



*"Jesus is my hope, and the living source of my happiness"
Padre Pio Prayer Groups, pilgrims of hope*

EIGHTH SHRINE – MAY 2025

THE PILGRIM VIRGIN

BIBLE COMMENTARY

From the Gospel according to John (2:1-10)

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus is the new wine, the one that comes at the end of time. He is the right answer, after our thousand attempts to solve things in our own way. He is the wine of hope, after an unexpected emptiness: "They have no more wine" is an expression referred to those who feel fear and discouragement, to those who got lost after an unfulfilled event. Jesus is the new wine of the Church, when the Church seems tired, when people would like to say that they are at the end of their banquet. Jesus is the new wine capable of transforming simple water. We priests are not perfect and often bring out too much of our humanity, sometimes we find it hard to manage so many situations, to transform them into something that can give salvation. Through us, His priests, Jesus transforms the water of baptism into the gift of the Spirit, the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus chooses to go to that banquet inhabiting the history of men, confused among themselves, together with His mother and His disciples. He wants to remain small among them and with them, his time has not yet come, he does not want to be different from the others. He does not ask us to detach ourselves from life and from what we are in order to be with Him, to feel different and better than others. Maria does not want to change history, she does not want to expose Her Son so that everyone recognizes that He is the best. He has only one desire: that the power of God transforms the history of men, and thus that our human banquet may become a divine banquet. Those servants called to obey a man are in reality called to obey God: "Do whatever he tells you". Mary is the teacher of an obedience that reveals the presence of God, who came to be close to us, who made Himself like us to transform our little stories into a history of salvation.

SPIRITUALITY

From a letter from Padre Pio to Giuseppina Morgera (Dolcissimo Iddio, Epist. M. p. 100)

Remember that in heaven you have not only a Father, but a Mother, too. Yes, my dear daughter, let us remember the gift that these heavenly parents of ours have given us. They have given us a Son, and



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with such a precious gift they have bound us and in the order of grace, they are ready to give us the riches of their love and goodness. They will always listen to us, they will be always eager to defend us, always loving and welcoming us, always generous in benefitting us. Let us therefore entrust our souls, our anxieties and our destiny to their tenderness. Let us surrender with full trust to their love.

If we were to distrust their mercy and their will to come to our aid, we would add another wrongdoing to the many that we may have done, and this would cause them to suffer even more. And if our misery terrifies us, if our ingratitude to God terrifies us, if the memory of our sins stops us from presenting ourselves to God our Father, whose indignation towards us we have provoked, then let us have recourse to our mother Mary. She is all sweetness, all mercy, all goodness, all tenderness for us because she is our Mother. Let us ascend in her company to the throne of God, and let us reach Him through the power of His mother. In moments of supreme struggle let us insist and keep asking that He comes to save us, ungrateful children of His handmaid.

She is the one who in the solemn moment of becoming the Mother of God, described herself as the Lord's handmaid: "ecce ancilla Domini". Our most loving mother will also know how to sustain our supplications, to assert our reasons, to make our prayers acceptable, and how to reassure us that she is no less tender and generous as our Mother in heaven than she was already on Calvary, at that most solemn time for her when she spiritually gave birth to us all through her love to Her Child. But what is the use of spending more words to feel the tenderness of this dear mother for us, when our past lives have already made us experience how solicitous she has been towards us! Padre Pio made the rosary as his great daily prayer, his constant intercession and would often recall that through that prayer he received the greatest graces from the Lord. However, he was keen to emphasize the meditative aspect of the rosary, inviting Cleonice Morcaldi to greet Our Lady at each Hail Mary "in the mystery that you contemplate". In recent years we have learned that often Padre Pio's Marian devotion was the fruit of a deep meditation on the Word of God, and the rosary was the highest point of his way of contemplating the Sacred Scriptures attentively and confidently.

The missionary virgin

Having said this, it must be remembered that one day he confided to one of his brothers: "I learned everything from Our Lady." The Virgin guided him, she was his catechist, but above all his role model in life. We can appreciate the modernity of this discourse, if we read the chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, which proposes Mary as mother and model of the Church. Almost at the end of this year of formation in which we wish to invite the Groups to live more and more the missionary spirit within the Church, we cannot fail to refer to the Virgin who was the first catechist and the first missionary. I have said many times that the Christian community has as many doors as the Colosseum, there are many ways to meet the Lord, and not infrequently do we do this, because in a moment of physical or material need we turn to the Virgin. Asking for Mary's intercession is like opening one of the most beautiful doors, but let us not forget that it remains only a door. It is necessary, then, to listen to Our Lady who in so many ways opens our hearts and pushes them to look ahead, beyond the fog of our problems and immediate needs, in the hope of our salvation that includes our whole history. The same Marian apparitions that have accompanied Marian devotion down through the centuries can be summed up in the words of the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you". Our Lady listens to us, comforts us, prays for us, but then she wants our eyes to be opened and above all the ears of our hearts to be opened to listening: "Do whatever He tells you".

