

Homily  
Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, Priest  
Friday, September 23, 2022

Jesus is “The Christ of God.” That’s what Peter said. And then Jesus rebukes them. Peter was given a great gift of the Holy Spirit and it puts him in a tough situation; all of them in a tough situation. Jesus directs them not to tell anyone.

We often think of the gifts we receive from God as a blessing, and mostly they are. Everything we are and everything we do begins as a gift from God. Our ability to grasp with our hands, talk with our mouths, see with our eyes, think with our brains. And all the gifts that flow from there; some have the gift of critical thinking, some a nurturing style that fosters growth, some an artistic ability that soothes and inspires.

And then some gifts are more challenging. Every gift we have we are called to develop and use to the glory of God. And, because of Free Will, we choose to use these gifts for bettering our neighbor and society or for self-interests. Some have the gift of money management. Do they use that gift to better all life and glorify God? Or do they use that gift to make their own lives more comfortable? Do we use our gifts for self-interest, or do we love our neighbor, using our gifts to the best of our ability, honing that gift to maximize our gift, increasing the Body of Christ.

Saint Padre Pio, also known as Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, received many gifts that seem on the surface pretty cool; bilocation (the ability to be in two places at once), stigmata (bodily marks corresponding to the wounds of Christ), healing, apparitions, levitation, prophecy, and others. In 1947, Fr. Karol Wojtyla visited Padre Pio who prophetically told him he would rise to the highest post in the Church." Fr. Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1978. But each of these presented trials for our saint. He was challenged, even by the Vatican, on many manifestations of his gifts. Several doctors and investigators inspected his Stigmata wounds; many determined they were self-inflicted. Eventually, the Vatican confirmed they were genuine and removed all sanctions against our saint.

He was a holy, obedient and devout man. He was known for his piety, his charity, the quality of his preaching and dedication to hearing confessions. He famously advised, "Pray, hope and don't worry." He loved Jesus and devoted himself to the people around him. Yet, his gifts were often an impediment to his performing his ministry as Priest and Confessor.

Padre Pio died during the night of September 23, 1968, at the age of 81. On June 16, 2002, he was proclaimed a saint by Pope John Paul II. In his homily, the Pope said, “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.”

That is what we are all called to; a life of holiness where we keep our focus on Jesus, hone our gifts and share them in a way that glorifies God and betters our neighbor and our world. By the intercession of St. Padre Pio, may we trust in the power and grace of our Lord to heal us and make us strong to proclaim His Glory to the world. Amen.