves the world, that renews consciences, that sustains the 'Casa', that comforts the suffering, that heals the sick, that sanctifies work, that elevates health care, that gives moral strength and Christian resignation to human suffering, and that the smile and benediction of God on every languor and weakness."*

In this complete excerpt, Padre Pio uses a series of action verbs to describe what prayer does: "moves, renews, supports, comforts, heals, sanctifies, uplifts, gives." Each of these reflects the spirit of *"Freely you have received; freely give."* For Padre Pio—who faithfully followed the Gospel—prayer is not merely an individual practice or a private relationship with God. It is to be lived with others. It becomes a force and sets into motion a unique dynamism.

Awareness that each person has their own personal way of approaching God and walking with Him does not make believers into a scattered group of individuals isolated from one another. Rather, it builds bridges, unites expectations, and makes each one a guest and a source of strength for others' prayer. It is no coincidence that the first and fundamental prayer of the Holy Mass is called the "collect"—a gathering—because together we unite ourselves with one another and with Christ, our mediator before the Father.

In Scripture, praise to God is often expressed using stringed instruments such as the psaltery, lyre, or harp. Each string has its own sound, but together they create one melody. In this text, we aim to evoke that choral unity, highlighting the various aspects of Padre Pio's spirituality, like the many ways our Founder found to play a single melody to the Lord. The harmonious sound of stringed instruments also calls to mind the vocation to pray together—to gather each person's spiritual journey into a single song of praise and thanksgiving.

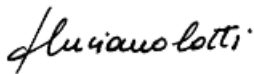
Finally, a string also suggests another dimension: that of tension. Each string is stretched differently, but all are directed towards producing a sound that reaches Heaven. For this reason, each chapter will be marked by a string - a kind of note or thread - representing one of the many dimensions of the one melody that Padre Pio expressed through his life.

These reflections lead us to emphasize that, while this text is for everyone, it is especially entrusted to the spiritual assistants and group leaders. We rely on their dedication and leadership to help propose a shared journey guided by a clear formation path, so that our Groups may truly live out Padre Pio's spirituality and commitment to a common spiritual path.

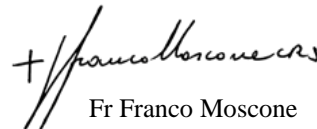
We express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who, in different ways, contributed to the creation of this resource.

Above all, we thank Padre Pio, who will surely accompany us with his blessing and help us live his charism to the fullest.

June 16, 2025 – Anniversary of the Canonization of Saint Pio



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