Making Ourselves Small, Just Like Mary did

Pope Benedict XVI states: "Mary is great precisely because she does not want to make herself great, but God. She is humble: she wants to be nothing other than the handmaid of the Lord (cf. Lk



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1:38, 48). She knows that she contributes to the salvation of the world not by carrying out her own work, but only by putting herself fully at the disposal of God's initiatives" (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 41, LEV, Vatican City 2005). The pontiff presents us with the strength of Mary's missionary action, the thing that is close to her heart is the manifestation of Christ her son in the life of every believer. That is why, although He is in heaven, he never shows himself in His greatness, but as a humble person who opens the hearts of believers to the knowledge and service of God. In a letter sent to the Ventrella sisters while he was in Naples for military service, Padre Po explains the meaning of Mary's humility: "Dear daughters, abjection in Latin is called humility, and humility abjection; so that when in the Magnificat the Blessed Virgin says, "For he has looked with favour on his lowly servant ", she means to say that the Lord has looked down on Her abjection and smallness. Nevertheless, there is some difference between the virtue of humility and that of abjection; humility is the recognition of one's own abjection. Now the sublime degree of humility is not only to recognize one's own abjection, but to love it; this is what I have exhorted you to do" (*Epist. III*, p. 562). This is precisely the metamorphosis of Mary of which Pope Benedict XVI spoke, putting herself completely at the disposal of the kingdom of God.

More than once, Padre Pio pointed out how the Virgin plays this role in a particular way at the moment of confession; once he said: "Our Lady covers the confessional with the mantle of God's mercy". On the occasion of the miracle at the wedding at Cana, the servants are the unaware collaborators in the miracle of Jesus; it is precisely our choice to live that mercy that accompanies the whole life of the Virgin that can make us unaware missionaries of the salvation that Jesus wants to offer us, often using mysterious ways.

Universality of Mary's Heart

Monsignor Paolo Carta, who was a military servant, then Archbishop of Foggia and finally Archbishop of Sassari, says that one day he turned to Padre Pio asking him to meet some faithful he knew, despite being aware Padre was besieged by so many people and requests. "I will come to see you with a family that is very close to my heart. The father, a colonel, is little or no practitioner. The mother is religious, but she is Protestant. Their son, however, was one of the best students of the Military Academy of Modena, so much so that to reward his piety and goodness I went from Foggia to Turin specifically to bless his wedding». Padre Pio immediately made himself available and so the Archbishop with that family joined him in the convent's guesthouse. Padre Pio knew very well that the colonel had little faith, and that his wife was not Catholic. "However," the story continues, "he presented himself with such a smile, with such a bright look, and his face radiated so much sweetness that we all remained in silence, staring at him, fascinated and ecstatic for a few moments. He addressed words full of faith and goodness to everyone. How he knew how to meet them in the right way! Yet he could easily have addressed the mother saying, "Madam, what are you waiting before becoming a Catholic?" Or say: "Colonel, when will you decide to go to confession?" No, no. The Father had a sense of respect and discretion and at that moment he wanted to do only what I had come to ask for that family: the blessing. He gave it in a warm voice of paternal sense, smiled again and withdrew. We went out with our souls pervaded by the sweetest joy." Let's go back to the idea of the Church as a palace with many doors. I do not hide the fact that in our Christian community, the daughter of a society where there is a desire to go to extremes, there is no shortage of those who would like all Christians to be perfect, that there be great clarity between what is right and what is wrong. These are two aspects on which it is necessary to clarify. The door must be open, anyone can approach the Lord, pray to him, meet him. It is the encounter with the Lord, his grace that brings about conversion, certainly not the word of a good priest, even if he were the greatest preacher in this world. Welcoming, as Padre Pio did, not pointing the finger at choices that are not our responsibility, is the path we must take as a church. Praying together with everyone, regardless of their moral choices,



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means placing others in front of a witness of faith, acceptance and charity. When God's grace reaches its purpose, the moment of absence arrives, the need for a word of clarity. That is the moment to say: "Do what he tells you". That will be the moment when without any judgment, without any great speeches we will be able to be with those who are "looking for good wine", that is, a word of salvation compared to those they have heard so far, from that servant, who may be a poor man, not perfect at all but is called to work in the name of God, transforming a story of sin, into a path of mercy. Fra' Modestino Fucci, one of our brothers who died in odour of holiness, welcomed everyone, without asking anything about their past. He listened, he encouraged, but when the time came, without reproach and without sermon, he accompanied the people to us priests with great humility: "Wow, today I'll bring you a big fish, treat him well. "I don't know if it is better to have a community that immediately raises fences, that tells who is good from who is not, even before people knock on our door, or a church that becomes missionary, meets, listens, accompanies towards salvation."

5th MAY DAY OF CHARITY

PRAYER

Prayer for Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza (House for the Relief of Suffering)

By Father Franco Moscone

O holy and glorious God,
so full of love for your children
that you sent your Son to give us life and salvation,
we thank you because the Holy Spirit,
poured out on the Church by Jesus
continues to bring forth brothers and sisters
who put their own existence at the service of the poor,
the suffering and the needy,
following the example of Christ.
Through the intercession of Padre Pio,
who carried the signs of Jesus' love on his body,
grant to his Work,
the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza,
the grace to be faithful to the charisma of its founder,
so that each one can bring your love to the bed of the sick:
make of the Casa a temple of life,
guiding hearts to loyalty and transparency in their actions.
Instill feelings of gratitude and love
in the Prayer Groups and in the devotees of Padre Pio
so that even today they may be the sign of that Providence
which wanted this work as a testimony to all
of the boundless trust in the Love and Mercy of God.

HYMN