

gladdening mercy but the oil of His virtue which will strengthen you and make you successful in the combat. We all know well that wrestlers rub oil on their limbs to make them more agile, more supple and more robust.

Carry on tranquilly, for the divine mercy will not be lacking and much less will it be lacking in your case if you show docility beneath the Lord's divine action. Ah, Raffaolina, don't be stingy with this heavenly physician. For pity's sake, don't keep Him waiting any longer. To you, too, He is saying: *Give me your heart* (Prov. 23:26), my daughter, so that I may pour my oil into it. For pity's sake, let the invitation of such a tender Father not be wasted. Open the door of your heart to Him with trustful abandonment. Don't hold up the pressure stream of His oil as it is poured upon you, lest you have to go in search of this oil of His mercy at the hour of death (Cf. Mt 25:1ff.) like the foolish virgins of the Gospel, for you will then find nobody willing to give it to you. Yes, during life always remain united with Jesus in the olive grove as He suffers His agony. By sharing thus in the anointing of His grace in the comfort of His strength you will find yourself after death among the same olive trees to share in the joy of His Ascension in His glory.

I urge you, then, not to lose heart in face of all the trials which your very dear sister is undergoing. May the Lord have pity not so much on her physical as on her moral state. Don't hold it against me and tell me I am to blame for hardly ever speaking to you about your poor invalid. God knows my reason for this! I myself keep silence, however, as I have no words to justify myself in this matter....

You must learn how to suffer in a Christian manner. Don't be afraid, for no suffering no matter how low the motive on which it rests will go unrewarded in eternal life. Trust and hope in the merits of Jesus and in this way even poor clay will become finest gold which will shine in the palace of the king of heaven....

My respectful regards to your excellent sister.

May Jesus be always with you and with all those souls who love Him. I leave you all in the Lord's holy embrace and always remain,

Your most humble servant,
Fra Pio, Capuchin.

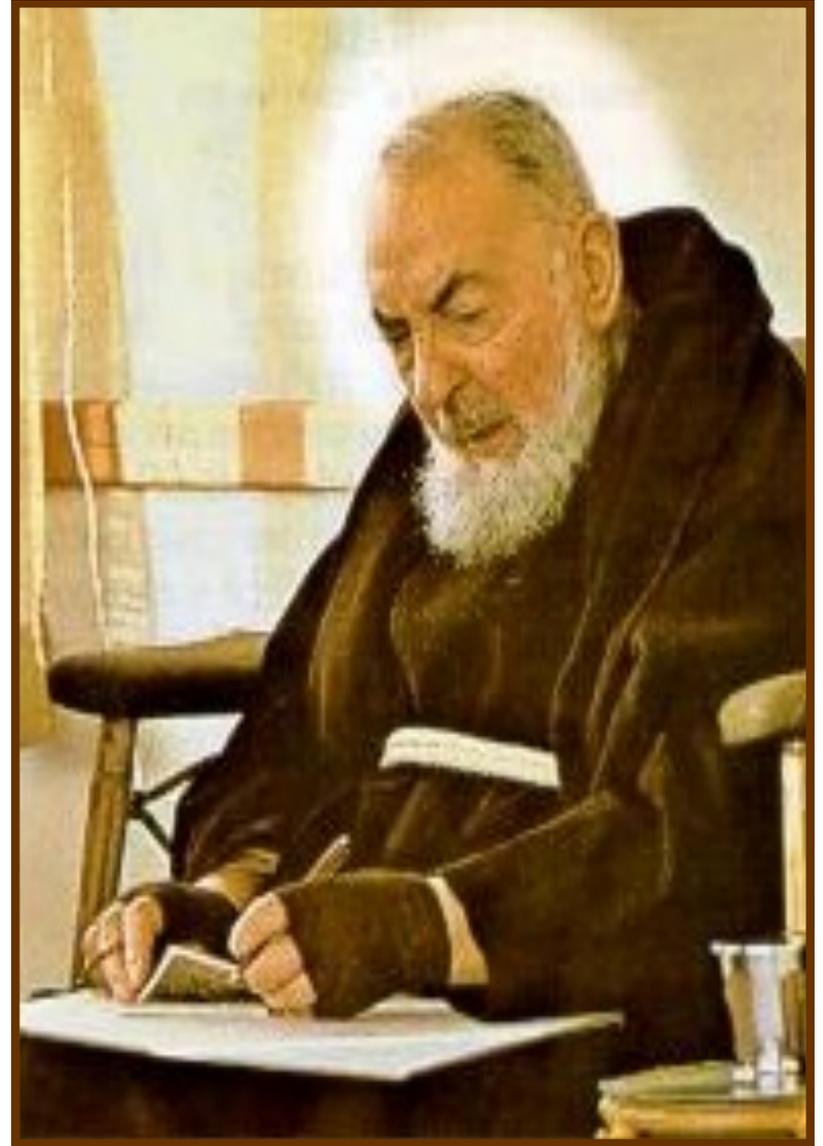
Reminder: The contents of this letter is specific between Raffaolina Cerase and Padre Pio. Someone else having similar problems may receive different answers from Padre Pio.



