

Life

Padre Pio was born in 1887 in Pietrelcina, Italy to a devout family who attended daily mass. He was weak and sick since he was a child, and in his childhood he made the decision to dedicate his life to God. Pio joined the Capuchins at fifteen. He became a priest at 23. At age 29, he was sent to Our Lady of Grace Capuchin Friary, and he served there his whole life. In September 1918, when Fr. Pio prayed in the church facing the cross, stigmata appeared on his hands and feet, sharing the wounds of Christ on the cross. These wounds would bleed, but physicians could not explain why. He could not be healed and the pain had not been subsided. These wounds lasted for 50 years but had not been infected, and even exuded a special fragrance. He is the first stigmatized priest in the history of the church. Father Pio received many graces from God, such as being able to read the mind, predict, cure diseases, appear in two places, etc. In the confessionals he could tell the sins of the faithful, and endless people came to him for confession every day. At the same time, he was also severely attacked by Satan in both his soul and body. Many people came to seek his guidance, but many people also doubted and slandered him. Father Pio always maintained humility and silence, only slept for three hours each night. He sacrificed his time to listening to confessions, celebrating mass, praying, and providing guidance to believers coming from all over the world. He endured physical and mental pains without any complains, but cared for the pain of others with compassion, and created the Casa Sollievo Della Sofferenza. It is not only a hospital for curing diseases but also for caring for patients' souls. The dedication, love and preaching of Fr. Pio deeply affected people from all over the world. He died in 1968 at the age of 81.

Reflection

Several popes praised highly of Father Pio. Pope John Paul II explained the relationship between suffering and the sanctification of Father Pio during his canonization mass: "The life and mission of Padre Pio prove that difficulties and sorrows, if accepted out of love, are transformed into a privileged way of holiness, which opens onto the horizons of a greater good, known only to the Lord...His holiness cannot be understood without this constant reference to the Cross. In God's plan, the Cross constitutes the true instrument of salvation for the whole of humanity and the way clearly offered by the Lord to those who wish to follow him." Pope Benedict XVI called Father Pio as chosen by Christ to be "a power of love for souls, of forgiveness and of reconciliation, of spiritual fatherhood, of effective solidarity with the suffering." Pope Francis described Fr. Pio as "a servant of mercy" and said: "He did so full time, practicing, at times in exhaustion, 'the apostolate of listening'. Through his ministry in the confessional, the saint was able to become a caress of the living Father, who heals the wounds of sin and refreshes the heart with peace. Padre Pio never tired of welcoming and listening to the people who came to him. He spent his time and strength spreading the perfume of the forgiveness of the Lord."

Prayer

Father Pio loves to pray, saying that it is "a key that opens God's heart." He organized many prayer groups, his famous saying was "Pray, hope, and don't worry". He is especially devoted to the Virgin, always carrying the rosary with him and praying it whenever there is a free moment. He thinks that the rosary is "The synthesis of our faith, the expression of our charity, and the foundation of our hope." Father Pio said that the rosary is a weapon to fight the evil of the world. Someone asked him in his later years, "What inheritance do you wish to leave your spiritual children?" He answered simply, "The Rosary."

May we learn from St. Pio to endure pain with love and as an offering,
pray with confidence and pray the rosary often.
St. Pio, pray for us.