

We will say, however, that this mystery did not exactly consist in being unaware of God's fundamental designs, but rather in not knowing in what manner these designs were to be fulfilled in him. Writing to Padre Agostino (Padre Pio's other spiritual director) he insists on this same idea on two distinct occasions in the course of a few months:

"There are so many things that I would like to tell you, Father, but I am unable to do so. I realize that I am a mystery to myself (17-3- 1916).

"What am I to say about myself? I am a mystery to myself and if I succeed in carrying on it is because the good God has reserved the final and surest word for authority on this earth" (15-8- 1916).

In November 1922, alluding to his entry into the Capuchin Order, he writes as follows to one of his spiritual daughters:

"Infinite praise and thanks be to you, O my God. You hid me away from the eyes of all, but already at that time you had entrusted a very great mission to your son. A mission that is known to you and myself alone [...]. O God! Show yourself more and more to this poor heart of mine and complete in me the work you have begun. I hear deep within me a voice which says to me repeatedly: sanctify yourself and make others holy." (Cf. Alessandro da Ripabottoni, Pio da Pietrelcina, Infanzia e adolescenza, 3rd Ed., p. 80).



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## Padre Pio – His Mission A Vocation to Co-Redemption



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# Padre Pio – His Mission

## A Vocation to Co-redemption

Beyond all doubt Padre Pio had a mission of his own, a specific charisma which, in a certain way, conditioned his entire life, both from the individual point of view and with respect to his social activity. He was not always aware of the practical achievements and decisive goals of this mission entrusted to him by Divine Providence. But moment by moment he pursued it generously and fearlessly and never did he doubt the reality of this mission nor shirk the responsibilities which it entailed.

Padre Benedetto, his spiritual director, appears to have hit the mark when he defined Padre Pio's mission and the charisma of which we are speaking by the concise and forceful expression, "a vocation to co-redemption." On 27 August 1918, in his reply to Padre Pio's letter of the 21st of that month, in which he told him of the mystical phenomenon of transverberation and his consequent painful anxiety, Padre Benedetto writes as follows:

"All that is happening to you is the effect of love. It is a trial, it is a vocation to co-redemption and hence a source of glory [...]. The Lord is with you. He is with you: patient, suffering, eager love, crushed and trampled upon, heartbroken; in the shadows of the night and even more so in the desolation of Gethsemane, he is associated with your suffering and associates you with his own.

"This is the whole fact of the matter, this is the truth and the only truth. Yours is not a purgation but a painful union.

"The fact of the wound completes your passion just as it completed the Passion of the Beloved on the Cross."

This "vocation to co-redemption" of sinful mankind was carried out by Padre Pio through his participation in the sufferings of the crucified Lover who chose him to be a victim of love and suffering.

On more than one occasion, reflecting on his state, on his past and his future, Padre Pio has frankly admitted that he finds something mysterious in the course of events, in his relations with God and in God's behavior towards him. The first reason for this atmosphere of mystery which at times enveloped his life sprang from the contrast – only too evident to him – between his infidelity to grace and the ever greater benevolence of God towards his soul. Evidently the phenomenon must have had a precise purpose, but this escaped him and hence, in great distress, he asked for clarification:

"I see something mysterious in myself: I am constantly sorry for the sins I have committed, I resolve continually never to commit them again, yet, I must admit with bitter tears, that, in spite of all this, I am still very imperfect and it seems to me that I very often offend the Lord. At times I am really in despair because it seems to me almost impossible that Jesus should forgive so many sins; again, more often than not it seems impossible that Jesus should let me go astray. Oh, what on earth is all this? Explain it to me a little.

"However, all this happens to me without my perceiving it, for I have by no means the will to offend God even to the slightest extent" (Letters 1 dated 2-9-1911).

Moreover, as he advances gradually along the painful path of passive purification towards transforming union, he sees himself more deeply enveloped in mystery.

In a state of bewilderment he declares that he fails to understand how and why he is placed in this baffling situation:

"How great is my misfortune, my dear Father! Who can understand it? I am well aware that I am a mystery to myself. I cannot understand myself " (17– 10 – 1915).