**ALWAYS LIVE UNDER THE EYES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
AND YOU WILL WALK UNHARMED THROUGH EVIL PASTURES.**

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Letter of Padre Pio: FACING SUFFERING



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In letter 77 dated 21 July 1915 and letter 78 dated 31 July 1915, Raffaolina Cerase writes to Padre Pio concerning the status of her sister Giovina's health. She also states: "I myself am in deep darkness and am extremely desolate. May Jesus, Mary and Joseph guide, protect and defend us." She goes on to relate to Padre Pio the deteriorating condition of Giovina's health and the need to consult with specialists about her sister's stomach problems.

Raffaolina goes on to explain that the Way of the Cross for both her and her sister are very painful. As she consults various doctors looking for a solution for Giovina's medical condition she states the following to Padre Pio about her sister: "But at present I believe there is nothing that will relieve the sorrow of that martyred soul. Nothing will serve to give back strength and energy to that weak and suffering body, although I hope I am deceived in thinking so. You are aware of everything yet you are silent and continue to keep silent. Is it charity that makes you keep the curtain lowered to hide the grim and terrifying future from me? Am I perhaps mistaken? Oh, if only I were!

"What am I to tell you about myself? I am all the time in agony in face of this harrowing scene. Nothing whatsoever distracts me from this enormous, torturing nightmare. What upsets me at times is that these sufferings of mine are not acceptable to Jesus, because they have a human motive which concerns Giovina's bodily well-being, although I am convinced that her soul acquires merit when she suffers in this way, with resignation and in a Christian spirit. Is this a fact? Answer me on this point.

"I am always looking at and thinking of things of this earth, of transitory and deceptive things. O my Jesus, if it is possible, take this bitter chalice away from me, but may your will always be done! I feel your hand coming down more heavily on me. You are right, I deserve much worse treatment, but have mercy on me...."

Padre Pio responds to these two letters on 4 August 1915 as follows:

Beloved daughter of the heavenly Father,

May the grace of the divine Spirit comfort your soul with that consolation which can come from God alone. May Jesus make you ever dearer to Him and never more like Him on the path of suffering. May Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, enable you to understand all that is contained in the great secret of suffering borne with a Christian spirit. May she obtain for you all the strength you require to climb to the summit of Calvary loaded with your own cross.

Great strength is needed, unfortunately, to follow this path, but take heart, for the Savior will never leave you alone or without His help. Let us make haste, then, to join and mingle with all those pious and faithful souls who follow the divine Master. Let us hasten, I say, and not remain far behind this holy company. Let us always be united with them and never lose sight of them. Let us never take our eyes off them or we shall never be able to reach them, we shall be deprived of those secret treasures which they alone possess and shall be excluded from the eternal joy which is only obtained through them and in their company.

Be consoled, Raffaolina, by this thought which should be exceedingly sweet for you, namely, that you are very dear to the heart of the divine Father who has deigned to make you similar to His divine Son. He intends to lead you to great holiness and hence He has subjected and will subject you again to uncommon trials.

Be docile in shouldering these crosses with humility. Seek comfort in this sacrament of the Eucharist. In the midst of great desolation let your soul never cease to sing to God the hymn of gratitude and praise. Keep far away from the corruption of the carnal Jerusalem, from profane assemblies, from corrupt and corrupting entertainment, from all ungodly company.

Prepare your lips, as the divine Redeemer did, and drink along with Him from the black waters of the Cedron by accepting tribulation and penance with holy resignation. Cross this torrent with Jesus by enduring the world's contempt for love of Him perseveringly and courageously. Recollect yourself continually and may your whole life be hidden in Jesus and with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, that is to say, in the silence of meditation and prayer. Don't be frightened by the dark night of humiliation and solitude or the floodtide of mortifications. Go forward all the time, go forward, Raffaolina, and don't let the torrent of mortification stop you. Do not let the persecution of worldlings and of all those who live without the Spirit of Jesus Christ deter you from following the road trodden by the Saints. Continue to run up the steep slope of the mountain of holiness and don't let the rough path dismay you. Continue to walk close to Jesus, and if following Him means protection against every mishap, you will most certainly win through in all things as you have always done.

I cannot conceal from you, Raffaolina, that the trial to which you are still to be subjected will again be a very harsh one. Before breathing your last on the cross you still have to agonize in the Olive Grove with Jesus Christ. Don't be frightened, however, by this fresh announcement. Remember the goodness with which the Lord has treated you up to the present. He will continue His work of perfecting you which will be to your advantage. He will continue to pour out upon you to the full not only the oil of His