

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS IN HONOR OF ST. PIO – WEDNESDAY OF THE 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT
HOLY ROSARY CHURCH – WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 4, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is good to be with you today. I bring you the spiritual closeness and affection of the Holy Father. A warm welcome to the members of the Saint Pio Foundation. Thank you for this opportunity to venerate a relic of this beloved saint. Padre Pio's famous words could serve as our motto for the season of Advent: "Pray, hope, and don't worry." Each of these three exhortations are found in the readings for today's Mass.

First: *Pray*.

Prayer is what we see the "great crowds" doing as they come to Jesus, "having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others". You might say: *What do you mean that they are praying?* They aren't kneeling down. They aren't "saying prayers". But they are placing themselves before the Lord in all their poverty and need. They are following the Lord day after day, even to the point of hunger, just to hear another word from the Lord. That is prayer! It is like the way of prayer that St. Pio modeled in his own life and teaching. He wrote: "Do not turn in on yourself... In the midst of trials which may afflict you, just place your confidence in our Supreme Good in the knowledge that He takes more care of us than a mother takes of her child." That is what the people who followed Jesus did. They forgot about themselves, and they entrusted themselves to the Lord. This is what it means to pray.

Second: *Hope*.

Hope is what the prophet Isaiah expresses in the first reading. In the midst of a situation of suffering and trial, he says: The Lord "will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines". He "will destroy death forever". We will say: "Behold, our God, to whom we looked to save us!" This is hope: to be experiencing darkness and affliction, and to trust in God's promise to bring light and salvation. Hope is the special virtue of the season of Advent. During Advent, we remember a time when the world waited for the coming of its Savior. So much in the world was dark, especially

for those who were the most poor in this world. But then came a Child who brought the light of hope to all people, beginning with the poor. As we pray for the rebirth of Christ in our hearts, we also hope for a light that scatters our spiritual darkness and renews our joy. Hope is also the theme of the coming Jubilee Year, which will begin this Christmas. “Hope does not disappoint.”

Padre Pio practiced hope as a way of life. His sufferings were many, including misunderstanding and physical pain. But to watch him celebrating Mass was to see a man who found his hope in Christ. To be united with Christ in the Eucharist was what gave St. Pio’s life meaning and joy. Everything that he did for others—his intercession, his letters, his confessions, and his service to the needy—was his way of sharing with others the hope that he found in his encounter with Christ.

Finally: *Don’t worry.*

It is the great irony of our age that the more material comforts we amass and the more technological capabilities we master, the more opportunities we find for worry and anxiety. Everywhere we look, there are people without peace. But in Psalm 23 of this Mass, we hear what can allay all of our worry: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” With him at my side, “I fear no evil.” And, in spite of the presence of the enemy, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.” This, of course, is what Jesus counseled his disciples many times, telling them: “Do not be afraid. I am with you.” Saint Pio, echoing Jesus, said: “Worry is useless.”

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It all begins with prayer. When we pray, by offering to the Lord everything that we have and all of our poverty, then we grow in hope because we experience what it is to trust in the Lord. And when we are filled with hope, we don’t worry because we know the One who has promised to save us.

During this Advent season, we do well to follow the simple counsel of Padre Pio: to pray, to hope, and not to worry, because our hearts are set on Jesus Christ, who has come into this world, and who is coming again.